

LABOUR HITS OUT OVER CUTS TO SERVICES, DESPITE FIRST MINISTER'S PRAISE FOR ABERDEEN CHARITY

SNP accused of paying lip service to city's homeless people

BY TIM PAULING

Labour's top brass have criticised the SNP over cuts to services for the homeless and people found drunk and incapable in Aberdeen.

Labour leader Wendy Alexander and former justice minister Cathy Jamieson accused the Scottish Government of being responsible for the £27million being slashed from the council budget. But one city councillor yes-

terday said the politicians had no "credibility", given that Aberdeen Labour members failed to offer an alternative budget.

City homeless charity the Cyrenians will lose £900,000, nearly a quarter of its annual

budget. The charity revealed yesterday that more than 30 jobs would go as a result, and three accommodation projects for 25 homeless people would close.

Ms Alexander accused First Minister Alex Salmond of delivering the charity a "kick in the teeth" while paying "lip service" to the city's homeless people.

The accusation was based on comments Mr Salmond

made praising the charity in December.

"This shows once again how the SNP say one thing and do another, praising projects in one breath and imposing swingeing cuts with another," she said. "Alex Salmond has a lot of explaining to do to the Cyrenians and the vulnerable people who depend on the services they provide in Aberdeen.

"The SNP stand accused of

paying lip service to their needs. Warm words are not enough - particularly if cuts in funding and cuts in services are the end result."

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Ms Jamieson called the decision to cut three years of funding worth £400,000 to Albyn House as short-sighted.

The facility provides a bed and support for those found drunk and incapable, as opposed to a night in a police cell, and could become a model for other areas.

"The SNP need to understand that government is about more than just talking

about services like these," she said.

"Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill saw for himself the great work that this organisation does and yet he's willing to allow it to close."

Last night Kincorth and Loirston councillor Callum McGaig wrote to Ms Alexander, demanding to know what Labour's financial proposals were for the city after the party refused to put for-

ward an alternative council budget.

"The Labour Party have clearly decided that they need to roll out the big guns on this issue after the pitiful showing from their local councillors at the budget meeting," he said. "They have demonstrated that they have no alternatives to the budget which was put forward, and so their complaints are entirely without credibility."