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28 March 2016

To 
The invited views on the 2016 budget proposals for Darlington Borough Council, so I thought that I may as well add my own!

Your proposals to relocate and reduce the library service and sell off the Crown Street library site would, to me, be acceptable if the funds were going to be used elsewhere in the council's services, especially street cleaning and enforcement of littering/fly tipping (below). However, apparently not, so I can't support this whatever, and I'm quite ~~bewildered~~ bewildered by the proposal!

I can quite understand how you may be trying to 'nudge' people away from written books and (old) local studies towards personal computers and ~~of~~ digital technology (sic). I can also see how by relocating a reduced library down a backstreet (effectively where the registrar office is), is a bit more of a 'nudge' in that direction. However, I can't approve of this at all, and I have to say your proposal is ridiculous.

Street cleaning and enforcement of litter-fly tipping. To make any cutbacks in these services, I have to say is totally wrong! I'm astonished it should even be considered! As I said, if you closed the library to put more funds to street cleaning, I'd support you! In fact, I think any cutback to these services is a far more serious proposal than closing the library! Litter happens, and you need people to collect it, but there is an awful lot of malicious littering, and these people have to be corrected - and punished, as criminals, if need be. And, likewise, a lot of fly tipping, an issue which must be resolved - and any illegal tipping dealt with by enforcement officers. You shouldn't be charging people who take their rubbish to the tip, though, and that includes small businesses - that's why people dump it, because it costs to take it to the tip!!

Can I comment on your grass cutting services? I used to stay at Braulstone and I found the quality of the grass cutting to be, honestly, absolute rubbish! Whoever cares and maintains the trees and shrubbery is, equally, useless, in my view. It occurs to me that you have got a poor contract rather than any budget consideration here.

You need to get workers committed to the job, ^{and} you don't necessarily need all the ride on mowers, etc - a manual, push, mower is all you need sometimes, it saves fuel, for goodness' sake; likewise a sythe instead of a strimmer! And you need a more regular grass cut, not ~~less~~ ^{less}, it's a wasted economy to cut less - it takes more time and effort ~~when~~ you do cut!!

Good, competent, gardening makes a town look good, and can divert attention from the ~~riff~~ ^{riff} raff and the bad bits of town! You're doing yourselves no favours by this poor, unprofessional service as it stands, and your rather silly, ~~more~~ ignorant, cut back proposals. Sorry to sound rude here, but I have to make a point! Moreover, a couple of hundred

quid of flowers and bulbs from B & Q is money neither here nor there, no-one's going to complain about that spending!!

To finish, I must object to spending on some things which are probably beyond your control, but when it comes to Council expenditure is a big drain on your money. Namely, ^{wages} ~~pay~~ and pensions.

I find the paying of more than the national wage to some employees not acceptable if they're doing much the same as in the private sector. I used to work with a Council (East Lothian, in Scotland) and I always considered myself to be overpaid compared to what I had done - and have done since - in the private sector.

Similar, I don't believe executive level staff deserve the wage they get, no-one on a Council should get 6-figure salaries, and sums of 650k, 60k, aren't acceptable. It's a public service, and your officers, I have to say, look more like they're grabbing what they can before they run away to the private sector.

I believe that you need to bring the wages ^{bill} ~~all~~ down to a level to get any sympathy for the services' cutbacks.

And - pensions. People have paid towards them, yes, but they are a drain on your resources, and - do they deserve the pensions, in this day and age? Is their work record, attendance, and so forth, mean they deserve it - or have they been malingerers and clock watchers?!

Under these cutbacks, perhaps it is time to look at the work records of the retired former workers and decide whether they deserve to continue to get a pension, or be 'paid off' with an appropriate lump sum, so ~~freeing~~ ^{freeing} up costs and money?!

A radical idea, perhaps, but I'm afraid some pensioners aren't kindly, deserving, former hard workers!

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,



12th March 2016

...SAVE OUR LIBRARY BUILDING.....
please

Machines will never provide us with the joy holding and reading a book gives us.

And, we were given this beautiful building to share forever. One place where everyone is equal, as it is free for everyone. Young, teens, middle agers, older people and disabled people have all benefited from being able to use it.

The thought of losing it, is extremely sad for many, many people in Darlington and beyond. It is without doubt one of our most precious buildings, and once destroyed can never be replaced.

The people of Darlington deserve this library - and the staff who have kept it functioning all these years, deserve to continue to preserve the work they have already undertaken for future generations.... IN THIS BUILDING.....

Yours sincerely
Rosemary Buckton.