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- Scottish Conservative councils urge the SNP not to cut their budgets further

7 Dec 2017



The Scottish Conservative leaders of four councils have joined forces with the Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance to urge the Scottish Government not to impose further cuts on local authority budgets.

The letter to Derek McKay makes clear that since its own budget is not being cut next year there is no justification for it to cut the local authority budget either.

In advance of the Budget announcement for 2018-19, the letter highlights that the cuts local authorities have already endured are affecting front-line services.

In addition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has increased the Scottish Block Grant in real terms and therefore, any cuts to Council budgets are solely a political choice by the SNP Government.

The letter is signed by Murdo Fraser MSP, Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance, Cllr Ian Campbell Leader of Perth and Kinross Council, Cllr Shona Haslam Leader of Scottish Borders Council, Cllr Jim Gifford Leader of Aberdeenshire Council and Cllr Douglas Lumsden Co-Leader of Aberdeen City Council.

Scottish Conservative Shadow Cabinet Secretary on Finance, Murdo Fraser said:

“We have written to Derek McKay, outlining our position that local authorities must not suffer any further budget cuts.

“According to COSLA, councils have seen a real terms cut in funding allocation of 8% since 2010.

“These cuts are already affecting front-line services and further cuts would mean an even greater impact.

“The Finance Secretary has just received a real terms increase in the Block Grant and so there can be no justification for any further cuts in Council budgets at this time.

“Any plan to further cut these budgets will be solely down to political choice by the SNP Government

More delays for SNP’s named person scheme

6 Dec 2017



The SNP’s controversial plans to assign a named person to every young person in Scotland face further delays following an Education Committee vote today.

A majority of MSPs said scrutiny of elements of the policy would have to wait until certain details are sorted out.

It means the committee cannot produce a report on the information sharing elements until the Scottish Government improves the bill, which delays its overall progress through parliament.

Last year, the Supreme Court deemed those particular elements unlawful, and ordered ministers to change the legislation before it could be implemented.

Since then, critics have said the SNP has only succeeded in making the named person proposals even more confusing.

Experts said those expected to implement the policy have no idea what their legal responsibilities would be, and don’t have sufficient guidance.

While five SNP MSPs voted against the move today, the six opposition politicians on the committee backed it.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

“The majority of the committee were very clear that it would be inappropriate to proceed to stage 1 because it was not possible to determine whether the evidence taken supported the general principles of the bill.

“This is a very unusual step for any committee to take but it is the right one.

“If we had progressed to stage 1 we would have undermined the effective scrutiny of the committee system.

“The Information Commissioner was very clear that the illustrative code of practice was not fit for purpose and was unlikely to bear much resemblance to the final code of practice.

“The practitioners told us time and time again that their support for the bill was contingent upon them knowing exactly where they stood in relation to their responsibilities.

“The illustrative code did not give them that clarity and that is why committee members, irrespective of their views on named persons, came to the conclusion that they did.

“Frankly, this whole parliamentary process is a mess and the responsibility for that lies solely with the Scottish Government.

“It is little wonder that so many members of the public are telling John Swinney to cut his losses, ditch the bill and start again with a different policy which supports our most vulnerable children.”

To see a copy of the minutes from today’s Education Committee, visit:
http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Minutes/20171206_ES_Minutes.pdf

[Half a million bed days lost to delayed discharge](#)

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5 Dec 2017



More than half a million bed days were occupied by patients who were fit to leave hospital last year, new figures have revealed.

ISD Scotland said there were 532,423 bed blocking patients in 2016/17, the vast majority of whom were elderly.

And while that’s a slight decrease from the previous year, it still means one in 12 hospital beds are taken up by a delayed discharge patient at any one time.

In the Western Isles, nearly 30 per cent of hospital beds are used in this way.

Delayed discharge costs the NHS £132 million a year, and places immense strain on other areas of the health service.

Today's report cited patients awaiting care packages and care home places as by far the most common reason for a delay.

The SNP has repeatedly pledged to sort the issue of bed-blocking out, for the sake of both patients and hospitals.

However, despite repeated initiatives, little improvement has been made in recent years.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Miles Briggs said:

"Delayed discharge has caused huge problems in hospitals for several years now, yet the SNP government has made next to no improvement in this area.

"On a human level, it creates sheer misery for thousands upon thousands of patients who are fit to leave but have nowhere to go.

"It's time for ministers to come up with a meaningful plan to address this.

"We keep hearing of funding announcements and system overhauls, but nothing seems to change.

"More than half a million bed days were lost to this issue last year – that's not something our NHS or vulnerable patients can afford.

"Increasingly our acute hospitals are not able to function properly as vital acute beds are being used by delayed discharge patients.

"In some cases patients are being delayed by hundreds of days."

[Ruth comments on Brexit negotiations](#)

5 Dec 2017



Please see a statement from Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson following the Brexit negotiations in Brussels yesterday.

"The question on the Brexit ballot paper asked voters whether the UK should stay or leave the European Union – it did not ask if the country should be divided by different deals for different home nations.

"While I recognise the complexity of the current negotiations, no government of the Conservative and Unionist Party should countenance any deal that compromises the political, economic or constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

“All sides agree there should be no return to the borders of the past between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

“Similarly, jeopardising the UK’s own internal market is in no-one’s interest.

“If regulatory alignment in a number of specific areas is the requirement for a frictionless border, then the Prime Minister should conclude this must be on a UK-wide basis.”

[Concern as flu vaccination target for key health workers repeatedly missed](#)

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3 Dec 2017



The Scottish Government has been urged to ensure healthcare workers receive flu jabs this Christmas – after it emerged just one in three got them last winter.

The latest available figures for 2016/17 show that only 35% of healthcare workers were vaccinated against flu which, if repeated this year, could have a disastrous effect on Scottish NHS capability over the Christmas period.

The target is that 50% of all healthcare workers should be vaccinated in order to maintain staffing levels and protect vulnerable patients. This has never been reached.

The Scottish Conservatives have recently revealed figures that 3,000 doctors have left the country since 2008, nearly a third of GP training places are going unfilled, and the number of nursing and consultancy vacancies in Scotland has reached a record high.

With these ongoing vacancies and the predictable winter hazards and health challenges, it is more important than ever that NHS staff are protected from winter flu.

Miles Briggs, Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary said:

“The Scottish NHS is under ever increasing pressures, with doctors leaving

the country, GP training places going unfilled and nursing and consultancy vacancies at a record high.

“The SNP’s ongoing mismanagement of the health service has resulted in the worst ever waiting times and a workforce crisis in our NHS.

“The Scottish Government has repeatedly missed the flu vaccination target for healthcare workers by around 15%, demonstrating an unacceptable risk at this increasingly pressurised time.

“Making sure that vulnerable patient groups are ready for winter and have received flu vaccinations is vital – but as important is trying to make sure our key NHS workers have also been vaccinated.

“As always, all of this places ever increasing pressure on our GPs; the frontlines of our NHS.

“Our campaign to prioritise GP funding would ensure that GPs could respond flexibly to winter crises and pressures in other areas of the workforce.

“Winter is here. The Scottish Government must make sure that our workforce and vulnerable patients are protected as much as possible.”