

For 16 years, until May 2014, I was a Labour councillor in Haringey. So I know that cuts inflicted on our Council by the Coalition were brutal, unfair; and in most cases ideologically based.

Nobody should forget that. So when Yanis Varoufakis, the Greek Finance Minister called Austerity "fiscal waterboarding", I saw what's happening in my own borough as both fiscal and social waterboarding. It's plain that the most vulnerable residents are taking the brunt of the Government cuts.

But angry as I am with the Coalition Government, I'm also disgusted by the leadership of my own Council.

In my local Labour Party I was seen as on the right wing. Now my former Party colleagues have raced past me rightwards. They seem to be competing to see who can most slavishly impose the Government's cuts and follow its policies

Only weeks before a General Election, Haringey is pressing ahead with a three year budget; and pushing through out-and-out Neocon policies of privatisation; and of sales of public land for mainly private housing. Even though a change of Government may slow or even halt some of this destruction.

Haringey is the borough where cutting our Youth Service was a trigger for the riot in 2011. Now it has incensed young people by planning cuts, while pretending to have alternatives which turn out to be not even quarter-baked. For example, a "Youth Trust" has been mentioned. What is it and how would it work? Embarrassingly the decision-makers say they don't know. (Or maybe they do know and aren't saying? So much for transparency.)

Haringey is the borough where both Victoria Climbié and Peter Connelly died. Yet our irresponsible reckless "leaders" have announced - in advance – 25% future cuts to social work staff. Such a foolish plan! And a complete mystery how it's supposed to ensure the retention of experienced and committed staff; to raise morale; or to attract new recruits.

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett's article illustrates an appalling lack of planning and of even basic understanding - let alone compassion - shown by Haringey's failed leadership. Hopefully, pressure on our spineless councillors will bring some modification of the worst cuts. But if that happens, then why make everyone sick with worry by making proposals they don't need to put into action?

Haringey's leaders are equally irresponsible with proposals for slashing Early Years' provision. Cuts which, if and when Labour wins the Election, will go directly against the Party's national policies. And which undermine all the promises about "Early Help".

On housing, our red-rose wearing councillors could not be more enthusiastic for Tory policies if they were paid-up members of Barnet Conservatives. Anything the Barnet Tories

can do to destroy council estates, It seems Haringey's leaders can do better. In March they're off again to dine and clink glasses with developers at MIPIM in Cannes.

Here's a small example of our dysfunctional Council. In High Road Tottenham, a few minutes walk from my home, Haringey have leased and refurbished a shop - at an initial cost of £181,458 public money. They've provided a showroom for the internationally known architects John McAslan and Partners. According to a local newspaper the decision to throw largesse at a starchitect came from the Council Leader meeting John McAslan with Boris Johnson. What a way to run a borough!

McAslan have since been commissioned to redevelop the Council's Customer Service Centre near Seven Sisters Tube station - mostly for new private flats with minimum social housing.

Our misguided Council keeps making such bad choices on where to spend the limited money which is still available. Rubbing salt in the wounds of essential service users, their families and friends, who are now shouting about this butchery of public services.

Elected councillors elsewhere are loudly protesting. With a few honourable exceptions, ours seem mostly supine. Obeying orders; quietly doing what the Government and Party whips tell them to.

In a few cases, it's worse. The Leader, Cllr Claire Kober and her Chief Executive make fatuous, Pollyanna comments. Repeating claims that cuts are for the better. Among the phrases used: "Building a Stronger Haringey Together". "The future will be very bright". "A landmark moment because it ushers in a new era of change". "Giving people the tools and support to succeed".

I'm not inventing these quotes. Nor are they from the 2010 Coalition Agreement. Although they could be. I'm quoting from Haringey's Draft Corporate Plan 2015-18.

It might be funny if it wasn't deeply tragic. Councillors - some of whom were elected only ten months ago - should speak up for the interests of local residents. Local people should be able to trust local councillors to be on their side. But for those described in Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett's article, and for thousands of others, our council has betrayed that trust. It's now a privatisers' council, and a developers' council.