

## **LABOUR AMENDMENT 1 to Budget Cabinet Minute 327**

**Proposed by Councillor Steve Foulkes (15 minutes)**

**Seconded by Cllr. Phil Davies (5 minutes)**

- 1. Council notes that this budget cuts Wirral's workforce by nearly 20%, and that, in order to make this cut, this administration has borrowed £6.4m, which will have to be paid back at the revenue cost of £600,000 a year, over a period of 25 years which totals £15m. This amount is in addition to the £15m being found from other sources over the next two years.**
- 2. Council notes that the loss of 1300 jobs, (of which only 1100 are accounted for in this budget) will take £51m directly out of Wirral's economy, with all the consequent knock on to contractors, traders and shop keepers, which will considerably increase the impact of that loss.**
- 3. Council believes that an area like Wirral, which is heavily dependent on public sector employment, has little chance of making up that loss with new private sector jobs, particularly in a climate where the private sector is already shedding the jobs it currently has, and that a cut of this severity, from one of the biggest employers on Wirral, can only push Wirral's economy deeper into depression, increasing the level of unemployment and reducing opportunities for future generations of Wirral's young people.**
- 4. Council believes that the policy of this government to pursue deficit reduction over such a short timescale, with its consequent impact on local government, is driven more by political election timetables and a political ideology which wants to drastically reduce the size of the State, than it is by necessity. Council notes that even under a Thatcher "There is no Alternative" government, they chose to reduce a budget deficit over a period of nine years rather than five.**
- 5. Council believes the damage done to the local economy has been compounded by the fact that the Secretary of State chose in the Local Government Settlement to front load in one year many of the cuts to Local Government spending, and that this draconian move was further exacerbated by a decision to centre those cuts, through the use of Area Based Grant, on the areas of highest deprivation in the country, leading to a situation where, for example, Richmond on Thames loses just £5.39 in Revenue Spending Power per head of population, Wirral loses £84.27 and Liverpool loses £162.99**
- 6. Council deeply regrets that Wirral's Conservative Liberal Democrat Coalition has not joined with their colleagues elsewhere in the country in condemning this government's treatment of Local Government and its impact on vital front line services, but has**

chosen instead to celebrate the scale of the job losses they are inflicting as a triumph of leadership, without showing any appreciation of the damage they are doing.

7. Council further condemns the fact that they have taken every opportunity to thwart any attempt to scrutinise the impact of these cuts, unlike neighbouring authorities who have taken an all party approach to reduce the impact of any cuts that have to be made, and have gone to great lengths to conceal the real truth about what these cuts mean, including suspending elements of the Council's Constitution to suppress proper scrutiny and debate, and refusing to allow constitutionally called Scrutiny Committees to proceed.
8. Council notes that the outcome of this behaviour is that the members of this Council are being asked to approve a budget which has not been properly and rigorously scrutinised, which does not have in place any published departmental restructuring plans to show how services will be delivered in the future, and which does not have any published risk assessments or equality impact statements.
9. Council expresses its outrage that members are being asked to approve this budget "blind", without any of the essential back up information, and that they have not even been allowed to see the detailed departmental budget breakdowns which, in the past, have always been published as part of the budget "blue book" presented to Budget Cabinet as an integral part of the Budget report
10. Council believes this is totally unacceptable, that there is no evidence to show that this budget is either robust or deliverable, and that the failure to follow the Council's own Constitution on the budget procedure also renders it potentially illegal and open to challenge.
11. Council welcomes the fact that the residents of Wirral will not be faced with any increase in Council Tax, but regrets that the capping formula applied by the Secretary of State, combined with the financial incentive to set a zero Council Tax increase, effectively took away any choice from local people on whether or not they wished to pay even a small increase in order to protect vital services.

**Council recommends that:**

- Detailed Restructuring Plans, along with all relevant risk assessments and equality impact statements, be published as a matter of urgency to demonstrate how Council Services will be delivered in future in the light of the loss of nearly 20% of the workforce.

- The ban on allowing an in house bid for the PACSPE contract be lifted and timescales extended in order to allow a competitive bid to be submitted by Wirral's staff.
- The previous terms and conditions which applied to EVR/VS applications be re-instated immediately for any future applicants.
- Concessionary Travel for the over 60s is retained.
- Current levels of refuse collection are maintained and no new charges are introduced.
- In the light of the Draconian cuts to police services on Wirral, which include the loss of 325 officers and 163 police staff in this year alone, the posts of four Community Patrol Officers are restored at the cost of £110,000, using the fund for re-structuring costs, to run in tandem with the review of the Anti Social Behaviour Team.
- The Independent Panel on Members Allowances be asked to devise a sliding scale formula equivalent to a 5% saving so that those members in receipt of the highest allowance bear the largest reduction, and the level of their public sector income as a consequence of their role as a councillor is taken into account.
- No member be allowed to accept more than one Special Responsibility Allowance, including allowances from other public sector bodies.

Council notes that other major changes to the budget are contained within separate amendments in order to maximise the opportunity for all councillors to vote with their consciences.