

Four year budget to protect services for the most vulnerable

Like most local authorities, we are finding it increasingly difficult to deliver a balanced budget in the face of continued austerity.

Councils have borne the brunt of the government's public sector cuts. Here in Warrington we have suffered cuts of more than £92million since 2010 – the equivalent of £1,312 per household. Throughout this period we have done our utmost to protect the most vulnerable people across the borough and those services that you value most.

Now we must find another £9million in savings from the 2017/18 budget, despite the increase in council tax. By 2020 we must save at least another £30 million in total. We will continue to do all we can to protect essential services, such as social care for vulnerable children and adults, while also doing our best to maintain other services such as waste and recycling collection, street cleaning and roads maintenance, but it won't be easy.

Warrington is already one of the lowest-funded unitary authorities outside London and your council tax one of the lowest in the North West. We have reducing budgets on one hand and the increasing demands of an ageing population on the other. Even this year's increase won't plug the gap.

We are doing all we can to reduce our own costs and to raise extra revenue to put back into frontline services. Our aim is to make sure these pressures are well managed so that local residents, particularly the most vulnerable ones, are protected from the worst effects of the cuts.

We've also been listening to what our customers and frontline staff tell us, and this is helping us to continually improve our services, making them more efficient and accessible. But there are tough choices ahead. Difficult decisions will have to be made on whether to reduce or even stop some of our services altogether.

We're asking for your support. Please look out for the launch of 'Count me in', a campaign aimed at making Warrington an even better place to live, work, visit and do business.

'Count me in' is about how all of us – council, residents, businesses and community groups combined – can make a positive difference for ourselves, one another and the communities around us.

The campaign belongs to all of us. It will be yours to own and share with the people around you, whether at home or at work. It might mean doing something differently, such as recycling food waste, or starting something new, such as volunteering with a community group. It might mean making a pledge to check in now and again on an elderly neighbour, or changing the way you look after your own health.

Warrington is already a place to be proud of. Together we can make it even better.



Councillor Terry O'Neill

Leader, Warrington Borough Council