

If Sunak does not give essential services the money tha...

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Has a budget ever been leaked as much as this Wednesday's? No doubt there is a rabbit left in Sunak's hat, but most must be out of the hutch by now.

Such is the scale of the leaking that I do now spot a trend. There is going to be some more Covid money. However, this will probably only be enough to get to the end of June, when it is presumed that Covid will be over, however unlikely I think that will be.

There is also more absurd policy to boost house prices, entirely to support the middle classes in the Tory Party and their fixation with property wealth. None of this will help those struggling to fund secure homes who cannot afford to buy them. So much for levelling up.

Then there will be the token gestures to the free-market fanatics. Freeports will feature heavily for that reason.

Whilst tax increases that are needed now to tackle the inequality that Covid and QE are creating will be deferred, in the main.

But in all the leaking that lets me reach these conclusions there is something missing. And that is that there will not be any promises made to make good the harm to the public services created by Covid.

The private sector has had money poured into it by this government during this crisis, mainly to compensate it for not being able to work. But schools, the justice system, social care and health are all creaking under the enormous workload that they have continued to manage, albeit in some cases (like justice) with enormous difficulty and growing (and unjust) delays. There would appear to be no hint so far that the money that these bedrocks of our society require will be available, or that those who have worked so hard to make sure that services have continued, despite the odds, will see any recognition for their efforts when they know many others have done nothing.

This worries me. The reason, I hope, is obvious. Not only do all these services have backlogs to deal with, which in some cases are severe, but they desperately need to

retain staff who have been worked to the absolute limits of what they have been able to endure.

Sunak may say, and I think will say, that the money has run out, but that has also been exposed as a lie now. People know that the money has not run out for the friends of government. And they are not just the cronies supplying PPE, but are also those supplying the utterly useless lateral flow tests that will be done in the months to come, and for all those running outsourced contracts. For them money is still available. It's just not available for those who actually have to deliver justice, stand in front of classes, or patiently explain subtraction yet again, or who need to care for the elderly and vulnerable, and for those who still see more deaths a day than it is reasonable to ask them to have to endure.

The chance that our public services might still fail, because people can no longer face working in them, is very high. Under-investment, underpay and under-resourcing could deliver that outcome.

To be blunt, saving the private sector when there are no public services left is getting absolutely all the required understanding of a modern economy wrong. The modern economy is not built on the basis of the private sector. Nor does that private sector have to pay taxes to pay for the public sector. We now know that this is not true. What we know instead is that the right balance between the two sectors is required instead.

My great fear is that Sunak does not understand this. In fact, I doubt he is even remotely close to sharing this perception. And if he is not he could sleep walk us to the point where staff, broken by the demands on them, simply have to leave the NHS and other essential services simply for the sake of their own health, and that of their families.

This is an issue I know a bit (maybe too much) about. I know those strains are real. And that they can break even those who seem the strongest.

If Sunak does not offer the funding needed to relieve the pressure on essential public services on Wednesday we are in deep trouble.