

Breaking the Austerity Myth - Defending Local Services - Workshop Notes

Please note that the below is a summary record of comments, queries and suggestions made by individuals attending the workshop. As such points may not be consistent and do not necessarily reflect the views of a majority of participants.

There were some detailed and intensely felt stories told of unfairness and incompetence relating to Shropshire Council and their delivery/non delivery of services. Some broad points and queries were:

- There is a clear lack of strategic leadership and forward planning in Shropshire Council
- Councillors, private providers and private agency workers should be questioned more and be accountable and transparent.
- Why are Shropshire Council services run by a private company or cartel?
- If one campaign succeeds is it at the expense of other services?
- Where is the money to come from if cuts are resisted? Council tax has been frozen, town and parish precepts are regressive and government funding of local authorities is becoming minimal. Real success needs the adoption of the kind of radical economics highlighted by the BtAM speakers.
- Cuts are a political and ideological choice and have to be fought nationally. Can Labour or others successfully present the viable alternative to austerity?

<p style="text-align: center;">Campaigns/activity/organisations</p> <p>i.e. a quick audit of known activity and campaigns that are already currently taking place/planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade union activity e.g. Unison • Ludlow Campaign for Fairness and sub groups • Ludlow Foyer campaign • People's Alliance for Ludlow • Party political campaigns e.g. Greens, Labour and Liberal democrats • Town and parish council activity • Shropshire People's Assembly • Friends of Ludlow Museum • Shropshire Defend our NHS • Churches Together around Ludlow 	<p style="text-align: center;">Ideas and potential activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research for good practice ideas beyond Shropshire re campaigning and organisation • More campaigning by political parties • Support town and parish councils in their efforts to defend local services • Lobby Shropshire Council to secure additional funding from central govt via county-wide referendum. • Support local campaigns e.g. Ludlow Foyer • Town and parish councils become more party political in approach. • Town and parish councils to be independent of party political affiliation • Media campaigns to highlight extent of cuts and all defense activity • Encourage greater involvement in town and parish councils e.g. more people to come forward for election • Encourage anti-tory candidates to come forward for Shropshire Council elections in May 2017.
<p style="text-align: center;">Roles and Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work collectively across all groups opposing Local Authority cuts. • Avoid duplication of campaigns and effort • Support Trade union activity aimed at defending staff redundancies • Develop and support individual group and organisation campaigns • Develop better communication and liaison between campaigning groups/organisations and town/parish council activity. • Focus on activity that can be supported by all concerned irrespective of party political affiliation. • Reach out to younger people and get them involved. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fight TINA (There Is No Alternative) re austerity. Present the alternatives. • Work collectively across all groups opposing Local Authority cuts to services. Support development of groups such as the People's Alliance for Ludlow and the Shropshire People's Assembly • In particular develop and support campaigns against cuts that impact on the most vulnerable/least powerful groups. Reach out to younger people and get them involved. • Support trade union campaigns aimed at protecting public sector jobs and services. • Increase media campaigns to highlight extent of cuts and local activity. Also raise awareness online with social media, videos etc.