



Leicester City Branch

2016 BUDGET RESPONSE

UNISON Leicester City Branch members are feeling the enormity of the result of the General Election on 7th May 2015 and, although Leicester remains In Labour control, we face a massive challenge. It is safe to say that the pressure being put on the trade unions and management by the onslaught of the Tory Government is not going to end soon.

In fact the Comprehensive Spending Review that George Osborne announced in October 2015 made the situation worse.

The budget situation within Leicester City council is in a critical condition and we need to ensure that our members are treated fairly during this period and to this end we have been warning the City Mayor for the last few years to curb spending on what we saw were vanity projects and set aside funds for the storm we now face.

The City Mayor has said that they have to manage the budget through a Corporate Spending Programme and Organisational Reviews this has already resulted in approximately 900 jobs being lost since 2012.

This process has also allowed for hidden cuts by manipulation of council procedures (Job Evaluation) that has led to vacant posts being deleted and the downgrading of other staff that have been left behind. In fact the City Mayor has said *“If we are to have a sustainable future in the face of the massive cuts by government we will need to continue to integrate services and operate out of fewer buildings. It is inevitable that this process will involve jobs being re-engineered and where possible staff being supported to move into different roles.”*

Furthermore when asked to outline specific cuts that are going to be carried out the City Mayor said *“The scale of cuts is so great and the list of cuts would be so long that it would be impossible to write it!”* He also revealed to us that there would be 21 rolling reviews of council services designed to save £45 million.

Further additional pressure announced by government is the 1% rent cut resulting in a £27m loss in income for the council by 2020, leading to the need for even greater service reductions in the Housing Department than originally planned and severely impacting on Leicester City Council's ability to build more social housing.

It is our understanding that for the first time in living memory Leicester City Council have been unable to set a 2 or 3 year budget program and compelled to set a "one year budget whilst they take stock". Even if the current painful spending review program, delivers in full Leicester City Council. The Council admits we face an extremely difficult outlook and as such the City Mayor needs to adopt a more open approach and tell the people of Leicester what these cuts will mean to local communities in a city that's already had a 37% real term grant cut since 2010.

As the cuts begin to bite the City Mayor needs to look carefully at the impact on stripping away preventative services such as Children's Centres and the work they do would have a detrimental impact on Statutory Services such as in Social Care that are already stretched. There is also the future impact of Universal Credit in deprived cities like Leicester again this will have an impact on the most vulnerable.

The Authority has had to set aside another £17 million for redundancy and severance pay; when pushed they indicated another 700 job losses would come from these reviews. UNISON Leicester City Branch have made it clear that over 50 Organisational Reviews have already been carried out in a range of services including Children's and Adult Social Care, Housing Services, Housing Options, Hostels, Property services, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Support (Including Human Resources, Finance and Information Technology).

As such there is very little left to slash without causing great pain and anxiety to our members. Unfortunately the City Mayor appears to have tunnel vision with regards to supporting the City Centre, Economic Development and Businesses and has taken his eye off the ball in terms of local communities and the employees of the council.

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