

North Tyneside Council Report to Council Date: 15 February 2018

Title: 2018-2020 Financial Planning and Budget Process: Liberal Democrat Group Critique
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Report of: The Liberal Democrat Group

Wards affected: ALL

Liberal Democrat Group Critique for the 2018/19 General Fund Revenue Budget, the proposed Council Tax Level for 2018/19, the Investment Plan for 2018-2021 and the Treasury Management Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2018/19

1.0 Introduction

We have serious concerns about some aspects of the Mayor and Cabinets proposals in the Budget for 2018/19.

Once again, the Local Authority is having to make cuts enforced by Central Government's continued policy of reducing finance to Local Authorities.

While acknowledging there is some growth in the economy, uncertainty over brexit negotiations and how this will affect the North East, together with the small level of local economic growth means many families face uncertainties and continuing economic pressures.

We believe it is more important than ever for the Mayor and Cabinet to prioritise services and try to protect those services to vulnerable residents especially children and the elderly.

Among our concerns we would draw particular attention to the following and ask the Mayor to review them:

Business Case - Fit for Purpose- How we are organised

- Restructure of external funding team – Loss of staff here, could be detrimental as surely we should be trying to find alternative sources of funding.

Business Case- People Wellbeing Services

- Deletion of 5 Grade 7 Enablement Officer posts in Mental Health and Learning Disability - These are very vulnerable residents, and any changes can't be rushed without causing confusion.

Business Case -Cared for – Value for Money Tested Social Care

- Concern at such a high level of saving. Does this not lead to a two tier system and will the people paying privately receive preference.

- Review and restructure the Integrated Services Rehabilitation Services Offer - Concern that this may lead to more people having to stay in hospital longer or families having to wait longer for assessments.

Business Case Protect the Cultural Offer

- Decrease of Library Opening Hours:– Concern that working residents will have less opportunities to use the library services.

Business Case Alternative Weekly Collections

- Concern that this saving will be hard to achieve and concerns over cross contamination.

Business Case Maximising Resources

- Changes to the Social Care charging policy for non residential services. This will affect some of the Authority's poorest residents.

We recommend the Mayor and Cabinet put in place special monitoring processes for high risk and major changes.