

WHAT'S HAPPENING.

30 Oct 2018

BUDGET DOESN'T END THE AUSTERITY NIGHTMARE

Years of wrecking ball austerity have left local services in a perilous state. Commenting on the Chancellor's Budget statement, UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said:

"Over the past decade, austerity has caused untold damage to our communities and our public services. Our union has fought austerity every step of the way, using every weapon at our disposal.

"We've now won the public debate on austerity – it's widely recognised as a disaster. Even the Prime Minister was keen to announce that it's over.

"Yet what this budget proved is that austerity is far from over. The Chancellor claimed it's "coming to an end" – but even that isn't true.

"Years of spending cuts have meant real pain for millions, with very little gain. Public services are running on empty, and councils are still axing thousands of jobs.

"Years of wrecking ball austerity have left local services in a perilous state. It will take time and substantial investment for them to recover.

"Instead, this was a budget that didn't deliver the meaningful increases across public services that would mean a real end to austerity.

"This was a budget that provided no new money for local government after a decade of vicious cuts (except a measly sum for social care that won't come close to ending the care crisis).

"This was a budget where the much heralded increases to NHS funding will barely cover projected deficits (if that), and the "extra" funding for mental health is coming from previously announced NHS funds, and only covers acute mental health services, not much needed prevention.

"This was a budget which claimed to end PFI – something which our union has cam-

paigned for – but which in reality does nothing to end the scandal of existing PFI, save for a “centre of excellence”, a contradiction in terms when it comes to PFI surely.

“This a budget that allocated more new money to potholes than to schools at breaking point.

“This was a budget that failed to deliver the real change our country needs, especially at a time of Brexit uncertainty. However one of the few rays of light to come out of the budget was that the government has partly listened to UNISON’s campaigning on the universal credit work allowance.

“We called for an increase, and the government has promised to assist some people – but still left single people and couples without children without help. Unsurprisingly, ministers remain wedded to the rest of universal credit, despite all its flaws.

“Our country deserves better than this. After eight years of letting down public services and our communities, we need a radical Labour government committed to fundamental change in our economy and our society. The Tories, as this budget showed, are capable of nothing more than meddling at the margins.”