

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council meeting, 28 January 2025 - Minute Extract

355. Motions received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 17

Councillor M Mullaney, seconded by Councillor Cope, proposed the following motion:

- The recent 2024 autumn budget change to inheritance tax relief announced by the Labour government will introduce a family farm tax and will have a detrimental impact on family farms and farmers' ability to pass on their farms to the next generation of farmers and essentially put at risk our nation's food security
- House of Commons Library research, commissioned by the Liberal Democrats, has revealed that farming subsidies have fallen by 20% in real terms since 2015 – equivalent to the loss of £722 million in public funding for farmers
- Last year alone, 8100 UK farms closed their doors – equal to one in 25 of all farms in the country.

Council believes that:

- Whilst it is true that the financial inheritance left by the Conservatives was shameful, the Labour government has committed a shameful betrayal and let down farmers by breaking their promise to not introduce a family farm tax
- The family farm tax will damage the ability of farmers to pass on their farms to the next generation of local farmers
 - Labour's family farm tax will threaten food security by forcing the sale of family farms and, with a smaller number of farmers, removing competition from the marketplace by stealth, risks basic food cost hikes for our residents
 - The Labour government's family farm tax will make British food production harder
 - The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed and Keir Starmer promised not to introduce a tax like this
 - Numerous rural and farming organisations such as the National Farmers' Union and Country Land and Business Association have warned that countless farms will be harmed, threatening food security and rural areas like ours
 - The comments made of the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed, that already struggling farmers will have to "do more with less" shows an absolute ignorance as to how the rural economy works
 - At a time when many farmers in Hinckley & Bosworth are struggling with soaring costs and energy prices, this sudden tax rise will damage the future of their farms and our local economy.

Council further believes that:

- Farmers are key allies in tackling climate change and the natural capital crisis, caring for and restoring the countryside while producing high-quality food for our tables, but their ability to do this has already been threatened by the transition away from the basic payment scheme which has resulted in many farmers fearing that new systems will fall short of what is needed

- The many failings of the Conservative's Brexit deal have also contributed to the problems facing farmers including increased food production costs and shortages as well as severely damaging their ability to export to their main markets in Europe. New trade deals have undermined animal welfare and environmental protection, undercutting responsible British farmers and setting a dangerous precedent for future deals
- The decision by Leicestershire County Council to sell off, or explore selling off, county farms is also deeply concerning and damaging to future food production – these include farms in Hinckley, Stapleton and Barlestone. –

Council resolves to:

- Request that the Chief Executive writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at this decision and to call on the government to stop the family farm tax
- Call on Leicestershire County Council to halt its policy of selling off county farms."

During discussion on the motion, members emphasised the importance of farming for the economy and for mitigating climate change and highlighted the sale of county farmland for house building.

Councillor M Mullaney along with ten further members stood to request voting on the motion be recorded. The vote was taken as follows:

Councillors Bools, Bray, Cartwright, Cook, Cope, J Crooks, W Crooks, Flemming, C Gibbens, S Gibbens, Green, Hodgkins, Lambert, Lynch, Moore, L Mullaney, M Mullaney, Pendlebury, Simmons, Smith, Stead-Davis, Webber-Jones, Weightman and Williams voted FOR the motion (24);

Councillors C Allen, R Allen, Harris and O'Shea abstained from voting.

The motion was therefore declared CARRIED and it was

RESOLVED –

- (i) The Chief Executive be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at this decision and to call on the government to stop the family farm tax;
- (ii) Leicestershire County Council be called upon to halt its policy of selling off county farms.