



## **FY19/20 budget for South Lanarkshire is a Compromise!**

I have always felt that politics should be a compromise; a coming together of ideas that delivers a fair outcome for as many as possible in our community. With this in mind: on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019, we saw the minority SNP administration budget for Fy19/20 defeated and replaced with a compromise budget that is by no means perfect but a compromise no less: delivered by the Conservatives, Labour and the Independents, standing together to focus on what our constituents are jointly asking for.

- The Conservatives wanted more money for the roads;
- The Independents wanted Free@3 and:
- Labour wanted to protect council jobs and community services.

As I've already stated on social media: the SNP minority administration didn't put forward a bad budget but like everything in politics, we all have our own priorities, which didn't include the SNP's uber-expensive policy to provide free school lunches for all P4 & P5 pupils. Now before I go on, I want to make it clear that all school children who are entitled to free school lunches, will continue to get free school lunches but the SNP wanted to go further to the detriment of other priorities that the majority in the chamber felt were more important:

- My own colleagues felt the roads couldn't continue to see their budgets reduced as they have under the current SNP administration, so we fought hard to increase spending on this vital service and one that I've always stated: is my priority;
- Councillor Coopers Independent Group fought to deliver access to free nursery provision on a Child's third birthday from August 2019 and:
- Labour focused on protecting council jobs and community services.

In the last Echoes: SLC Council leader John Ross was reported to have said that austerity continues to hit local authorities; an austerity forced on all 32 Scottish local Authorities by the SNP minority government in Edinburgh. With the Scottish block grant increased for the coming year, Scottish property taxes the highest in the UK and hardworking Scot's paying more income tax than in any other part of the United Kingdom, it is the SNP government in Edinburgh who is cutting local authority budgets across Scotland!

Also, in the last Echoes: Aileen Campbell MSP (SNP) was reported to have said that the SNP's defeated budget was down to Labour and the Conservatives. I'd like to remind everyone that this budget was supported by approx. two-thirds of the councillors in the chamber and included: (1) The Conservatives, (2) the Independents and (3) Labour. I'd also like to remind Ms. Campbell that if the SNP government in Edinburgh funded their indicatives properly, then SLC would not have been left carrying the cost of Free@3 and therefore: free school lunches for all P4 & P5's could also have been delivered as well. The SNP government in Edinburgh continues to cut Local authority budgets, while raising taxes! They also continue to centralise more-and-more: leaving democratically elected local councillors less power to deliver the services their communities want so we're forced to make extremely hard decisions. However, I'm proud to have been able to vote with my Conservative, Independent and Labour colleagues to deliver a better outcome for the majority across South Lanarkshire. The SNP need to remember that they are in a minority and are going to have to start

working on their ability to compromise too. As I said at the start: the SNP budget wasn't a bad budget, but they've got to accept they must work with the other groups, based on a consensus approach to delivering the priorities we all want to see from our local authority.

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