

Public services in our country are all struggling right now. Water, health services, councils, schools, police – it's a long, shameful list of services underfunded and essential workers underpaid and overstretched.

As usual with this government, a struggling economy doesn't mean the richest will have to tighten their belts. There'll be no cap on banker's bonuses or windfall taxes on the profiteers running down public utilities. Instead it's ordinary working people who are asked to shoulder the burden.

That's why millions of workers from Junior Doctors to teachers have been taking strike action – they've negotiated and talked, argued and campaigned, and withdrawing their labour is all they had left. They've done it not just for fair pay but for better services too. They've had my support throughout.

The Prime Minister Mr Sunak recently dared to tell the public to "hold our nerve" in the face of spiralling interest rates. And last week he announced a 6% pay rise for some public sector workers – below inflation, so effectively still a pay cut – and he's told departments they need to find the money for the increase from existing budgets: this means that we will all pay for it through even more cutbacks to services.

Public services including councils have done their best for 13 years to deliver essential services in spite of the government and what has amounted to an attack on communities. We'll continue to fight for fair funding and residents, but it gets harder all the time.

In the latest blow to services, rail companies have announced they want to close more than 1000 ticket offices at train stations including all but one in our borough.

All this is just more evidence that this government is completely ignorant about the worry many people are facing right now and the pressure services are under. They don't respect public services or the people who use them.

Our Labour council is opposing the ticket office closures. We've launched a petition at www.sthelenslabour.org, and our Cabinet Member for Strategic Transport Cllr Seve Gomez-Aspron last week took an urgent motion to full council asking for cross-party support, which I'm pleased to say was backed unanimously.

I encourage residents to respond to the rail group's public consultation directly – visit www.transportfocus.org.uk, or call them on 0300 123 2350 to have your say.

Best wishes to all Star readers.