

Budget Speech 4 March 2020 - Councillor Douglas Johnson

Thank you Lord Mayor.

And of course thank you to everyone – officers and colleagues – who have contributed to this Green Party budget amendment I am very proud to present.

It is an impressive and comprehensive package of investments for real change.

I want to talk about 3 areas:

- Tackling the climate emergency
- Investing in new jobs
- And looking after people who need our help

We are proposing major investments in:

- warmer homes and schools, that are cheaper to heat,
- better facilities in parks
- £1 million for cycling infrastructure

We are offering

- better public transport that makes it easier to take the bus than the car,
- free bus and tram travel on the 6 Sundays before Christmas;
- and we will restore the popular FreeBee - the free, clean, electric bus going round the city centre ...

And what's interesting about our proposal is: these new buses will be in the direct public ownership of Sheffield City Council.

We will create new jobs:

- in a new staff team of sustainability officers to work on the climate emergency
- to promote cycling,
- to start the process of a Workplace Parking Levy, in order to raise long-term funds for modern transport
- to bring more empty homes back into use

- to enforce standards of private rented housing – and planning conditions
- to protect and enhance our built heritage
- to staff libraries
- to patrol our streets and make them safer
- to tackle drug use
- and to promote tourism and the city's wonderful natural ecology

All in all, our budget is a net increase of 34 permanent jobs for people in our city – which is the same number as the vacancies under the Administration's proposal.

Our proposal makes changes that will be sustained year on year.

Looking ahead to the year after next, we will still have those people in new posts.

What's more, we will also have an additional £1 million a year for social care.

There will still be the extra resources we propose for advice work, young care leavers, and reversing this Administration's cut to Upperthorpe's Healthy Living Centre.

I have looked at the other parties' amendments and I agree with much of the sentiment in them. Between us, we have a lot of common ground.

Imagine if we worked together on a joint budget.

However, I do have some concerns.

CIL ... is paid by property developers to recompense communities for the impact of new development on them.

I have been quite clear in my views about the Administration's clumsy move to switch the neighbourhood portion of CIL away from the communities most affected by development.

But the far bigger pot of CIL has been accumulating since 2015, with this Administration spending barely any of it.

Suddenly, in the Labour group amendment, we see a proposal to spend almost every penny of this pot of CIL money, together with almost all the New Homes Bonus.

It's quite easy to give away £12 million with some populist, but vague, spending promises ...

... but it's not sustainable.

What stronger sign can there be that this Administration expects to lose its majority in May?