

Tuesday 31st March 2009

WENDY SUBMITS PETITION AGAINST MUSIC CUTS TO RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL - Council urged to think again at Special Council meeting -

Today, local politician Wendy Alexander submitted her 766 signature strong petition to Renfrewshire Council as part of her campaign to reverse proposed music tuition cuts. This comes ahead of the Special Council meeting which is to take place on Thursday 2nd April - the first councillor-called Special Council meeting to happen in over 7 years since 2002.

Standing outside the Council's offices today with the petition, Wendy was joined by Pauline Simm - a local music instructor who has bravely chosen to speak out – and Labour councillors. (1)

Wendy said:

“A huge thank you to all those who took the time to sign the petition and get in touch with me about the Council's plans to cut music tuition.

I am delighted that Scotland's foremost composer, James MacMillan, is today speaking out against Renfrewshire Council's plans. It just goes to show how far reaching the campaign is. He said, ‘it is a nonsense to provide fortnightly rather than weekly lessons...this policy will make Renfrewshire the laughing stock of the musical world.’ He goes on to express his concern over the ‘dire’ implications this will have for the future of music in Renfrewshire. (2)

The cuts in music tuition are a direct result of education not getting its fair share of financial resources the Scottish Government provided to Renfrewshire Council. The SNP-led Renfrewshire Council got £10.6 million additional grant funding this year, so there is no excuse for keeping spending on education practically at a standstill and making these ‘savings’.

The Council argues that core provision will remain, that tuition is heavily subsidised and that it won't affect those sitting certificated examinations. Instrument tuition is not a ‘luxury’. By keeping the same £75 charge but halving the number of lessons students lose out. What about those students coming through the system, if they don't get the tuition they need in primary and S1-3 then they won't be sitting the exams in future!

Despite officially requesting that the Council guarantee there will be no compulsory redundancies, the Council refuse to rule it out.

Free lessons are provided in Glasgow, Inverclyde, West Dumbarton, Edinburgh, East Lothian, Mid Lothian, West Lothian and North Lanarkshire.

I urge the Council to rethink this senseless policy which has attracted the united opposition of pupils, parents, teachers and musicians”

