

Dear Councillor,

We are writing to you as a local Labour Party councillor to try and arrange a convenient time for you to meet a delegation of trade unionists and anti-austerity activists to discuss how we can build on Jeremy Corbyn's call for councils to stand together and refuse to implement government cuts.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), co-founded by the late Bob Crow, is determined that working class people should not pay for a crisis that we did not cause, and we are happy to work together with Labour representatives who take the same stance.

We believe that Jeremy Corbyn is right to highlight the potential that councils have to resist austerity. English councils still control budgets totalling £114 billion pounds, over one fifth of all public spending, and have more financial powers than is commonly realised. Even the previous Con-Dem government's 'localism agenda', continued by the new Tory government, is dual-edged. Aiming to 'devolve the axe' to councils to cut local public services, by giving local authorities a 'power of competence' to do "anything apart from that which is specifically prohibited", the Tories have potentially given councils a greater power to resist - if they use it. TUSC has a core policy platform for local councils which can be found on our website: www.tusc.org.uk

NO CUTS BUDGETS

In the last couple of years TUSC has worked with councillors in Southampton, Hull and Leicester to present legally compliant no cuts budgets to the annual budget-making meeting. Based on the use of reserves and councils' borrowing powers, they were designed in each case to buy time for the council to organise a broad public campaign to compel the government to restore its funding. Unfortunately, on each occasion, the alternative budgets were rejected by the majority Labour groups.

One reason for doing so was that each council Labour group felt itself to be facing the government's cuts on its own. But surely that wouldn't be the case now, with Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader? TUSC believes that in the new situation opened up by Jeremy Corbyn's victory, there really is no reason why Labour councils should not combine together and refuse to implement the Tories' brutal austerity agenda.

That is why we would like to have a face-to-face meeting with you to discuss the possibilities of joint action against austerity, based on our council joining with others to present no cuts budgets at the budget-making meetings in early 2016.

SIGNED:

