

# Councillor's report: Mik Sabiers

## South Acton Labour councillors' update

Welcome to the first update of 2017 where I'll be looking primarily at finances, but also providing some updates on scrutiny, campaigning and defending our NHS.

## Ealing's budget, council finances and the council tax going forward

It's all about the figures over the next month. The big issue is the latest discussion on the council's overall budget. So far the council has identified some £170 million in savings to be delivered by 2018/19 (although our target is edging up from towards the £200 million mark as central government continues to slash funding).

The council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget and to act responsibly with local people's money. Ealing's Labour council has set out the following principles when setting spending and savings plans:



- Making every effort to protect those at risk in our borough including elderly, disabled, children and young people who use our services.
- Building residents' resilience and social capital through acting as an enabling council.
- Intervening in problems as early as possible to deliver the best results for residents.
- Seeking solutions that make use of local people's knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to the borough.
- Maximising employment and economic growth by being an exemplary employer and encouraging local business growth.
- Making our services and those we commission world class and focused on what matters to local people.

These are reasons why we even though have frozen the council tax year on year, we have kept our libraries and sure start centres open, have looked to regenerate our communities all while delivering strong local services and encouraging employers to pay the London living wage and invest in the borough.

The latest round of the budget process kicked off with the Local Government Finance Settlement 2017/18 in mid-December, effectively funding in England will fall by 10.6 per cent in 2017/18 (9.4 per cent for London boroughs), and in real terms by 25.6 per cent by 2019/20 (23.8 per cent for London boroughs). Effectively it is more of the same (cuts) and more pressure as the social care crisis builds. Last year Ealing council put an extra £2.3 million into supporting the most vulnerable, but as the pressures rise the situation gets tighter. It is worth noting that on top of that £2.3 million extra for social care (which will rise to £4 million by 2019), we also created a special £5 million social care transformation fund used to redesign services. The result is that last year Ealing froze council tax for a record eighth year in a row.

Next week all the Labour councillors will meet to discuss the latest budget and in particular the updated funding position. Details from this were presented at January's cabinet meeting (if you really want to look at the detailed numbers go here: <http://tinyurl.com/zw3kn7g>) and from there will go to Overview & Scrutiny on Thursday 9 February (as well as the Ealing Business Partnership) before cabinet considers the budget proposals (on 14 February) and recommends the budget & council tax rate for 2017/18 which is then set by full council (on 21 February). That will then set the budget and plans for the next year, but as I said earlier at the time of writing we are still in the discussion phase and looking at all the details over the next few days.

## Housing, planning and waste scrutiny

As well as looking at all the details on the budget, Overview & Scrutiny looked at the potential impact of the Housing and Planning Act earlier this month. Many parts of the Act have yet to be fleshed out, but there was a good discussion on measures to improve the private rented sector (highlighting Ealing's licensing of landlords and looking at powers to challenge rogue landlords and letting agents). The report also looked at changes to tenancies (the panel reiterated its support for 'lifetime' tenancies, although the government continues to try and push flexible (or fixed term) tenancies which are nothing of the sort. OSC also discussed changes to planning rules which will place an extra burden on local authorities but don't really seem to be funded, as ever

central government continues to cut council budgets while piling on the pressure of more work.

As aforementioned the next meeting of OSC will have a focus on the budget, but we will also hear the latest on the waste and recycling contract. Some of the headlines have seen a good jump in our recycling rates (we've made the 50 per cent target) while there has also been a drop in missed collections. We're also working on dealing with flytipping with the 'find them and fine them' approach paying dividends, although there is still more to do. We'll find out details on Thursday 9 February – see more here: <http://tinyurl.com/n9alxo>

### **Out and about in Acton and Ealing and wider afield**

But it's not all about the Town Hall (although I also have pension fund panel and audit committee to round off a February deep in figures), Josh and I have been out pounding the streets with fellow councillors and activists. We had a good session last week with cllr Dan Crawford and cllr Kate Crawford joining us and local MP Rupa Huq to knock on doors across the ward (Yvonne has been hitting the phones). Our next canvassing session is scheduled for Saturday 18 February at 11:00, so put the date in your diary and join us as we mobilise people and continue to raise Ealing Labour's profile door to door. Josh, Yvonne and I are also regularly at the Ruskin surgery held at Ruskin Hall every Saturday from 11 to noon which is where people can drop in to see if we can help out.

### **Save our hospitals & Save #OurNHS**

There are also campaign days across Ealing with the last one focused on the NHS, that takes me to the other meeting coming up, namely the Save our hospitals public meeting at Ealing Town Hall on Wednesday 15 February. Come down to hear Ealing council leader cllr Julian Bell outline the latest in our campaign alongside cllr Stephen Cowan from Hammersmith & Fulham, our assembly member Dr Onkar Sahota and more. Put the date in your diary and get the latest update on what is happening to our NHS, and you may also want to get set for the #OurNHS London march and rally on Saturday 4 March, put simply the NHS is one of our greatest achievements, so don't allow it to be undermined and ultimately destroyed by the Tory government. Say no to the STP, say no to the Tories say yes to the NHS, because it's #OurNHS. You can find out more here: <http://www.ournhs.info/>



Warm regards

Mik

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