

Dear Cllr Morton,

The implication of your emphasis on the scale of Haringey's budget deficit is that we should share responsibility for the financial difficulties facing the Council. But our first responsibility is to the vulnerable individuals and families who have been targeted to bear a disproportionate burden of the proposed cuts – and as a Labour councillor and Cabinet member for health and wellbeing - it should also be yours. It is preposterous that we are being asked to accept that the fate of Haringey Council now depends upon closing down the few remaining day centres and residential facilities in the borough for people with learning disabilities and autism.

We have grave reservations about the adequacy – indeed legality – of the consultation process you describe. Following meetings with Council leader Claire Kober in November 2013 and January 2014, we have continued to meet regularly with council officials and professionals, with a view to establishing a local autism partnership board. We now find that over this period plans were being made for major cuts in services - yet there was no attempt to consult with us (or indeed with the Haringey Learning Disabilities Partnership Board) about these proposals. We were entirely ignored in the consultation process supervised by HAVCO between September and November. The concept of 'reablement' which now appears to guide the proposed major rationalisation of services was never mentioned in any of these meetings. You indicate that a planned meeting of the autism working group was cancelled at short notice in November because of 'unforeseen' difficulties – and that a further meeting has been planned for the end of January (though we have not been notified about this), when the budget consultation period will be over. You indicate that 'alternative proposals' have been submitted in relation to the Capital Innovation Funding grant – without any consultation. Last year, we helped Council officers to complete Haringey's Autism Self-Assessment document (following the incompetent efforts of the Council's former autism lead). My recent offer to help with this year's assessment did not even receive an acknowledgement.

The proposed budget cuts were announced a week before Christmas, allowing only 19 working days for consultation. This process includes four one-hour meetings in day centres - when 648 individuals with learning disabilities and their families will be affected, and many more with dementia and other complex needs. Your 'easy-read' letter provides no information whatever about the proposed cuts in services. All in all, we feel that our trust has been abused and the spirit of partnership advocated in the Council's Corporate Plan has been sadly lacking.

When I attend the forthcoming consultation meetings, I do not want to hear about budget deficits, 'difficult choices', and suchlike justifications for austerity measures. I hope instead that you will support demands that the Council abandon these iniquitous proposals and engage in a proper process of consultation with people with autism and learning disabilities in the borough about the services that they need.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Fitzpatrick