

## Lib Dems councillors object to discrimination against t...

Published: January 13, 2026, 2:15 am

---

[Next Left, the blog of the Fabian Society](#) has a really good blog this morning on how a great many Lib Dem council leaders are effectively [siding with Matthew Oakeshott](#).

As they note, as The Times [reports](#) (£):

*The grassroots of the Liberal Democrats have declared open revolt over the scale and pace of cuts to frontline local services.*

*In a serious blow to the unity of the coalition, 88 Liberal Democrat council chiefs have written to The Times today warning that services for the most vulnerable will have to be cut. The 17 local authority leaders and 71 local party heads say that the spending reductions are too big and are being implemented too quickly.*

*Local government is the powerbase of Nick Clegg's party and the move suggests that loyalty to the leadership has been strained to the limit.*

The 88 signatories include the LibDem leaders of Newcastle, Hull, Milton Keynes, Warrington and Portsmouth City Councils and their Deputy leader in Birmingham, the leader of the Liberal Democrats in the Local government association, and over 70 more leaders of Liberal Democrat council groups.

Good for them.

And as the same blog also notes, there is good reason for their concern:

*The BBC ten o'clock news last night highlighted [just how much the new local government settlement will hit poorer areas harder](#), with BBC home affairs editor Mark Easton showing that the cuts will be worth £210 per adult in deprived Hackney compared to £2.86 per person in affluent East Dorset. Those councils with high levels of deprivation, and so which are more dependent on grant funding from central government to reduce inequalities, are being hit very hard, while councils which have a strong local economic base from which to raise their own resources will be relatively protected.*

A ministerial source tells Easton that the government's intention was to "unwind the process" whereby more deprived areas got more support under Labour. This government thinks that was unfair, and so is seeking to reduce the amount of redistribution towards poor areas in the local government settlement. It is as the Lib Dem councillors say to the Times:

*So, while urban areas with high levels of poverty, unemployment and health pressures are losing almost 9% of their spending power as a result of the cuts, less deprived districts such as Wokingham in Berkshire are losing less than 1%. Mr Pickles, however, argues that this is because poorer areas have been receiving far more money from central government and therefore have more scope for efficiency savings.*

The argument highlights an ideological clash between fairness as promoting redistribution and equal opportunities between more and less deprived parts of the country, and fairness as localism, in proposing that different areas should get to keep more of their own resources.

This is blatant political choice to increase the gap between rich and poor. It can't be explained any other way. And the Lib Dem grass roots look like they're understanding that loud and clear.

How long for the Coalition? Not long on this basis.