

# Council 28 November 2024

Meeting recording: [(1) Cambridge City Council - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/@camcitco/streams)

## Agenda item 6a. Support for an Essentials Guarantee

**The Council notes:**

* The City Council was one of the founding members of the Food Justice Alliance (formerly Food Poverty Alliance), formed in 2017.
* As a result of this partnership work, the Labour-led council funds and facilitates work to deal with the demand for affordable food and campaign for food justice and has passed a motion declaring Cambridge a right to food city.
* Most recently, partnership work with Cambridge Sustainable Food and the City Council resulted in Cambridge achieving a ‘Gold Sustainable Food City’ accreditation. This signals that local work is ‘at the forefront of national and international initiatives, instigating transformative change within local food systems’.
* The significant increase in need for emergency food in Cambridge, with Cambridge City Foodbank providing more than 17,000 emergency food parcels in the last 12 months, a 74% increase on the same period in 2020/21.
* That for the first time in its history, the majority of people Cambridge City Foodbank supports with emergency food will be repeat rather than one-off visitors, with approximately 80% visiting less than 4 times, demonstrating that a higher proportion of people who experience food security in Cambridge now continue to experiencing hunger and hardship on an ongoing basis.
* That as a result of austerity policies by the previous government around 5 in 6 low-income households on Universal Credit are going without at least one essential like food, a warm home or toiletries,[[1]](#footnote-1) which shows that the social security system inherited by the Labour government has not been providing people with enough to afford the essentials.
* As a result of the ‘Essentials Guarantee’ campaign by national organisations including the Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Labour government took positive steps to address the issues raised in their Autumn Budget. The Trussell Trust noted following the budget that ‘it’s a welcome relief to see the UK government make a first step towards a more supportive social security system, introducing what it’s calling a Fair Repayment Rate in Universal Credit’. This is a significant change, capping debt repayments to 15% (previously 25%) to allow more households to keep more of their financial support.
* This has been welcomed by national organisations as an important step towards the Essentials Guarantee, alongside various other commitments for social security including increasing the Carer’s Allowance threshold, additional funding for the Household Support Fund and an increase in the minimum wage to make it a ‘genuine living wage’. The Trussell Trust have additionally pointed to other positive measures brought in by the Labour government to turn the tide on poverty and inequality, including long-term investment in social housing and reforms to Right to Buy.
* That Cambridge MP, Daniel Zeichner has welcomed the steps the Labour Government is taking to address this issue, stating that ‘The previous Government’s decisions, such as the damaging mini-budget of September 2022, significantly worsened the situation, harming the most vulnerable in our society, and I want to see an end to widespread reliance on emergency food parcels’, while highlighting that the steps outlined in the recent budget ‘will help transform people’s lives for the better.’
* That 9.3 million people in the UK face hunger and hardship, meaning their household is more than 25% below the Social Metrics Commission poverty line. This represents one in seven people in the UK, and one in five children. Without action, a further 425,000 people are projected to face hunger and hardship by 2026/27.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**The Council resolves:**

* To support the Labour party with their commitment to review Universal Credit, tackle poverty and ‘end mass dependence on emergency food parcels which is a moral scar on society’, as well as their work to improve social security in line with the issues raised by the Essentials Guarantee campaign.
* To continue to support the transition of food hubs in the City to Social Supermarkets, a more sustainable model which is based on the principle of dignity and choice to users; complimenting and supporting the local emergency food banks.
* To continue to support the Food Justice Alliance, which this council helped to fund, to continue to tackle food poverty with local organisations and our statutory partners.
* To convene a food justice conference in February 2025, to explore how food can drive real change in building stronger communities and tackling poverty; building on years of collaborative efforts with Cambridge Sustainable Food and other partners, that the Labour-led council both fund and have supported since 2015.
* To instruct the Leader of the Council alongside the Labour MP for Cambridge, Daniel Zeichner, to write to the Chancellor and Secretary to the Department for Work and Pensions to support the steps already taken by the Labour Government in line with the Essentials Guarantee and outline the Council’s support of the Essentials Guarantee.

1. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: https://www.jrf.org.uk/social-security/guarantee-our-essentials-reforming-universal-credit-to-ensure-we-can-all-afford-the [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The Cost of Hunger and Hardship*, Trussell, 2024: https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/publications/report/the-cost-of-hunger-and-hardship [↑](#footnote-ref-2)