

Minutes of the Council Meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames on Thursday 21 February 2013 at 7.30pm

Present:

Ayers F.	Forsbrey G.E.	Patterson A.C.
Ayub A.	Frazer C.M.	Pinkerton J.M.
Bannister C.A.	Friday A.E.	Rough M.W.
Beardsmore I.J.	Gething N.	Sexton J.R.
Bushnell M.	Gohil D.	Sider R.W. (Mayor)
Dale J.A.	Grant D.L.	Smith-Ainsley R.A.
Davis C.A.	Harman A.C.	Spencer C.
Dunn R.D.	Leighton V.J.	Spoor B.
Dunn S.A.	Madams M.	Strong C.V.
Evans T.J.M.	Mitchell A.J.	Watts R.L. (Leader)
Forbes-Forsyth P. (Deputy Leader)	Napper I. (Deputy Mayor)	Webb S.
	Patel D.	

Mr. Murray Litvak, Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee and Ms Sue Faulkner, the Vice-Chairman were also in attendance

Councillor R.W. Sider, the Mayor, in the Chair

38/13 Tribute to former Councillor Jack Pinkerton

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R.L. Watts, paid tribute to former Councillor Jack Pinkerton who had passed away recently:

'Jack was elected to the council to serve Stanwell North and Stanwell Moor in 2003 and was re-elected in 2007. During his service he fought a County Council election and was narrowly defeated by just a few votes after a re-count. Jack put his heart and soul into representing those who elected him. Indeed he was passionate about his ward, and was always approachable. He got things done and was much respected by his residents. He was a member of a number of committees including Planning, Standards, Audit, Improvement and Development, the Local Committee of Surrey County Council and Licensing. He was never afraid to speak out and air the views he believed in, and his professional background enabled him to comment on many problems that faced the Council. And living so close to the council offices, he was always 'on call' and in particular he was often called upon at the last minute to take the place of a member of the licensing committee who had called in with illness on the day of a Review hearing.

Jack set and abided by a high standard of dress and conduct both in and out of the Chamber and supported all Group and mayoral functions. There is no doubt that he set an excellent example for members to follow, and will be very much missed by all those who knew him. '

Members, officers and public present joined the Mayor to stand in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for the late former Councillor Jack Pinkerton.

39/13 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.A. Broom, M.P.C. Francis, C. Nichols and S.D. Taylor.

40/13 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 December 2012 and the extraordinary Council meeting held on 24 January 2013 were approved as a correct record.

41/13 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

42/13 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor announced his upcoming events:

A civic concert at Halliford School on 22 February and on 16 March, a civic concert featuring Weybridge Male Voice Choir at St Peter's Church, Staines.

43/13 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader, Councillor R.L. Watts, made the following announcement:

'This is first and foremost a Conservative administration with the following values at its heart – self-reliance, opportunity, accountability, community and tradition. As a Council, and as individuals representing our wards, we face unprecedentedly difficult times. In order to survive and make progress we need to modernise this pleasant place and ensure that every opportunity is explored that helps people to live and work here. We have also had a difficult decision to make on Council Tax which we have decided to raise minimally. Spelthorne residents will pay around 6 pence extra per week at Band D level to maintain services. We have decided on three key areas where our work will be concentrated: economic development, planning and housing, and making the most of the Council's assets.

We have four new councillors on the Cabinet and a new deputy leader – I would like to welcome my new Cabinet: Councillors Leighton, Mitchell, Sexton and Webb. The new Deputy Leader is Councillor Forbes-Forsyth.

In partnership with Elmbridge Borough Council we are working to deliver the Government's Troubled Families programme. The national programme is aimed at changing the fortunes of the most difficult families in society who cost the rate payers in the region of £75,000 per family, per year. The programme involves staff co-ordinating input from a variety of agencies who currently work with those families. This innovative joint team will work with around 220 families within Elmbridge and Spelthorne over the next 22 months. This model is seen as good practice and is now being adopted in other parts of Surrey and the country.'

44/13 Announcements from the Chief Executive

There were none.

45/13 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

46/13 Outline Budget 2013-2014 to 2017-2018 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the outline budget projections for 2013-14 to 2017-18.

Resolved that:

- (1) The net budgeted expenditure (before investment and use of reserves) for 2013/14 be set at a maximum level of £11.702m
- (2) In order to reach this level, the Management Team, the Leader and Cabinet identify a package of options by which the budget can be balanced both in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and over the following three years of the outline period.
- (3) For planning purposes of the Outline Budget, an annual increase of 1% be assumed for pay increases to staff and councillors for 2013/14.
- (4) An agreed total reserves target minimum level (as measured on 31 March each year) be set at a level of £11m for 31/3/14.
- (5) The financial health indicators set out in paragraph 2.45 of the report of the Chief Finance Officer be agreed.

47/13 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2013-2014 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the current Treasury position and the Annual Investment Strategy and Prudential Indicators for 2013-2014 to 2014-2015.

Resolved that:

- (1) The proposed Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2013/14 as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer be approved.
- (2) The Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer be approved.

48/13 Calendar of meetings for June 2013 to May 2014

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Calendar of Meetings covering the period 1 June 2013 to 22 May 2014.

Resolved that the Calendar of Meetings for June 2013 to May 2014, attached as Appendix A to the recommendation, be approved.

49/13 Detailed Revenue Budget 2013-2014 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Net Revenue Expenditure Budget for 2013-14 and the proposed Council Tax for 2013-14.

The Mayor referred Members to the Budget Book (green cover) reflecting the decisions and recommendations made by the Cabinet on 12 February 2013.

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Council gave consent under Standing Order 19.4 for the Budget speech of each of the Group Leaders to exceed 10 minutes.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R.L. Watts, made a statement on the Budget and Council Tax and moved the recommendations on the detailed Budget for 2013/2014 as set out in the Budget Book (green cover). This was seconded by Councillor T.J.M. Evans. The Leader of the Spelthorne Independent Group, Councillor F. Ayers and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor I.J. Beardsmore, also made statements.

Copies of the Council Leader's, the Spelthorne Independent Group Leader's and the Liberal Democrat Leader's statements are attached to these minutes at **Appendices A, B and C** respectively.

Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley requested, under Standing Order 21.4, that the voting on the amendment be recorded.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (29)	Councillors F. Ayers, A. Ayub, C.A. Bannister, M. Bushnell, J.A. Dale, C.A. Davis, T.C.M. Evans, P. Forbes-Forsyth, G.E. Forsbrey, C.M. Frazer, A.E. Friday, N. Gething, D. Gohil, D.L. Grant, A.C. Harman, V.J. Leighton, M.J. Madams, A.J. Mitchell, I. Napper, D. Patel, A.C. Patterson, J.M. Pinkerton, M.W. Rough, J.R. Sexton, R.W. Sider, R.A. Smith-Ainsley, C. Spencer, R.L. Watts and S. Webb.
AGAINST (4)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore, R. Dunn, B. Spoor and C.V. Strong
ABSTAIN (1)	Councillor S.A. Dunn

Resolved:

- (1) To approve the growth and savings items as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer.
- (2) To approve the Council Tax Base for the whole council area as 2013-2014. [Item T in the formula in Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")] and,
- (3) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purpose for 2013-2014 be calculated as £175.56
- (4) To approve in support of a 1.94% increase in the Spelthorne Borough Council element of the council tax for 2013-14, the following proposals:
 - a) That the Revenue Estimates as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer be approved

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- b) That no money, as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer, is appropriated from General Reserves in support of Spelthorne's local Council Tax for 2013-14.
- c) Taking account that the council tax base for the year 2013-14 is 36,514.25 calculated in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012, made under Section 35(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, as approved by Council 24 January 2013.

(5) That the following sums be now calculated for the year 2013-14 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

(a)	65,214,296	Being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
(b)	58,803,815	Being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
(c)	6,410,481	Being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31A (4) of the Act.
(d)	£175.56	Being the amount at 3(c)above (Item R), all divided by Item T (2 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
(e)	£0	Being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section34 (1) of the Act (as per the Attached Appendix).
	£175.56	Being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T (2 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

(6) That the following amounts be now calculated for the year 2013-2014 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by The Localism Act 2011.

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VALUATION BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Spelthorne	117.04	136.55	156.05	175.56	214.57	253.59	292.60	351.12

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (e) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in section 5(1) of the act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the sum which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band 'd', calculated by the Council, in accordance with section 36(1) of the act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different band.

- (7) That it be noted that for the year 2013-14 Surrey County Council and Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to Spelthorne Borough Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

VALUATION BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1. Precepts issued to the Council								
i) Surrey County Council	781.68	911.96	1042.24	1,172.52	1433.08	1693.64	1954.20	2345.04
ii) Surrey Police	138.37	161.43	184.49	207.55	253.67	299.79	345.92	415.10

- (8) That, having calculated the aggregate in each case above the Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, hereby sets the amounts set out in Appendix 6 of the report of the Chief Finance Officer as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2013-14 for each of the categories of dwellings in Appendix 3 of the same report.
- (9) To determine that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2013-14 was **not** excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (10) To note that as the billing authority, the Council had **not** been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2013-14 was excessive and that the billing authority was not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

50/13 Draft Capital Programme 2013-2014 to 2016-2017 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the proposed Capital Programme for 2013-14 to 2016-2017 in the light of the available resources and corporate priorities.

Resolved that:

- (1) The Capital Programme for 2013/14 to 2016/17 be approved.
- (2) The Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 to 2016/17 be approved.

51/13 Pay Policy Statement 2013-2014

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Pay Policy Statement for 2013-14.

Resolved that the Pay Policy Statement 2013-2014 be approved.

52/13 Nomination for the appointment of an Honorary Freeman of the Borough

The Mayor, Councillor R.W. Sider proposed, the Leader, Councillor R.L. Watts seconded and Councillor C.M. Frazer endorsed the nomination of Mr. Colin Squire, Chairman of Squire's Garden Centres and Chairman of the Civic Awards Trust, for appointment as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

Resolved

- (1) That Mr. Colin Squire be nominated for appointment as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.
- (2) That a Special Meeting of the Council be held on Thursday 18 April 2013 for the formal appointment of Mr Colin Squire, Chairman of Squires Garden Centres and Chairman of the Civic Awards Trust, as an Honorary Freeman of the Borough.

53/13 Report from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R. L. Watts, presented the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 18 December 2012, 29 January and 12 February 2013, which outlined the various matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

54/13 Report from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor M.W. Rough, presented her report, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

55/13 Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The former Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor J. R. Sexton, presented the report in the absence of the Chairman, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

56/13 Report from the Chairman of the Planning Committee

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor R.A. Smith-Ainsley, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

57/13 Motions

There were no Motions received.

58/13 Questions on Ward Issues

There were no questions received on ward issues.

59/13 General questions

There were no general questions received.

60/13 Urgent Business

The Council considered a review of the representation of the different political groups on Committees, pursuant to section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 following the establishment of the Spelthorne Independent Group. The proposed allocation of seats would meet the requirements of Section 15(4) of the Act.

It was moved by Councillor R.L. Watts and seconded by Councillor P. Forbes-Forsyth and

Resolved to agree the allocation of seats as shown below until the Annual Council Meeting (ACM) in May 2013:

Committee	Total number of seats	Conservative	Spelthorne Independent Group	Liberal Democrat
Audit	7	5	1	1
Licensing	15	10	3	2
Planning	15	10	2	3
Scrutiny	15	10	3	2
MCC	8	6	1	1
Staffing and Appeals	5	3	1	1
Total	65	44	11	10

61/13 Thanks

Councillor J.M. Pinkerton expressed her thanks to councillors and staff for their support over the past few weeks.

Appendix A

The Budget Speech of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Robert Watts

Mr Mayor – I have great pleasure in presenting the Budget Report for the Municipal Year 2013-14.

The Council has been faced with a logistically more challenging situation with this year's budget process with late announcements of major new funding arrangements for local government with respect to arrangements for councils to be partly funded from business rates, and with respect to council tax support. We again faced an awkward decision with respect to the Government's offer of "Council tax freeze" grant. The decision this year was slightly easier, as this time the government's offer was of a grant equal to only 1% of council tax income. Once again the funding was offered only on a short term basis, which meant that if we accepted the freeze grant our income in a year's time would have been around £140k lower than if we had increased council tax for 2013-14. This in turn would force us to make additional cuts in a year's time. The Cabinet has therefore very carefully weighed up its council tax decision and has decided that in order to protect frontline services for the future we will make a small increase of 1.94% in the Spelthorne Borough Council tax.

We are very mindful of the financial pressures on our residents. The proposed increase on an average band D household is equivalent to an increase of £3.36 per annum or just 6 pence extra per week. This is below the current rate of inflation.

By protecting our income base we are ensuring that the Council can continue to maintain and indeed enhance the support it provides to the voluntary sector which by value totals nearly £400,000 per annum.

In the face of continuing significant grant cuts, the 2013-14 budget has been one of the hardest this Council has ever had to set. We know that a solid and firm financial base must underpin everything the Council does. Put simply, if we don't balance the books we cannot continue to provide the full range of services to our residents both now, and in the future, which is always uppermost in my mind. We are constantly reviewing everything we do, how we do it, and whether anything can be done better, often in partnership with others.

I am proud to say Cabinet, managers and staff have, together, tackled and overcome this challenge in a most professional way.

Local government has proportionately made the greatest contribution to the Government's deficit reduction programme aimed at putting the nation's finances on a sustainable basis following the mess left by the Labour Government. This Council has a net underlying reduction of £400,000 in the grant we receive for 2013-14.

The funding we will receive from Central Government and the share of business rates the Government says we should be receiving will be just £44.95 per head of population for 2013/14; this is 23% below the national average of £58.55. This means we are losing £1 million per annum against the average district council.

As we are all acutely aware interest rates remain at historically low levels and are likely to continue at that level for some while. The UK Base rate remains at half of one per cent. Just like businesses this has hit the Council's ability to continue to deliver the high levels of investment income which it had been achieving and which has previously helped fund the provision of many of the general services for the public. We have responded to this by diversifying our investment strategy to invest in equity backed and property backed funds and corporate bond funds which has helped mitigate the impact of high earning investments maturing. We have been careful to balance risk and return. Currently our portfolio is achieving an average rate of interest of 3.3% which in the current climate is an excellent performance. Whilst we are looking carefully at how we can further broaden our range of investments to improve our investment returns, whilst balancing against risk, it is likely that for some while to come our investment income will continue to be constrained. This is why it is justifiable for the Council in the forthcoming year (during a period of low interest rates) to use a small amount of its interest equalisation reserve, to support the revenue budget, which was built up over recent years from above target investment performance, as I am sure you will agree with me a fine example of prudent investment by this Council. At some point interest rates will start to rise and our investment income will recover.

Some have queried why councils appear to have relatively large reserves? Councils such as ourselves need reserves to enable us to fund an ongoing capital programme and, to have contingency monies to cope with unexpected pressures, particularly important in the uncertain times that we are now facing. I would remind Councillors that nine years ago the Council was using more than £2.8million general reserves to support the revenue budget. Five years ago we were using £1m. We could not go on taking funds from the reserves. So we have gradually been reducing the use of reserves. In 2013-14 we will be using only £75k of the interest equalisation reserve. For 2013-14 we are using some specific reserves in order to fund invest to save initiatives. Firstly £65k to fund the cost of ending our lease of expensive automated public conveniences and secondly £70k to fund a detailed feasibility study to look at the potential to work in partnership with Surrey County Council to refurbish the Council Offices in order both to make revenue savings and join up services across the councils for the benefit of our residents. The next step in our future reserves strategy will be to move towards making revenue contributions to the reserves to replenish them.

Additionally we have been using reserves to support the capital programme we are restraining the scale of the capital programme to £1.1m being conscious of our limited capital resources.

Like households and businesses, facing the impact of the recession, the Council has had to tighten its belt and seek out even more savings than the

savings it has already delivered over the last few years. From last summer onwards members of the Cabinet have been working closely with the Council's Management Team and heads of service to scrutinise all services budgets and to identify savings and additional sources of income. I can assure you no stone has been left unturned. All service teams from Management Team down were asked to identify and deliver savings for the budget and all delivered. This budget being presented to the Council today is underpinned by additional savings of £1m (approximately 8% of budget). There will continue to be regular quarterly monitoring throughout the coming year to ensure that we successfully deliver these savings.

It might have been tempting for us to have increased our largest fee income source by raising parking fees. However, we have listened to the concerns of our retailers and local businesses and we are not proposing any parking charge increases as part of this budget.

We will seek to build upon our existing partnerships and are putting in place more focused arrangements for driving forward partnership working with other councils and other partners both private and public sector.

My Administration will focus particularly on ensuring we achieve best value from our assets and we will focus on opportunities where we may be able to use our assets to help stimulate economic growth and inward investment. To support this priority we have prioritised within the budget and allocated £76k to help speed up the process of updating the Local Plan.

The Council is in the early stages of exploring options for a light rail link between Staines-upon-Thames and Heathrow Terminal 5 which if successful would help stimulate economic growth in the borough.

The Council has continued to progress in freeing up office space at Knowle Green which can be let out to partners to generate revenue income for the Council. To date, we have freed up 35% of space at Knowle Green. The aim is also to address the backlog maintenance challenge facing Knowle Green.

The 2013 -14 budget process was made more uncertain and challenging by the parallel changes to council tax benefits and localisation of business rates. The Council approved its new council tax support scheme on 24th January which includes 100% protection for the disabled claimants and has limited the impact on working age claimants to a maximum of 8.5% which is considerably more generous than some of the other districts in Surrey.

We are disappointed that local government is not being allowed to retain a larger proportion of business rates. For this Council potentially we may retain 6.5% of the total business rates income we collect. Whilst we retain 20% of any additional business rates collected, we are also exposed to additional risks with respect to bad debts and valuation appeals. This further strengthens our commitment to promoting and supporting economic growth in the Borough. We will carefully monitor our collection performance and seek to continue the excellent collection rates achieved in recent years.

Whilst we have achieved a balanced budget for 2013-14 we know the future is looking extremely uncertain and challenging. We know the austerity period is likely to continue until 2018 which means we face several more years of reducing funding of probably at least 6 or 7 per cent per annum in terms of support from central government. The welfare reforms including creation of universal credit are likely to adversely impact financially on the Council. It is in this context that we are seeking to carefully minimise budget pressures in future years.

In order to meet this future financial challenge we focus ever more closely on:

- shared working opportunities
- maximising income from assets
- procurement savings
- flexible use of technology
- looking at how we deliver and prioritise services

Over the last three years this Council has continuously reviewed management structures and has reduced by 33% the underlying senior management costs of the council between 2009-10 and 2012-13; I should remind councillors that here in Spelthorne we have the lowest ratio of staff to residents compared to all the other districts in Surrey that operate Streetscene services in house.

I would like to briefly touch on the progress we have made on delivering some of our key projects:

We successfully bid for £493k from Government to assist us in addressing difficult to reach properties for waste/recycling collection. A new web page has been designed and is available to view on the Spelthorne website.

- We have a new skate park in Shepperton to support young people with positive leisure activity.
- We have carried out improvements to the security at Sunbury Skate Park based on residents' views.
- Play area for children with a disability, Clockhouse Lane
- Commenced building a Wellbeing Centre at the Greeno with a sensory garden area for the elderly and most vulnerable.

As mentioned above we have implemented a new council tax support scheme.

We recognise that we have limited resources and need to focus on delivering priority projects. We have reviewed and improved the Council's corporate project management methodology to ensure that we successfully deliver our projects.

I would like now to return to the detail of our budget and Council Tax proposals for 2013/14.

Our net expenditure next year is projected to be £12.1 million. Grants of approximately £3.4m and net retained business rates of approximately £1.7m produces external funding of around £5.1 million. We plan to use £0.6 million from interest earnings and reserves, a reduction of £68,000 on the previous budget. This leaves £6.4 million to be met from the Council Tax, which, after taking account of a collection fund deficit of £28k and a tax base of 36,514 properties at Band D, will require a Band D Council Tax of £175.56 to be levied. It is perhaps interesting to note that if we still kept all of the business rate collected in the borough, we could levy a nil absolute Council Tax and still have lots of money left over!

As well as our own part of the Band D Council Tax there will be added the precept from Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police. Like the Council both these organisations have faced a similar decision on council tax freeze and like us they have decided they had no choice but to slightly increase their part of the council tax bill this year. These are Surrey County Council £1,172.52 (a 1.99% increase) and Police a £207.55 (a 2% increase) which gives a total Band D Council tax of £1,555.63 giving a 1.99% increase overall.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Frank Ayers as the outgoing Leader, and to Councillor Tim Evans for his valued support as the Cabinet Finance Portfolio holder and all other Cabinet Members as well as the Chief Executive and his management team especially Terry Collier and his team and all the staff for their support and assistance in preparing this budget.

I would also like to express, on behalf of the Council, our best wishes to David Lawrence who has recently retired on ill-health grounds from his role as Chief Accountant. We thank David for his contribution to the Council over the seven years he worked for us.

I now formally move the recommendations of the Cabinet of 12 February 2013, as shown on pages 1 and 2 of the Budget Book, detailing the precepts by the County Council and Surrey Police and the Band D Council Tax levy for the year 2013-14.

Thank you, Mr Mayor.

Appendix B

**The Budget Speech of the Leader of Spelthorne Independent Group,
Councillor Frank Ayers**

21 February 2013

Mr Mayor-before I respond to the budget I would like to congratulate Terry Collier and his team for their usual excellent work preparing the budget.

It is difficult to be critical of the budget speech seeing as it is, with a few exceptions, virtually word for word the same budget speech that was presented by me last year for the 2012/2013 municipal year. Well done Cllr Watts, if you can't think of anything to say yourself regarding the budget why not use the majority of last year's budget speech.

Mr Mayor, I have a number of concerns. A month ago we were on course to achieve a balanced budget without any use of reserves; I cannot understand what has changed in a month.

In the budget book at 3.12 it refers to the equalisation reserves and that it is proposed to use £100k of these reserves, but in the Leader's speech he said £75k would be used. Can we know which figure it is, £75k or £100k? Can Cllr Watts explain why in the Green Book under Corporate Publicity, saving of £28k previously identified has been reduced down to £9,900. (loss of £18k)

Why under car parks, saving of £107k previously identified, has that been reduced to £84,700 (loss of £22k)? What has changed in a month that would make such a significant difference?

Economic Development extra funding required of £26,200. Can that be explained, albeit I think I know the answer to that?

Feasibility study for Knowle Green Hub, Spelthorne's contribution £70k, SCC contribution only £30k. This should be 50-50 at the very least, why have we agreed to this disproportionate split?

I think it's fair to say that one month ago we were on course for a balanced budget without any use of reserves whatsoever. Now one month on we need to use £75k or £100k from the equalisation reserves. I accept the decision by the Cabinet to protect the most vulnerable people 100%, from any council tax benefit cuts has a financial cost to this council of £35k; however that still leaves £40k unaccounted for, if we were to continue throughout the year in the same vein.

There will be a budget overspend of £500k. This will not be acceptable.

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Mr Mayor, my group would like to support the proposed council tax increase of 1.94 because we believe the frontline services that matter most to our residents must be protected and this small increase is the best way to achieve that aim. However we need answers to all those points I have raised before my group are prepared to give their support.

Thank you Mr Mayor.

Appendix C

The Budget Speech of the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Ian Beardsmore

Mr Mayor,

Just 2 years ago we were responding to the budget speech of Cllr John Packman. Now it is 24 months on - 24 months and 4 leaders on. This inconsistency is bad news for the residents of Spelthorne. My party will not be supporting the proposed increase in the Council Tax especially on top of the hit residents have just taken from another place.

To add insult to injury this is on top of the double hit they took last year. Changes to the benefit system, I referred to in my speech last year, are now with us so no need to raise the council tax. In Spelthorne this should not be the case - I do support the 100% support given to the most vulnerable, but that would have been covered by the 1% from central government. So no need to raise the council tax for that.

I have been around long enough to remember when Spelthorne was one of the richest boroughs in the country, fat on the profits from selling off our housing to A2 - or perhaps it would be better described as selling out our tenants to A2. On top of this in the years between 1996 and up to the credit crunch in 2008, interest rates were higher and we earned more than £20 million in interest alone. Where has that money gone? To put that in perspective, this budget is around £13 million! We could have had this year free on that interest alone.

The fate of this cash is a litany of budget over-runs, poor financial management, and constant raids on the reserves to peg the Council Tax, especially on the run up to the elections. There have been some improvements to our parks and services but in the big picture they constitute a very poor return on our money. To compound the problem, we have gone to great lengths to ensure that money which should, or could, have come to us in the form of Planning Infrastructure Contributions (PICs) has not come to us. In the last 4 years using this route Elmbridge Council have gained £4 million for their residents. For Spelthorne residents - nothing. This is money for schools, roads, parks, improving our street scene and so forth.

This is not to be confused with Section 106 monies which are quite separate. PIC would have been separate additional money. So that is another whole tranche of additional money we have squandered. Makes talk of generating additional income and being prudent seem grossly inadequate really.

PIC is being replaced with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). BUT guess what? We will be one of the last Boroughs in Surrey to get that because of the inadequacies of our Local Development Framework (LDF). As usual, backwards Spelthorne last in line. This is the same inadequate LDF which cost us a mind numbing £1.2million!!!

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If you really want to see out of control spending at its worst the LDF is the place to look. And as I said, we now find it unfit for purpose. You, the ruling group have a record of failing miserably. It is your failings because I do not remember just how many motions and amendments we have tabled over the years, either to kick start things or save money or provide better services. Or just stop plundering reserves. And you have rejected the lot.

I do understand the issue of tax base but I also know the wastage which got us into this mess. We will get money from the government albeit just for a year if we freeze our tax now. Given our wastage can we morally, reasonably expect residents to bail us out? There is nothing in it for them. It is Eric Pickles who said that Councils had a moral duty to freeze the council tax. Not me. But it is more true in Spelthorne than in many other areas.

As things stand at the moment there is nothing in this budget for residents except pain. We have to listen to what they are asking for, what they are telling us. And having listened, provide the clear strong leadership to implement those messages.

Cllr Ian Beardsmore
Lib Dem Leader

