

cuts bulletin

No.7

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Cuts Crunch this Monday

Labour Councillors are meeting on Monday 9 March to decide next years rate and are likely to vote to keep the rates increase down to 37½% by cutting at least £11 million from the budget and putting Council rents up by £4 p.w.

Information on the cuts is not complete but the Labour Group Meeting will be considering two different cuts packages, one drawn up as a "cuts exercise" by Councillors and one drawn up by the Chief Executive and Senior Management.

In a letter to the Labour Councillors, Council Leader, Ted Knight says that it is possible "to reduce current revenue expenditure yet protect essential services and existing job holders". This could be done, he says, on the basis of the 10% 'option' of the cuts exercise carried out by the Chairperson of each committee detailing cuts varying from 5 to 30% in 5% bands. Some of the politically unacceptable proposals in the 10% bands are excluded in his review.

Rents up by £4pw

Ted Knight also proposes that Council rents should be increased by £2 in April and £2 in October, saying that they have received legal advice that if rents are not increased "to within the £3.25 level Councillors will be at very serious risk of surcharge".

The cuts as proposed are outlined overleaf. These proposals may not all be adopted by the Labour Group and the final decision should be made in public at the Policy and Resources Committee next Wednesday.

Few of the proposals are detailed because the Branch Executive Committee instructed members not to co-operate with the exercise, in accordance with branch policy.

The proposed cuts and rent increase would reduce next years revenue spending by £17.2 million and would mean a rate increase of 33%. However, Ted Knight suggests in his letter that a further £3 million should be

placed in balances "to accommodate the fact that we have been unable to get the co-operation of officers in this exercise and, therefore, there may be some unforeseen practical difficulties in achieving some of the savings". This would mean a domestic rate increase of 37½%. If no cuts in spending are made and Council house rents are not raised, the rates increase would be 57.9%.

A second cuts "package" is also being drawn up, by the Chief Executive and Senior Management. This is believed to propose cuts totalling £13.8 million, as would be required to comply with Michael Hesseltine's "spending guideline" to Councils to spend 5.6% less in real terms than in 1978/79. Latest figures suggest that no London Borough and few other authorities will be reducing their spending to these levels.

Branch Meeting

The Executive Committee is meeting on Tuesday afternoon and shop meetings will be held to inform members of the latest situation. A branch meeting will be held shortly afterwards.

Members are reminded that the present Branch policy is one of total opposition to cuts in JOBS AND SERVICES.

The best way that we can defend the interests of ALL members is to unite behind this policy and behind any action that the branch decides to take.

Picket the Labour group meeting

From 5.30pm onwards.

Monday 9 March

Also POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Wednesday 11 March 6.00pm

What cuts are proposed

For most Committees the proposals are only outlined and it is not possible at this stage to predict exactly what effect they will have on services and jobs. The following are examples of the proposals together with the chairpersons comments (if any) on the effect of the cuts.

TOWN PLANNING

Cuts of up to 10% can be achieved by natural wastage and the freezing of ALL vacancies. Cuts of more than this "can only be achieved by reductions in numbers of staff with consequent reduction in service".

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

- CUT - Ward consultations programme, with redeployment of three staff.
- CUT - Nearly 20% of grants to Neighbourhood Councils.
- CUT - £48,000 from grants to voluntary organisations (advice centres etc) in some cases the organisations will lose 4 times this amount because 75% of the grant comes from central government.

CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

A cut of 10% in the budget would fall on workers leading to the loss of 38 white-collar and 121 manual jobs.

AMENITY SERVICES

- CUT - Libraries materials by £105,000.
- CUT - 75% from entertainments.
- REDUCED Opening hours of lidos.

VACANCIES "Vacancy discount" increase by 3%. In some areas, service will be hit seriously by staff shortages.

- CUT - 25% from grants.
- CUT - Seasonal playschemes.
- CUT - Sports coaching.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH/CONSUMER SERVICES

- CUT - 9 Admin/Technical posts.
- CUT - ALL grants to organisations (Lambeth Safety Council and Lambeth Consumer Council).

HOUSING

- CUT - Area Improvement. 10 Admin/Technical jobs to go.
- CLOSURE of Northside Reception Centre. Redeployment of 9 white-collar and 4 manual workers.
- CLOSURE of all tenants laundries. Redeployment of 4 staff.
- CUT - use of Housing Association properties for homeless.
- FREEZING 50 "vacancies", 25 white-collar and 25 manual posts.

PUBLIC SERVICES

- FREEZE vacancies to 13%.
- CLOSURE Lonesome Depot. 1 redeployment.
- CLOSURE Popes Road Car Park at evenings and weekends. 2 redeployments.
- CUT - early morning cover for public toilets "Random non-opening due to staff sickness".

SOCIAL SERVICES

The proposed cuts have not been detailed but from the information available there will be 10% cuts in the following:-

- CUT - "Running costs" for adult and childrens homes. Whilst this covers laundry, fixtures and fittings etc, the largest cost is FOOD.
- CUT - Aide and adaptations for the homes of the physically handicapped and elderly.
- CUT - holidays for the elderly.
- CUT - placements in private and voluntary residential homes. This will place additional strains on workers in Lambeths own homes when there is currently a 30% vacancy rate.
- FREEZE Vacancies to 10% (although in many parts of Social Services there is already a 16-17% vacancy rate).
- POSSIBLE of a Day Centre for the mentally ill.
- CLOSURE
- CUT - £182,000 from grants to voluntary organisations

BOROUGH DEVELOPMENT

Borough Development staff are funded from the capital programme. This has been cut back so much by the Government that - unless the Council decides to comment sufficient capital programmes for this year, there could be 60 redundancies.

SERVICE DIRECTORATES

- RUNNING half a million on supplies, COSTS stationery, equipment etc.
- CATERING "a review of uneconomic units" to CUT £10,000.

THESE ARE ONLY SOME OF THE PROPOSED CUTS' HOWEVER TED KNIGHT STATES IN HIS LETTER THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE ABLE TO KEEP ITS 'No compulsory redundancy' PLEASE

STOP PRESS

'The Council will cut'

The General Management Committee of the Constituency Labour Parties have noted to support the broad proposal. It is therefore very likely that the Labour Group meeting will decide to make cuts.