

Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC

Assembly Member for Aberconwy

Aelod Cynulliad dros Aberconwy

Shadow Minister for Local Government

Gweinidog yr Wrthblaid dros Lywodraeth Leol

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National
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Wales



Cllr Dilwyn Roberts

Leader of Conwy County Borough Council

Bodlondeb

Conwy

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22 February 2016

National Assembly for Wales,
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Dear Cllr Roberts, Dilwyn,

I am writing, ahead of the Cabinet meeting to be held on Tuesday the 23rd February. My concerns are in relation to some of the proposals coming forward on the Agenda. Whilst I do appreciate that efficiency savings have to be met in order to deliver a balanced budget, the proposed reduction in service to a four-weekly refuse collection is unacceptable in my view.

Additionally, the proposals to bring in parking charges at our few remaining free car parks, is another retrograde step and would only seek to undermine our hardworking business owners who are so heavily dependent on the attraction of free car parking spaces.

Further, I am extremely disappointed by the news that the much-needed and highly-valued Number 19 bus service is to be withdrawn from May the 1st. This service is considered a lifeline for many, including the elderly, enabling them to access medical services, work, and to travel further afield in order to undertake social visits.

All three of the above initiatives are considered by many to be measures that penalise our hardworking families, our businesses and communities. Given some of the departmental over spends that we have witnessed over the past years – for example, in relation to home-to-school transport, the fiasco surrounding Colwyn Bay Pier, and the delayed changes to Port Eirias, all of which have seen large sums of our taxpayers money spent – I do feel that there are other ways that savings could be achieved in Conwy without such measures being taken, and I would be grateful, therefore, if you could advise as to whether any of the KPMG-identified backroom savings have been applied in Conwy County Borough Council.

Furthermore, these proposals they come at a time when residents face a further council tax increase of 5% coming forward. I am mindful, therefore, that the residents of Conwy may be justified in their opinions that they seem to be paying more, and receiving less.

[cont]

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Janet Finch-Saunders will treat in confidence any personal information which you may pass on to her, and she will normally allow her staff to see it, so that they can consult with relevant authorities in order to help and advise you. We may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues which you may find of interest. Please let us know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

Mi wnaiff Janet Finch-Saunders cadw unrhyw wybodaeth bersonol yn gwbl gyfrinachol, ac fel arfer mi fydd rhaid iddi rannu'r wybodaeth 'efo aelodau o staff i'w galluogi nhw i ddelio 'efo'r awdurdodau perthnasol er mwyn eich helpu a ch cynorthwyo chi. Efallai mi fydd angen i rywun ysgrifennu atoch er mwyn darparu'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf o bwys. Gadwch wybod i ni os nad oes diddordeb gennych mewn cael eich cysylltu at y diben hwn.

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To address the proposals:

Firstly, with regards to the proposed changes to refuse collection, if I may quote from the 'Savings from refuse collection and increased recycling' Report:

"When asked if they recycled everything, only 41.2% of respondents initially noted that they could manage if the wheelie bin was collected less often, however 55.4% of respondents noted that they could manage if separate nappy collections, additional Christmas collection and extra bins for larger families were considered. This is very positive considering that only limited communications and marketing activities have been undertaken to date which would provide more answers and information in relation to residents' concerns or apprehensions about less frequent refuse collection."

I am concerned that, prior to this proposal being put to Cabinet, 'only limited communications...have been undertaken'. Additionally, the acceptance by 55.4% of respondents that they could manage, leaves 44.6% of respondents noting, one presumes, that they could not. This remains a significant proportion, and even more so given that: "Sixty eight (68%) of the respondents who answered that they would not be able to manage with less frequent collections (even if separate nappy collection, additional Christmas collections and extra bins for larger families) were responding on behalf of a household size of two occupants or less."

Secondly, with regards to proposed car parking charges, concerns have been raised to me relating to the potentially negative impact to the overall shopping experience for residents and visitors to the area, as well as on our high streets' vitality and footfall. Indeed, by contrast, recent trials for free town centre parking in Carmarthen have proved to be popular amongst shoppers and businesses alike.

The impact of these proposed changes on businesses, such as Glastir, which rely on the availability of free parking, must be a key consideration. Additionally, I am sure you will be aware of the coverage gained by the public meeting last Thursday at West Shore, Llandudno, where numerous objections to the proposed parking charges in that area were heard. Whilst I note from the report that consultation has been undertaken, the results published in the Consultant's report suggest that this focused primarily on who used the car parks, and for what purpose – rather than public engagement regarding the proposed changes to charges.

Thirdly, and finally, whilst I am aware that the initial decision to cease the Number 19 Bus

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route has been a commercial one, made by Arriva Buses, I am writing to urge the Council to work with any bus operator to ensure that this service continues, and to continue to provide financial support for the evening service. The 19 serves a number of communities within Aberconwy, and the cessation of this service threatens to isolate those living in these communities, particularly our more vulnerable residents, the elderly, and those who do not drive.

Yours sincerely,



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