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The woman who dresses Helen and Kate

INSIDE TIMES2



Did the MoD try to censor my book?
Johnny Mercer

Burnham told he must raise taxes or cut spending in budget

Steven Swinford Political Editor
Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Andy Burnham is facing a significant deterioration in the public finances that will leave him needing to find about £10 billion in either tax rises or spending cuts in his first budget.

The Times has been told that the Office for Budget Responsibility, the

fiscal watchdog, has entered its critical ten-day forecast period when it assesses the state of the economy. The findings are used to calculate the cost of debt interest that underpins the budget.

A senior government source said the timing was "highly challenging" for John Healey, the chancellor, because of the impact of the war in Iran. Economists believe that it will make

tax rises or spending cuts inevitable.

Andy Haldane, a former Bank of England economist and an ally of Burnham, urged the prime minister not to raise taxes.

"The market now suspects that this is a traditional tax-and-spend socialist government with better TikTok videos," he told LBC. "The Achilles heel of this government thus far has been its

unwillingness and/or inability to cut public spending."

In the past week, the cost of government borrowing has hit its highest level for 19 years, driven by rising oil prices and concerns that there is no end to the conflict in sight.

Economists said the government's £23 billion worth of fiscal headroom — a cushion against future spending —

had fallen to as little as £5 billion once the cost of Burnham's pledges on the cost of living have been factored in. Healey has signalled to markets that he intends to ensure there is a "buffer" in the budget to protect against uncertainty.

The average energy bill is forecast to rise by as much as 26 per cent in

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Failure to act allowed Letby to kill three babies

Hospital bosses ignored warnings, inquiry finds

Stan Bradley Northern Correspondent
Ben Elley Deputy Chief Reporter

Families of babies murdered and attacked by Lucy Letby have accused hospital managers of prioritising the nurse "over a unit full of vulnerable children" after an inquiry exposed repeated failures to stop her.

Three babies murdered by Letby could have survived and seven others may not have been attacked if staff had acted on warnings, the Thirlwall inquiry found.

Lady Justice Thirlwall found there had been a "complete failure to protect babies" on the neonatal unit at the Countess of Chester Hospital, detailing dysfunctional management, a gulf between hospital leaders and clinicians, and a failure to understand basic safeguarding principles.

Among the inquiry's 17 recommendations is that every cot and incubator in neonatal units across England should have a camera capable of livestreaming video to parents.

Yvette Cooper, the health secretary, said officials had been asked to "urgently develop plans for cot cams". She was "profoundly sorry" on behalf of the government and health service, adding: "Our responsibility now is to act."

Tamlin Bolton, of Irwin Mitchell, who represents families of seven children harmed by Letby, 36, said: "Prioritising one nurse over a unit full of vulnerable children — it's inexplicable."

Senior nurses refused to accept that

consultants' concerns might be justified, the inquiry found. A "them-and-us" culture developed between nurses and doctors, while clinicians were investigated through Letby's grievance process and pressed to apologise despite having done nothing wrong.

Parents were kept in the dark as executives delayed contacting the police. Tony Chambers, the hospital's former chief executive, conducted an "exercise in spin" by concealing the doctors' concerns from its board.

The inquiry found that "the prevention of reputational damage to the hospital was prized more highly than the transparency and inquisitorial function of the coronal process".

Chambers left the hospital in 2018 and went on to serve as interim chief executive of three other NHS trusts.

Cheshire police said they would consider the report as part of Operation Duet, their investigations into possible corporate manslaughter by the trust and gross negligence manslaughter by individuals. Three former senior leaders were arrested last year on suspicion of gross negligence manslaughter. One was subsequently arrested on suspicion of perverting the course of justice. None of them has been charged and police have not disclosed their identities.

Letby, Britain's most prolific serial killer of children, is serving 15 whole-life orders for murdering seven babies and attempting to murder seven others. Her case has become one of the most

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Cutting a dash Daisy Edgar-Jones at the premiere of *Sense and Sensibility* in London last night. She stars as Jane Austen's protagonist Elinor Dashwood

Right to work from home boosted under Labour plans

Oliver Wright, Steven Swinford

Labour will legislate to make it harder for employers to turn down requests to work from home, as union leaders claimed that not being in the office was a "lifeline" rather than a "perk".

Louise Haigh, the first secretary of state, told the Trades Union Congress yesterday that under the new law employers would have to "properly consider" requests to work from home.

If they decide to block them, they will be legally required to hold a face-to-face meeting with the employee and provide a "justifiable reason" for their decision to do so.

The approach goes further than current rules, which give all employees a legal right to request flexible working but employers are obliged only to consider the request in a "reasonable manner".

Speaking at the TUC's annual meeting in Brighton, Haigh defended people's right to flexible working.

"I know that businesses have to make things work too. Not every job can be done from home and not every request can be agreed," she said. "But every request can be taken seriously." TUC, said flexible working "isn't just a perk — it's a lifeline", adding: "That's why this move is a welcome step forward. It makes it harder for employers to turn down requests while giving workers a stronger voice in the process."

Andrew Griffith, the shadow chancellor, said: "Labour do not understand business... In the private sector, this is more job-sapping red tape, but in the public sector it will be a complete shirkers' charter."

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