

Statement by David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, on Haringey Council budget plans

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Since the Tory-Lib Dem Coalition Government took power in 2010, local authorities across the UK have been faced with crippling cuts to their budgets year on year. Yet the perversity is that some councils have had their budgets slashed by more than others. Since 2010, Haringey Council has been forced to make cuts of more than £100 million, and now is having to tackle further budget cuts of more than £70 million, leading to a decrease in spending power by over 5.4%. Quite unbelievably, other local authorities in far more affluent – dare I say Conservative and Liberal Democrat voting areas, such as Cambridge, Buckinghamshire and Surrey are actually seeing increases in their spending power. It is surprising that Lynne Featherstone, the Liberal Democrat MP for Hornsey and Wood Green appears to be opposing many of the Council's proposed cuts when she actually voted for every single one of the government's measures that made these budget cuts unavoidable.

There is no getting away from the fact that Haringey Council has some tough decisions to make. These decisions present us with a dilemma about which local services we should prioritise. In my mind it is absolutely clear that we should preserve the services relied on by some of the most vulnerable people in our borough. In a borough where, only a few years ago, the streets of Tottenham were consumed by flames and fear, we must ensure our young people continue to receive the services they require to support them on their journey into adulthood. Whether it be the work of our youth centres such as Bruce Grove, or our wonderful arts organisations like the Haringey Shed Theatre Company or our high performing sports clubs like Haringey Aquatics and Broadwater Farm Football Club, we must continue to ensure there are funds allocated to programmes to help our young people achieve and flourish.

I have consistently argued that government and local authorities must invest in their young people. Most recently, I put my name to Early Day Motion 488, affirming my position that all young people across the UK should have access to a broad range of high quality services with proper funding from central government, delivered by local authorities working closely with schools, sports clubs and youth voluntary organisations.

Haringey Council is faced with an incredibly difficult situation: Coalition spending cuts mean it must reduce its spending. Over the last five years, Londoners have been faced with a cost of living crisis. The Council's decision to freeze Council Tax for the fifth consecutive year has certainly helped thousands of families to endure this unfavourable economic climate. I would also praise Haringey Council's pledge to families that every school across the borough will be rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. However, the news that the youth services budget faces a cut of £2.1 million - in effect its entire budget - is in all honesty deeply troubling. Our commitment to our young people and to their education should not stop at the classroom door as the school bell sounds. In a city where parents have some of the longest working hours in Europe, often due to the fact they many are not earning a living

wage, it seems reckless to remove services that promote academic, athletic and artistic development in our kids within the key timeslot where many parents are still out at work.

The paradox of living in a city like London is that for many there are a wealth of social and cultural opportunities on their doorstep, but it is often the case that society's most vulnerable people are deprived of such experiences, and are consigned to lives of isolation and loneliness. The decision to close three of the four day centres across the borough that serve those with Learning Disabilities and Special Needs, such as autism, is equally distressing, not least because it removes a communal place for interaction, a place for socialising and engaging with the world outside their front doors and somewhere that provides a crucial refuge to many in our borough. Sadly in Haringey, we must all bear the burden of the cuts imposed on us by the Tory-Lib Dem Coalition**, but Haringey Council must endeavour to implement a budget that provides sufficient support to the most vital of local services.

I will continue to urge the Council to think very carefully about its decision to cut the entire youth budget and significantly reduce its investment in services for the disabled and people with learning disabilities. It is crucial that we continue to invest in the services that support some of the Borough's most vulnerable people. We must not let them down.

David Lammy, MP