

Greens from across 120 councils demand urgent funding for local authorities to tackle the coronavirus crisis



Green Party

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- Local authorities could lose up to half of spending power this year, letter warns
- Councillors call for more flexibility to decide on how to spend funding
- Sian Berry: “Our councils are stepping up but budgets are rapidly reaching breaking point”

Green councillors from across the country have signed an open letter to Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick to demand emergency and longer-term funding to enable local authorities to continue to support communities during the coronavirus crisis. [1]

The letter warns councils could lose up to half of their spending power this year if the lockdown were to last for just three months.

It also calls for local authorities to be given more flexibility to decide on how funds are spent, as they are best-placed to see where the real need is and how it can be tackled.

The letter has been sent by the Association of Green Councillors on behalf of councillors from across 120 councils, including Green Party co-leaders Sian Berry and Jonathan Bartley and Councillor Zoe Nicholson, the leader of Lewes District Council.

Berry, a Green Party councillor on Camden Council, said:

“Several weeks into the lockdown and with the increased demand caused by the crisis it is clear that the initial funding the government has already announced for local authorities is simply nowhere near enough.

“Councils are stepping up and providing vital services to our communities. Vulnerable people are relying upon them for a rapid increase in support. But, after a decade of cuts and in the face of lost income as a result of the crisis, budgets are rapidly reaching breaking point.

“We urge the government to act immediately so that we can continue to do this essential work and not add further strain to the NHS and other essential services.”

The letter highlights the level of resources already being committed to emergency support by Lewes District Council, where the Green Party are in co-operative administration. In that authority, food packs provided to those not covered by the medically shielded programme has already cost £1 per head of population in the first three weeks.

Councillor Nicholson said:

“In Lewes, like every other district and borough council, we are facing serious financial problems due to the coronavirus crisis.

“We have been at the front line of the response within our community, paying out for additional food packs and housing the homeless, all amid a significant loss of income.

“Like lots of other district councils we received a measly 0.02% per cent of the additional money the government previously announced for local authorities. We have spent this money at least ten times over just this week. The long-term financial position looks bleak for councils like ourselves who are providing essential front line services.”

ENDS

Notes

1

A copy of the letter can be viewed [here](#)

2

The Green Party saw its best ever local election results on 2 May 2019 when it more than doubled its number of councillors from 175 to 362 councillors on 122 councils.

Greens are also in administration in 17 councils across the country.

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