

Council: Tuesday, 8 April 2014

Opposition Business Item: Councillor Alison Moore

Amendment in the name of Councillor Anne Hutton

Restoring Democracy and Fairness

Add at the end:

Council also notes that the Conservative Administration is passporting a 25% cut in funding for subsidised places at afterschool clubs and holiday play schemes run by Mapledown School. These after-school clubs provide much needed respite for working parents of severely disabled children, and there are already not enough places to meet demand.

Council believes the decision by the Conservative-led government to impose this cut to the funding for these short-break schemes is callous and unfair, but also believes the council can do something about it.

Council therefore asks that in the spirit of fairness and putting local communities first the Administration should lobby government to reverse the cut in funding for these schemes, meet with the parents and children affected, and in the meantime the Administration should fund the shortfall of £45k by either reducing Councillors allowances, using public health funding or taking the money from reserves.

Substantive Business Item to read:

Council notes that after 12 years of a Conservative council in Barnet many people are angry about the way the Administration has handled things from parking charges, library closures or mass-privatisation of council services.

Council remembers just some of the things Barnet's Conservative Councillors have done over the last few years:

- They voted to give themselves a bumper pay rise of up to £20,000 each - right after the last local elections in 2010.
- They hiked up parking charges for residents by up to 300% in one year while claiming free parking across the Borough for themselves - and still continue to!
- They scrapped wardens for vulnerable older residents in sheltered housing.
- They tried to introduce new parking charges in East Barnet Village car park.
- They closed 8 children's centres and cut affordable child care funding.
- They removed all cash parking meters on high streets without consultation.
- They closed Friern Barnet Library, and then re-opened it a year later following public pressure and a court battle.
- They privatised critical frontline services on a mass scale without consultation.

Council further notes that many of these things had been done with very little or even without any consultation of local people, or despite consultation responses disagreeing with the proposals.

Council also notes that these things were done while the Administration was busy curtailing the public's rights to speak at Council committee meetings.

Council believes that we need an Administration that listens to local people and is fair. Council notes that there is no further Cabinet meeting before the local elections on May 22, and requests that Council and Policy & Resources Committee or the relevant commissioning committee where appropriate considers enacting the following measures to restore democracy and fairness in Barnet after the local elections:

- Establish a Fairness Commission.
- Draw up a robust consultation and community engagement policy to set out how the new council will engage with local people.
- Agree webcasting of all council and committee meetings.
- Establish 30 minutes of Public Question Time at Full Council meetings.
- Revoke all free councillor parking permits.
- Review the number of new committees and reduce them in order make savings of £200k in Councillors allowances.
- Bring forward proposals for at least 30 minutes free parking in all town centres.
- Bring forward proposals to cash-enable all current card-only parking meters.
- Bring forward proposals to establish free parking on weekends in December.
- Bring forward proposals to set-up an Oyster-style 'Barnet Card' as an option to pay for parking.

Council also notes that the Conservative administration is passporting a 25% cut in funding for subsidised places at afterschool clubs and holiday play schemes run by Mapledown School. These after-school clubs provide much needed respite for working parents of severely disabled children, and there are already not enough places to meet demand.

Council believes the decision by the Conservative-led government to impose this cut to the funding for these short-break schemes is callous and unfair, but also believes the council can do something about it.

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