

Press Release from John McDonnell MP

Hillingdon Conservatives Block Government's £150 million Investment for Hayes Schools.

Local MP and Labour Councillors Devastated at News.

Yesterday, Thursday (18th March), the Leader of Hillingdon Council, Conservative Councillor Puddifoot, addressed an assembly of all the local secondary headteacher's to inform them that he was refusing to sign up to the Government's £150 million investment programme to modernise and rebuild the secondary schools in Hayes and the south of the borough (Building Schools for the Future).

The council leader has stood down virtually all of the expert team of officers that has been engaged for two years in preparing the plans for the investment programme.

Although the councillor claimed that this was delaying the council's decision on whether to go ahead with the programme until after the elections, effectively this means the investment in Hayes and south Hillingdon schools is being blocked by the council.

The Conservative councillors from the north of the borough have delayed Hillingdon's bid for two years amidst widespread allegations that they resented the funding going to schools in the south of the borough. The allocation to the Hayes schools was based upon an independent assessment of educational needs in the borough.

Hayes and Harlington MP John McDonnell is furious that the Conservative council has blocked £150 million being invested in schools in his constituency.

John said "The Conservative councillors from the north of the borough have done everything they can to prevent this programme going ahead. They have fought a dogged fight over two years to block these funds coming to our area. I have refused to speak publicly up until now because I didn't want to do anything to jeopardise the programme or undermine the future of any of our schools but I can now reveal the destructive tactics the Conservative councillors have pursued over the last two years"

John continued, "The council failed initially to bid properly and so instead of Hillingdon being in an early phase of this national programme we lost out and landed up in the later wave behind other areas like Ealing and many more London boroughs. Then in July 2008 I was informed by council officials that Conservative councillors had decided to save money by closing Mellow Lane School and selling off its land. At the request of the school I said nothing publicly but I protested privately to the council and met separately with the Secretary for Education. As a result of my intervention the sell off of Mellow

Lane School was halted but then Hillingdon used every means to delay bidding and signing up to the Government's investment programme"

"I then met Ministers and officials and Hillingdon officials to press for action. Now I realise that Hillingdon's Conservative councillors never intended to agree to this investment programme and that I was being deceived. They clearly resented the funds coming to our area, even though I supported this programme of investment being extended to Uxbridge and the North of the borough."

"I am so angry at this act of political spite and vandalism against my community because it will be all our children that will suffer. The schools that desperately need the investment and modernisation will lose out. I am not going to take this lying down. I am calling for a community campaign to demand that the Council keeps its promise to sign up to this programme of investment. I will be writing to all local headteachers, local schools, school governors, local parents' associations, teachers unions and local community organisations. We will look to see if there is any possibility of a legal challenge to the Council leader's decision. We will not stand by and let them put our children's educational future at risk."

Leader of the Labour Group Councillor Mo Khursheed commented "we are all devastated after the unilateral announcement by the Conservative leader of the council. The whole education community were looking forward to the implementation of this modernisation programme which was to make such a major contribution to the education of our children and now our hopes have been dashed. Many people will be heartbroken at this news but we are mobilising the community to demand this investment programme is put back on track"

For further comment contact John