

Council: Tuesday, 11 September 2012

Opposition Business Item: Councillor Alison Moore

We need a Better Barnet, not 'One Barnet'

Council believes this Conservative administration is failing their stated 'One Barnet' aim "to become a citizen centred organisation".

The three guiding 'One Barnet' delivery principles are not being met.

- The council has not forged a positive 'new relationship with citizens' – residents have been shut out of the democratic process having never been formally consulted on the 'One Barnet' programme proposals;
- There is no 'one public sector approach' – Barnet are going it alone;
- The 'relentless drive for efficiency' is nothing more than a £1 billion gamble of critical council services with no proper risk assessments, no public sector comparator undertaken to ensure genuine value for money, and millions of pounds wasted on consultants and poor procurement practices.

Council believes that in order to try and create a Better Barnet the following needs to be done:

- Public faith must be restored in the democratic process:
 - LB Barnet should hold a public referendum on the 'One Barnet' £1 billion gamble.
 - Consultation practice with local residents needs to be completely re-vamped to stop the 'tick-box' culture that has emerged. A proper community engagement programme must be developed and implemented for 'One Barnet'.
 - The One Barnet Overview & Scrutiny Committee should be re-instituted to scrutinise 'One Barnet' proposals and monitor implementation.
- LB Barnet should be proactive in supporting the local economy, local jobs and valuing local expertise:
 - LB Barnet should have in place an active economic development plan that is mindful of the local economic footprint.
 - LB Barnet should introduce proper consultation with traders on reviving our struggling town centres; we need to listen to their views and implement a genuine recovery plan including looking at enterprise zones, and working with secondary schools and colleges on apprenticeships and local paid internships.
 - The NSCSO contract should include a commitment to keep jobs in Barnet – in the event that this outsourcing goes ahead.

- LB Barnet should properly assess and minimise the risk of service failure and financial loss of 'One Barnet':
 - The external auditor should urgently investigate ongoing poor contracting practice at LB Barnet before it enters into any further contracts above the EU threshold.
 - Equality Impact Assessments for local residents should be undertaken for the two 'One Barnet' contract outsourcings prior to any contracts being signed
 - For the services in scope in the DRS bundle, a full list of operational risks on a service by service area basis should be published indicating the likelihood and severity of each risk, and the details of how the council intends to minimise the likelihood and mitigate the impact of each
- The 'thin client commissioning model' of delivering council services where all the commissioning and contract monitoring is undertaken by a third party should be abandoned – even the Conservative LGA Chair, Sir Merrick Cockell does not believe in it
 - LB Barnet should invest a little of the millions of pounds being wasted on consultants to undertake a proper public sector comparator for council services currently in scope for outsourcing - a genuine programme of service reviews comparing the potential for in-house improvement against outsourced solutions, to ensure value for money is achieved.
 - LB Barnet should resurrect a real one public sector approach through meaningful liaison with public sector partners, and more use of shared services with them and other local authorities.
 - LB Barnet should investigate how much scope there is for using the new General Power of Competence to increase the council's trading opportunities – the council's valuable income streams should be used to re-invest in providing quality local services to local people, they should not be handed over to private for-profit companies.
 - A Scrutiny panel should be set up to investigate the possibility of delivering services through mutuals, co-operatives and co-production.

Council asks Cabinet to halt the current 'One Barnet' process while all this is undertaken.