

Council: Tuesday, 15 July 2014

Administration Business Item: Councillor Richard Cornelius

The savings context for Member policy-making

Council notes that the council has saved over £70m from our budget since 2010 and welcomes the fact that, in doing so, we have been able to meet the funding challenge that we faced as a result of the financial crisis, growing demographic pressures and a substantial reduction in funding from central government.

Council recognises, though, that despite strong growth returning to Barnet and the economy as a whole, as result of the Conservative-led Coalition's long-term economic plan, there are still demographic-related increases in service demand and a further necessity to cut local government funding to help remove the nation's budget deficit. Council notes that both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party have indicated that significant reductions in spending will follow the 2015 General Election.

Council believes that we will be required to save a further £72m from the budget by 2020. Council notes that this target was accepted by both parties at the inaugural Policy and Resources Committee.

Council welcomes that the new committee system will enable this consensus to be democratically expressed. Council believes that the system provides the scope for all members to actively engage with the policy-making process. Council applauds the committees that have met for acknowledging the reality of the situation, unanimously agreeing their savings targets and, generally, beginning to work in a collegial manner.

Council further recognises that there remains a £20m budget gap, to be addressed in order to reach the £72m savings requirement, and calls upon committees and their working groups to give consideration to this in their work.

In this spirit, Council calls upon all Members to think of, and work towards achieving, economies and cost savings in order both to meet our new financial challenge and protect the services we want to protect. Council calls on Members to keep this context in mind throughout the policy-making process and thus, similarly, not bring forward proposals to reverse policy without having identified an appropriate compensating saving.