

17 October 2016

I spoke about the then £7 million overspend in Adult Social Care.

I quote from my speech:

“The important issue here is that the cabinet member has been unable to accurately manage projected costs and mitigate overspend by implementing key policy so that the services operates within the financial envelope”.

27 February 2017

I questioned Cllr Woodley about the increased overspend. By then some £11 million overspend

I also challenged Cllr Hall. It seemed impossible that an accountant wouldn't be able to deliver on this basic principle. They set up a “secret committee” a budget deficit committee which clearly didn't deliver anything and no information was shared.

On 9 July 2018

There was a Peer Review undertaken by Eileen Buckton. Once again I challenged the Administration at Full Council. I highlighted that important strategic work in order to bring about deficit reduction was not being implemented.

I quote:

“In relation to the Alliance, (joint working) something initiated by a Conservative Administration there have been excessive delays in progressing this important work”.

The South, as usual, being last on the list to receive important services. Despite the South having the largest number of elderly residents services were last to be implemented in the area.

I quote:

“If I start with the key question on how the adult social care budget is aligned – there has been a complete failure to meet your projected budget targets, year on year. So much so that a budget deficit committee of which there were no papers presented to anyone except councillor Hall and the then cabinet member to give assurances that anything was going to change has never been scrutinised and provided to anyone except the administration. That is hardly transparent or helpful”.

2 March 2020

Once again at Full Council I highlighted problems of an overspend of some £10 million. I questioned why, given the significant increase in investment in Adult Social Care by the Government, for Croydon £2.4 million in 2019/20 rising to £7.4 million in 2020/21 there was still a significant deficit. Also Winter pressures would see a grant of £9.7 million.

I quote:

“What is concerning is the significant overspends and inability to track the budget which does seem to spiral out of control. This is not something new. We know that the majority of elderly people with complex needs live in the south of the borough and where longevity is some 13 years difference to other parts of Croydon but the current fiscal policy does not support initiatives in the south where it is most needed and hence overspends are at

10m. Unless the localities programme and joint working between key Health partners is delivered at pace I predict greater funding gaps”.

I also highlighted the unrealistic claims made to bridge the £6-7 million gap. I quote:

“Figures in the budget of some £6-7 million expected to be bridged by our collaboration with health partners is quite frankly unrealistic. You have no written agreement for this figure. Using capital to fund, so called, transformation projects means that future budgets will have significant gaps as the key issue of reducing costs is not addressed. I don’t believe that population growth and inflation have been truly taken into account in this budget and some £3m of debt remains on the department books for collection.

I have to say that the level of uncertainty in terms of how this budget will be balanced is concerning and your track record to deliver efficiencies is poor.

I can only say that you have failed miserably to get this under control in previous years and show no hope of doing so in the future”.

28 September 2020

I spoke at the emergency meeting of the Full Council on the subject of the impending financial disaster. Whilst it was no surprise to Conservative Councillors, it was quite astounding that Cllr Newman was still in post and Labour members still appeared to be in denial.

I quote:

“I am deeply concerned with the budget and its amendments set before us tonight. The financial instability, and I have to say incompetence, has been worrying for some time. Regrettably The Administration have not taken into consideration the comments of respected staff members which has led to this very sad position. Lisa Taylor has made it quite clear that you cannot spend money you do not have. You are now forced into a further position of capitalisation with little reserves to assist you.

Last year the S151 officer allegedly left because you wouldn’t listen to his warnings and more recently the CEO, Jo Negrini refused to return to office. Why she had to be paid such a significant sum of money is a mystery. £400,000 plus when the council is cash strapped is extraordinary which of course has added to the deficit and bemusement of residents.

Cllr Newman takes no responsibility for this sad state of affairs and stands on the shore like the captain of the Costa Concordia, after driving this ship, the council, into the ground leaving everyone to sink while he tries to save himself.

Cllr Hall has acted more as some property mogul and is more interested in purchasing buildings than concentrating on important issues such as Adult Social Care and the vulnerable.

If you spend money on a hotel or shopping centres rather than pay for care packages for the elderly and vulnerable or staff wages for those who care for these people you undoubtedly will run into trouble. The whole strategic focus has been lost in transition”.