

## Labour set to raise Council Tax by 2.5% But are we getting value for money?



*Despite some welcome investment there are still problems with roads and pavements all over RCT, such as here in Heol Deg*



*It seems money can always be found for projects such as this 'public work of art.'*

Yet again RCT residents will see a higher council tax rise than those in neighbouring Welsh Liberal Democrat led Cardiff.

Labour's Council leader says it is essential to protect front line jobs and services. Really?

RCT Welsh Lib Dem campaign manager Karen Roberts says

*" People might not mind so much if this were the case, but is it? Isn't it the case that trimming some of the excess fat out of the budget would work just as well?*

*That if, for instance, less money was spent on 'public works of art' then there would be more money for community art classes?*

*That if they spent less of your money on their publicity they could spend more on, for example, pothole repairs?*

*Indeed if they stopped spending so much on their Public relations and strategy department they could keep the council tax down.*

*They spend around £85,000 a year on newspaper adverts. Thousands more on local radio.*

*Over £60,000 a year on their Outlook magazine.*

*The Strategy and Public Relations department employ a raft of staff including a Corporate Policy & Consultation Manager, Publications & Corporate Branding Adviser and a Media Manager in charge of four press people.*

*The salary bill is well over a million a year. How much Corporate advice do they need?*

*They are there to provide a public service not act as a publicity machine for the Labour party.*

*And anyone who doubts that is the case need only look at the RCT Labour website full of photos taken by the Council photographer!*

*Maybe they could explain it to the lower paid workers whose terms and conditions were altered making them worse off?"*

## Regeneration, Regeneration, Regeneration

Just how long have we been talking about it? The regeneration of Pontypridd that is. It's been a long time coming, but is the latest round of activity just more false hope – will it actually bring the promised new business and jobs that are important not just for the town itself but for the whole area? Welsh Liberal Democrat Council group leader Cllr Mike Powell is viewing it with more hope than expectation

*"So far I am sorry to say the signs are not good. The Townscape Enhancement Programme was supposed to revamp the look of the town centre and bring in new businesses. However, between Jan 2011 and Jan 2012 only three businesses had applied and two given grants.*

*One of those was Cohen optician who moved across the street leaving behind an empty building in poor condition. The other houses the Plaid Assembly Member. So where are the new jobs?*

*I asked the Cabinet Member responsible what he planned to do to increase take up. His answer was simple "I propose to do nothing whatsoever."*

*So there you have it. Cabinet Members on over £36K a year doing nothing."*



## £5.30 A WEEK PENSIONS INCREASE THANKS TO LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

*From April most benefits will increase by 5.2%. The State pension will go up by £5.30 a week. This compares with the paltry 75p a week that pensioners were last given under the Labour Government. It is yet more proof that, despite what our opponents would like you to think, the Liberal Democrats are delivering on our promises to you.*

## Good news for unemployed youth

RCT Welsh Liberal Democrats have welcomed the news that the Council are to introduce an apprenticeship programme for 'up to 25 young people.'

Cllr Mike Powell, leader of the Council group, said

*"We need to offer more opportunities for young people to train and gain employment within their communities. Liberal Democrats are committed to the idea of apprenticeships at all levels."*

**At Westminster Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg announced the 'Youth Contract'**. A £1 billion investment to *"get every unemployed young person earning or learning again before long-term damage is done."*



Youth unemployment in the UK has risen to 21.9% and in RCT alone there are over 1500 young people on Job Seekers Allowance.

The new scheme will include a promise of a works experience package for every 18 to 24 yr old who wants it, 410,000 new work places over the next three years, and incentive payments to help employers take on new apprentices.

### Meanwhile down at the Bay

Welsh Liberal Democrats brokered a deal with Labour over the budget. This included an extra £38m to be spent in schools, and an economic stimulus package of £38.9 million. This is to help tackle unemployment and build our skills base here in Wales.

## Our Schools need backing not banding

Labour's Education Minister and Rhondda AM Leighton Andrews recently announced a 'banding' system for schools in Wales.

Secondary schools have been placed in bands from 1 and 5. Bryncelynog is in band 3, Ysgol Gyfun Garth Olwg band 5. The system has been criticised by teachers, governors, unions, in fact just about everyone except the Labour party.

RCT Welsh Liberal Democrat campaign manager Karen Roberts, herself a school governor, has blasted the idea

*"This will achieve nothing except the demoralisation of our teaching staff. These tables tell you little about how well a school is performing with regard to its core function which is to educate*



*children and ensure each pupil performs to the best of his / her ability.*

*The band the school is placed in relies not only on results but on the number of pupils on free school meals and pupils attendance record. It is unfair and can give parents the wrong impression of a school's performance.*

## Labour should stop complaining and get on with the job



The Labour party in RCT seem to spend a lot of time complaining - mostly about how hard done by they are because of the necessary cuts being made in public spending.

Take the issue of community safety. Labour here moan about cut backs (many made necessary because of their incompetence in Government at Westminster for 13 years)

Welsh Lib Dem led Wrexham Council contribute 25% to the salaries of 48 PCSOs. Their community safety partnership said a greater street presence was a priority and did something about it.

In RCT it has taken the community safety partnership three years to consider whether or not to impose restrictions on the consumption of alcohol in public places.

Maybe Russell and Co should stop complaining and look at giving taxpayers more value for money.

Find out more about us at

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*Yet the Minister is obviously determined to press ahead despite the opinions of everyone else.*

*We should be supporting our schools and staff and providing help where needed, not sticking meaningless labels on them*

*Cllr Mike Powell questioned the Cabinet Member for Education about banding at the January Council meeting.*

*She could not answer the question of how these tables would be used by RCT education department to help schools raise standards.*

*What then is the point of them – seems only Leighton knows."*