

## **Statement to the 30.1.17 Resources PDS Panel meeting of B&NES Council**

Thank you Chair.

Page 3 of Appendix 4 to the Resources Directorate Plan states that four posts are being removed "as a result of further consolidation of policy functions" and asserts that the reduced "capacity for new initiatives ...policy development and support" this implies presents only a "Low" risk to the delivery of the Council's 2020 vision and associated strategic priorities.

Although I am not sufficiently informed to comment on either the merits of cutting these particular policy posts or of cutting policy rather than other things in order to meet the enormous financial challenge the council faces, I am anxious that this Panel considers **the impacts of deleting these four posts in the wider context of getting the best possible value from the policy resource the Council retains, and in particular whether continuing the consolidation of policy functions, a trend going back at least 5 years, is the best way of doing this.**

In scrutinising this, I thus hope that you will bear in mind the following:

1. My statement to September 2013 Council in which I highlighted the importance and value of having a Policy Development and Scrutiny officer working separately to those with more formal executive powers and responsibilities;
2. My question to this Panel last July in which I observed that no appointment appeared to have been made to The Policy Development and Scrutiny Lead Officer position designated as the Council's Statutory Scrutiny Officer in January 2015, and highlighted the "increased importance of this role in the context of a Council administration with a sizeable majority, able if it so wishes to make decisions without regard to the adequacy of stakeholder support, policy coherence or evidence";
3. My statement to last November's meeting of this Panel illustrating my continuing concern around the adequacy of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in the light of the demands that a controversial, complex and cross-cutting policy-related infrastructure investment spanning more than one council administration, such as P&R East, brings to the fore;
4. Last Wednesday's long and fiercely contested Cabinet decision on this subject, providing an even more graphic illustration of the need for rigorous and effective policy making within the Council, and the risks associated with not having the right quality of policy-making resource in the right part of the organisation at the right time.

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