

When delivering the Government budget last week, the Chancellor mentioned wine 12 times, cider 10 times, and even the Civil War once. To his shame, he didn't give a single mention to the energy crisis, the food crisis, or the climate crisis. It says everything about his and the Conservatives' skewed priorities and 'head in the sand' approach to the difficulties facing households in St Helens and across the country that he could be so ignorant.

Of course, most shocking is the huge tax hikes the Government have introduced, raising the tax burden to the highest level in this country since the 1950s. With many people wondering how they're going to heat their homes and put food on the table this winter, it's a kick in the teeth for the government to demand even more out of their pockets.

Any fair tax system – and any government truly interested in 'levelling up' – would make sure those with the broadest shoulders bear the greatest burden, and last week this government decided to cut tax for banks, frequent flyers (a week before COP26!) and champagne rather than for families.

Governments are always able to find money for their priorities. The problem we all face with this government is where their priorities lie. On the evidence of last week's budget, it's certainly not helping ordinary households facing a winter of uncertainty.

Unlike the government, our Labour council here is clear about what's important – keeping more than 700 essential services running despite massive cuts and rising demand on key services, as well as delivering on the things residents have told us is important like regenerating our town centres, and I'm pleased to say that the public consultation on our draft regeneration plans for both St Helens and Earlestown is now open!

Visit www.sthelenstowncentre.co.uk and www.earlestown.co.uk for all the information you will need about these once in a lifetime proposals. There will be lots of opportunities to take part in person too, including a pop-up store in St Helens on Church Street between Monday 8th and Sunday 14th November, and one in Earlestown between Monday 15th and Sunday 21st. You can also phone 03333 580502 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm) and can collect information from local libraries.

Please do take a look at the plans and have your say.

Best wishes to all Star readers.