

Minute no 68. Area Based Grant. Reasons for Call In

The report is misleading and plays down the actual impact of the cuts recommended.

Cutting over half a million pounds, for example, from the School Development Grant, which is used to raise the standards of teaching and learning in schools cannot be said to have no impact on front line services.

Children's Services last year used £900,000 of uncommitted Area Based Grant to help reduce an overspend of £1.9m, of which £1.7m was due to increased spending on independent residential care for children. Cutting uncommitted grant will remove this flexibility and in so doing will have a direct impact on key frontline services.

There is a clear credibility gap between the priorities it says it is setting out to protect and the reality of what the Cabinet recommendations will mean.

A cut of 1.6m in the Working Neighbourhood Fund, for example, which is higher even than the cut recommended by the government, is in direct conflict with maintaining the Corporate Priorities both of mitigating the impact of the recession and reducing worklessness and of reducing the numbers not in employment, education or training.

Despite the much trumpeted dedication of this administration to consultation of all kinds, with staff, service users and the general public, there has been no consultation on these cuts at all, or any debate about their true impact. The reverse is true, with every effort being made to hide that impact.

It is not made clear that the way in which this report is written, and the recommendations are framed, means that the administration has now added a further £3.9m of additional cuts to be made to close the 2011/12 budget gap, which has already reached £24m and is rising fast, taking the total so far to nearly £28m, and this is before the full impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review is added to it..

The cuts in this year's grant are fundamentally unnecessary, as recent growth figures have demonstrated, and a result of political dogma from the national Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition which puts ideological commitment to a smaller state above the interests of the nation and is prepared, in so doing, to jeopardise the country's economic recovery by cutting too sharply too soon in order to achieve its ends over the course of a single parliament.