

RED POST

Labour in Totnes and South Devon

The cuts go on: hospital services

Last month we reported that Devon CC failed to challenge a further £400m cut in Devon's healthcare budget. We demand these cuts are reversed, and the 200 hospital beds axed from our NHS are restored, so Devon's health workers can respond fully and safely to the Covid-19 virus.

Fire and rescue

Totnes has just lost one of its two fire engines as part of a £4m cut in funding by Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue. Thanks to a Devon-wide campaign the cuts are not as bad as planned - 8 stations including Ashburton were to close. But unions say lives could still be put at risk.

Children's services

This month, Devon CC reports a £21m shortfall in funding for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. A recent inspection found that Devon Children's Care services overall had '*serious failures*' after a decade of cuts, including '*failures to protect some of the most vulnerable children and young people from harm.*'



Austerity must end

A decade of cuts has left our public services in crisis, along with the people who rely on them - which it turns out is all of us.

We know that the 2008 financial crash was caused by a banking crisis, not by public spending. And countries that have spent more since the crash - like Germany and the US - have come out of it much better than countries that cut investment. The New Economics Foundation calculates that each UK household is £3,629 a year worse off because of policies supposed to cut the national debt. But the national debt has doubled.

And the price of austerity wasn't fairly paid. It was paid by the poorest, in rising debts and homelessness, in 130,000 dying before their time, and millions of children growing up in poverty. Last year the UN's Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty said that the '*ideological agenda*' of austerity '*has taken the highest toll on those least able to bear it.*'

We must not let working people pay the cost of the current crisis. The Government has shown it can find money to save lives and businesses. That must become a huge investment programme, along the lines of Labour's Green New Deal, to transform the economy for people and planet. And we demand a humane system of universal benefits to hold our society together. The UN special rapporteur also found in the UK '*resilience, strength, and generosity*'. Out of that strength, let's build a society that works for the many, and for the future.

Labour Party news

On behalf of Totnes CLP, our thanks go to Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell for their visionary leadership of the Labour Party since 2015. And our hopes and best wishes go to Keir Starmer and Angela Rayner as they take over. We will continue to campaign for the socialist policies our communities and our country so desperately need.

We're delighted that **Plymouth MP Luke Pollard** keeps his role in the Shadow Cabinet with the brief for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We will continue to work closely with him on these and other issues that affect our constituency.

Another SW MP, **Thangam Debonnaire, moves to housing**, a key issue in our area with some of the most unaffordable housing in the country. We fully support Labour's proposals to defer rent payments and halt evictions for renters who are unable to pay during the coronavirus crisis.

Our Executive Committee has published a response to the **leaked report into the handling of antisemitism** and other complaints to the Governance and Legal Unit (under 'press releases' on our web site). While it *'deplores the leaking of personal details'*, the statement demands a full inquiry into the evidence that paid officials of the party were working to undermine the leadership and the 2017 General Election campaign. We share members' anger and distress at the language and behaviour exposed.

Support our NHS workers



Across the constituency, people have come out of their homes each Thursday evening to #clapforourcarers. The sound has been uplifting and inspiring. Carers include everyone on the front line of looking after the sick, including cleaners, care workers and carers at home. But we especially think of workers in the NHS, thousands of whom have come out of retirement or been redeployed from other areas to offer critical care.

Too often, health and care workers are doing without proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). As we write, staff are being asked to re-use PPE or use short aprons only as supplies run short. How has this been allowed to happen when the UK had weeks' notice of the coming storm? And why have hospital beds and staffing numbers been cut to such dangerously low levels, far below those in other European countries?

We will continue to demand answers, while we support every effort to help the NHS through the present crisis. Our Solidarity issue this month has news of the response across our area.

No pay cut for waste workers

We're pleased to see Kier Group - a major shareholder for waste collectors Tor2 - reverse their decision to force a pay-cut on staff during the corona crisis. The company planned to cut supervisors' pay by around 20%, but unions GMB and Unison successfully fought off the proposal. Tor2 serves almost half of our constituency, including Kings Ash and Brixham, after Torbay Council outsourced our waste services. We support all workers on the front line of public service at this time, and welcome the reminder that joining a union is the best way to protect your rights. Even if you are not in work, Unite the Union offers community membership to build solidarity and improve lives.

Look out for online meetings, a virtual book group, and more!