

Statement by Cllr Eleanor Jackson to Cabinet, 3-Feb-10

I am speaking this afternoon in support of the Labour Group Leader, Cllr John Bull. This is a difficult task because we seem to be faced with constantly moving targets as we try to glean the facts concerning the cuts from press releases, the Cabinet papers, and now the most up to date disclosures (apparently) Cllr Haerberling's letter to the Midsomer Norton and Radstock Journal published today...I welcome her statement that 'we propose to almost double the road maintenance budget to £6.5 million, which will deliver major improvements to our areas' road surfaces, and the proposals to improve disabled facilities. However, I would like to know if the £3 million to be set aside (I believe from so-called 'headroom money') includes the money needed as a contribution to the rebuilding of Julian House.

No-one disputes the need for cuts - but it seems that those proposed cover 'infrastructure, traffic movement and the public realm ' go too far. The knife, or perhaps I should say, the secuteurs, is cutting too deep.

However, one way to save a considerable sum - at least £250,000 would be, in the light of the emerging new evidence about traffic flow and use of car parks in Radstock, to cut the B&NES contribution to the unpopular new road in the centre of Radstock.

The heart of what I want to say is that I hope the Core Strategy provisions will be kept for more affordable housing and jobs. It must not fail because of staff cuts in planning and policy. It is vital that we have more affordable housing to cope with the predicted rise in population by 2026.

Finally I would plead with you to keep the youth clubs open. Cutting the youth service is short termism of the worst kind.

Eleanor Jackson.