

 > [News](#) > [Politics](#) > [Andy Burnham](#)

'King of the North' Andy Burnham labelled hero for fighting against Tories – 'this is what leadership looks like'

Andy Burnham spoke after Boris Johnson placed Greater Manchester into Tier 3 lockdown, but with much the Mayor claims is needed to support the city through the difficult time



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Dressed in a black shirt with the top button undone and a casual jacket - Manchester's mayor Andy Burnham has done what most politicians have failed to do in recent months.

He spoke passionately and with fight as he **blasted the Tories for 'playing poker with people's lives'** in a furious speech following news Manchester will enter Tier 3 lockdown and face tougher restrictions.

He found out about the government's "disgraceful" cash offer during a press conference when Manchester's chief executive showed the announcement on his phone, resulting in chaotic live TV scenes.

Shaking his head, he said: "It's brutal to be honest.

"This is no way to run the country is a national crisis. It isn't. This is not right.

"They should not be doing this, grinding people down."

Burnham's emotional statement has been widely praised online, and he's been trending on [Twitter](#) since stepping away from the microphone.

He's been dubbed King of the North after Game of Thrones hero Jon Snow, and many are saying he's an example of what true leadership looks like.

Others have said it makes them proud to be northern while some have joked (well, we assume they're joking) they plan to move to Manchester after seeing his speech.

Twitter is filled with memes and jokes about Burnham's speech.

Burnham savaged ministers for failing to provide the minimum sum of £65million needed to avoid a "winter of real hardship" under Tier 3 restrictions, which would plunge the poorest into poverty and homelessness.

He said civic leaders had reduced their original demand of £90m for stricken businesses and for workers to top up furlough payments.

Mr Burnham then reduced it again to £75million, then £65million but the Government refused and walked away, with reports it would only offer £60million.

By contrast, the Government has already spent more than £200bn on the [coronavirus](#) crisis.

In a day of drama, [Boris Johnson](#) was due to give a press conference at 5pm, where he was expected to impose further restrictions on the area against the will of local leaders.

In a furious speech to reporters, Mr Burnham accused ministers of "playing poker with places and people's lives" through a pandemic.

He blasted: "Are they piling pressure on people to accept the lowest figure they can get away with?

"Is that how they're running this country?

"Is this a government committed to levelling up this country?

"What we've seen today is a deliberate act of levelling down."

He said £65million was the absolute minimum to "prevent poverty, to prevent hardship, to prevent homelessness"

"Those were the figures that we had - not what we wanted - but what we needed to prevent all of those things from happening," he said.

"But the Government refused to accept this and at 2pm today they walked away from negotiations.

"In summary, at no point today were we offered enough to protect the poorest people in our communities through the punishing reality of the winter to come.

"Even now I am still willing to do a deal but it cannot be on the terms that the Government offered today."

Mr Burnham blasted ministers for scrimping on the cash bailout, saying: "At no point today were we offered enough to protect the poorest people in our communities through the punishing reality of the winter to come."

He said Chancellor Rishi Sunak's "whatever it takes" attitude has gone.

"It's 'you'll get what we will give you'," he said.