



John Pearson, Secretary, 21, Goyt Avenue, Marple, Stockport, SK6 7JR
Email : stockportunitedagainstausterity@outlook.com

To : Elected members, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

28 February 2016

Dear Councillor,

Cuts in Council Services

I was instructed to write to you by the recent members' meeting of Stockport United Against Austerity.

We are a non-party political organisation made up of local people, trade unionists and groups who are campaigning against the injustices produced by the government's austerity cuts. We fight to keep our public services and to oppose privatisation. Our full statement of aims can be found on our website at : <http://stockportunitedagainstausterity.weebly.com/>

Our decision to write to all members of the Council was prompted by our disappointment and serious concern at the contents of the New Year 2016 edition of Stockport Review. It appears that the publication is designed to be read as if through rose tinted spectacles!

Stockport Review

The Stockport Review contains no details of the £21 million which has been removed from the budget for 2016/17, nor that further massive cuts are to follow in each of the 4 financial years up to 2020, by which time central government will contribute no revenue support grant whatsoever to the Borough's finances.

The only reference to the cuts, is in a single sentence of the Council Leader's New Year message. She says, "Whilst 2016 promises to be another challenging year, with the Council having to make more savings and yet more difficult choices, the way we've tackled these in the past gives me great optimism as we enter the New Year".

Nowhere in the publication, can we read the news that £3.2 million is being cut from Children & Family Services, with a fifth of the workforce being sacked. Nowhere do we find details of the Libraries review, which is based upon deskilling with the sacking of 5 qualified librarians; nowhere news of the cuts in park-keeper hours; nor of £250,000 cuts in welfare rights and information services; nor of all the privatisation proposals in Adult Care Services; nor of staff cuts in museums. There is no mention of the awful decision to impose annual charges of up to £520 a year on disabled students travelling to their places of education.

Why didn't the Leader of the Council reiterate the more honest statement which was made by her Deputy, at the Executive Committee, on 18 August 2015, "It isn't clear to us how we can make these savings and continue to deliver services".

Why doesn't the Council tell it as it is; tell us the truth about what is happening to local government and the services on which we all depend; how vital services are being cut in Stockport as a result of government policy? Why doesn't the Council explain to the people whom it is elected to represent that the very fabric of a civilised society is being deliberately destroyed and pledge that it will take a stand on the side of the people of the borough, against ideological and unnecessary cuts?

Isn't it the case that democracy is consensually defined as "rule by the people, for the people"? Isn't it then the proper role of elected members of the Council to advance the interests of the people; to work to fulfil the needs of the people? What we see sadly, is the direct opposite – the Council telling those who elect it, what they cannot have and what will be taken away from them.

It appears to us that our elected representatives currently act more like managers than politicians; seeing their role as managing a shrinking budget dictated by national government, rather than speaking out for and championing those who elected them. Thus, there really is a crisis of representative democracy. It has become like a hollowed out shell – the form is still there but the content has long gone!

Stockport United Against Austerity will be demonstrating against the £21 million budget cuts outside the Town Hall on the occasion of the budget meeting, on Thursday, 3 March, from 5 p.m.

Will you show that you are one councillor who does stand on the side of the people of Stockport, by :

- 1) Joining the demonstration on Thursday?
- 2) Voting against the cuts budget at the Council meeting.
- 3) If you are standing for re-election in May 2016, publicly pledging that, if re-elected you will continue to vote against the cuts that are destroying the fabric of a civilised society?

We look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours faithfully,

John Pearson
Secretary