

Minutes of the Budget Council Meeting of Spelthorne Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames on Thursday 26 February 2015 at 7.30pm

Present:

Councillors:

Ayers F.	Francis M.P. (Deputy Mayor)	Patel D.
Beardsmore I.J.	Frazer C.M.	Patterson A.C.
Broom P.A.	Friday A.E.	Pinkerton J.M. OBE
Budd S.E.W.	Gething N.	Saliagopoulos D.
Bushnell M.	Gohil D.	Sexton J.
Dale J.A.	Grant D.L.	Sider R.W. BEM
Davis C.A.	Harman A.C.	Smith-Ainsley R.A.
Dunn R.D.	Harvey I.T.E.	Spoor B.
Evans T.J.M.	Leighton V.J.	Watts R.L. (Leader)
Forbes-Forsyth P. (Deputy Leader)	Madams M.	Webb S. (Mayor)
	Mitchell A.J.	

Chairman Councillor Suzy P. Webb, the Mayor.

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillors C.A. Bannister, S.A. Dunn, G.E. Forsbrey, M.W. Rough, C. Spencer, C.V. Strong, S.D Taylor and Mr. Murray Litvak, Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee and Ms. Sue Faulkner, Vice-Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee.

30/15 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record.

31/15 Disclosures of Interest

In connection with the Annual Grants Awards 2015-16 presented in the report from the Leader on the work of the Cabinet, Councillor V.J. Leighton drew attention to the fact that she was Chairman of the Shepperton Village Conservation group, one of the organisations which received a grant from the Council.

32/15 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor announced that Liz Borthwick, the Assistant Chief Executive, was retiring in April having started her local government career in September 1989 and been at Spelthorne for 15 years, having joined in January 2000. The whole Council joined the Mayor in wishing her a healthy and happy retirement and she was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

33/15 Announcements from the Leader

There were none.

34/15 Announcements from the Chief Executive

There were none.

35/15 Questions from members of the public

There were none.

36/15 Petitions

There were none.

37/15 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2015-16 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the current Treasury position, the Treasury Management Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2015-16.

Resolved that Council approves the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2015-16.

38/15 Annual Pay Policy Statement 2015-16

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2015-16.

Resolved that the Annual Pay Policy Statement for 2015-16 be approved.

39/15 Calendar of meetings 2015-16

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the proposed Calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2015-16.

Resolved that the proposed Calendar of meetings for 2015-16 be approved.

40/15 Draft Capital Programme 2015-16 to 2018-19 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Draft Capital Programme for 2015-16 to 2018-19.

Resolved that:

- (1) The Capital Programme for 2015-16 to 2018-19 be approved.
- (2) The Prudential Indicators for 2015-16 to 2018-19 be approved.

41/15 Fees and Charges 2015-16 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Fees and Charges 2015-16.

Resolved that the fees and charges to be levied for 2015-16.

42/15 Detailed Revenue Budget for 2015 to 2016 – Key Decision

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Detailed Revenue Budget 2015-2016 and the proposed Council Tax for 2015-16.

The Mayor referred Members to the Budget Book (green cover) reflecting the decisions and recommendations made by the Cabinet on 24 February 2015 and included the precepts being levied by Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police.

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Council gave consent under Standing Order 20.4 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 2015/2016 as set out in the Budget Book (green cover). This was seconded by Councillor T.J.M. Evans. The Leader of the Spelthorne Independent Party, 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 Party Leader's and the Liberal Democrat Leader's statements are attached to these minutes at **Appendices A, B and C** respectively.

The Mayor explained that under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 relevant authorities are required to record in the minutes of the proceedings the names of the persons who cast a vote for the decision or who abstained from voting immediately after any vote is taken at a budget decision meeting of an authority.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (22)	Councillors R.L. Watts (Leader), P.C. Forbes-Forsyth (Deputy Leader), P.A. Broom, J.A. Dale, C.A. Davis, T. Evans, M.P.C Francis (Deputy Mayor), C.M. Frazer, A.E. Friday, N. Gething, D. Gohil, A.C. Harman, I.T.E. Harvey, M.J. Madams, A.J. Mitchell, D. Patel, J.M. Pinkerton, D. Saliagopoulos, J.R. Sexton, R.W. Sider and R.A. Smith-Ainsley.
AGAINST (8)	Councillors F. Ayers, I.J. Beardsmore, S.E.W. Budd, M. Bushnell, R. Dunn, D.L. Grant, A.C. Patterson, and B. Spoor.
ABSTAIN (1)	Councillor S. Webb (Mayor).

Resolved:

- (1) To approve the growth and savings items as set out in the report's appendices.
- (2) The Council tax Base for the whole Council area for 2015-16. [Item T in the formula in Section 31b(3) of the local government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "act")] should be 37,971.10 band D equivalent dwellings and, Calculate that the Council tax requirement for the Council's own purpose for 2015-2016 is £182.44 Per Band D equivalent dwelling.
- (3) To approve a 1.94% increase in the Spelthorne Borough Council element of the Council tax for 2015-16. Moreover:
- a) The revenue estimates as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.
 - b) No Money, as set out in this report is appropriated from General Reserves in support of Spelthorne's local Council tax for 2015/16.
 - c) To agree that the council tax base for the year 2015/16 is 37,971.10 band D equivalent dwellings calculated in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council tax base) Regulations 1992, as amended, made under Section 35(5) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (4) That the following sums be now calculated by the Council for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992:

A	69,944,239	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	63,016,715	being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
C	6,927,524	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)
D	£182.44	being the amount at 3(c) above (item R), all dividend by item T (2above) calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31 B(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 Section 34(1) of the Act.
F	£182.44	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 on those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
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- (5) All newly built commercial property completed between 1st October 2013 and 30 Sept 2016 will be exempted from empty property rates for the first 18 months, up to the state aid limit.

A discount of £1,500 for shops, pubs and restaurants (excluding banks, building societies and betting shops) with a rateable value below £50,000 for two years up to the State aid limits from 1st April 2014.

A 50 per cent business rates relief for 18 months between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2016 for businesses that move into retail premises (excluding banks, building societies and betting shops) that have been empty for a year or more.

- (6) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2015/16 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
121.63	141.90	162.17	182.44	222.98	263.52	304.07	364.88

- (7) 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.

Precepts issued to the Council									
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1.	Surrey County Council	813.12	948.64	1084.16	1,219.68	1490.72	1761.76	2032.80	2439.36
2.	Surrey Police	143.98	167.91	191.90	215.89	263.86	311.84	359.82	431.78

That it be noted that, for the year 2015-16, 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:

- (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 as the amounts of Council tax for the year 2015/16 for each of the categories of dwellings on Appendix 3.
- (9) The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.
- (10) As the billing authority, the council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2015/16 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

43/15 Reports from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor R. L. Watts, presented the report of the Extraordinary Cabinet meeting held on 21 January 2015 and the reports of the Cabinet meetings held on 27 January 2015 and 24 February 2015, which outlined the various matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

44/15 Report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor M.J. Madams, presented her report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

45/15 Report from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor R.W. Sider, presented his report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

46/15 Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor P.A. Broom, presented her report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

47/15 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.

48/15 Motions

There were none.

49/15 Questions on Ward Issues

Under Standing Order 15.2, Councillor M.W. Rough, submitted the following question on a Ward Issue:

“Whereas we, the ward councillors, and the majority of Spelthorne residents deplore the problem of spitting and dog fouling the pavements and parks, we are somewhat curious as to the costs and outcome of the signage placed in parks and in Ashford North red transfers on the pavements.

Park users, including responsible dog owners, have expressed their distaste describing them as offensive, disgusting, not fit for purpose and other similar words. Not one has actually approved or noticed improvements.

A question posed was "Why has the Council put graffiti on the pavements?" This refers to the red transfers on pavements in Ashford North which was done on the basis of an eight-week trial basis.

Therefore, would Cllr. Sexton who promoted this exercise please tell us the cost of this exercise in park signage, the cost of the transfers and the system used to assess the outcome so our residents may be better informed.”

Response from Cllr. Sexton, portfolio holder for Communications and Procurement:

Thank you for your question, Cllr. Rough.

Dog mess is a nuisance that upsets many people when it gets on their shoes and it's a public health hazard, particularly to children who play in our parks and open spaces. We find this unacceptable and are sure you do too. It also gives responsible dog owners a bad name and costs council taxpayers' money to clean up.

With our ‘No messin’ campaign, we put up posters around the borough, including parks and on Council bins to raise awareness and help tackle the problem.

Even so, people wanted us to do more. That's why we trialed the red stencils in my Ward.

In terms of the accusation that they are offensive, no one has complained to the Council, and in fact ANRA has confirmed in an email to me that residents felt the signs were too small and not visible enough. ANRA has also offered to be involved with a further stencilling trial and leaflet distribution, which demonstrates the support this initiative has with the residents.

The No Messin campaign cost in total £3655. This includes posters, stickers, metal signage and leaflets.

For the stencil trial, the stencil itself cost £95.00, the leaflets £15.00 and the paint £10.49.

We feel that this relatively small amount represents good value for money to help get the message through to the small minority of irresponsible dog owners that the Council and local residents are not prepared to put up with dog fouling.

In terms of outcomes, the aim was to raise awareness. A recent resident survey showed that there was good awareness of the dog fouling campaign. A "Get Surrey" poll showed that 82% thought that even our more graphic posters amounted to "effective advertising".

50/15 General Questions

There were none.

51/15 Urgent Business

There were no urgent items.

Appendix A

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

Madam Mayor – In this, the 800th year of the sealing of the first Magna Carta, I have great pleasure in presenting the Budget Report for the Municipal Year 2015-16, which is designed to continue to provide the services to our residents which they both expect and deserve.

Like most of the UK public sector and particularly local government, this Council is facing a challenging financial future. We have had yet another £600,000 reduction in revenue support grant funding for 2015-16 (following on from a similar reduction for 2014-15).

Regardless of the outcome of the General Election we believe we face very serious funding cuts over the next few years and that we need to be preparing to become a self-funding council by 2020 at the latest. This is why we have put in place the Towards a Sustainable Future programme.

Local government is facing its most difficult period in living memory.

The Towards a Sustainable Future is an ambitious but necessary programme covering a number of elements including:

- Maximising income from assets both in the form of capital receipts where appropriate which can be reinvested – Bridge Street being an excellent example of generating revenue income streams.
- Being prepared to make strategic asset acquisitions if they will deliver an appropriate investment return for the Council.
- Relocating the Council offices to a smaller more efficient location and freeing up Knowle Green to increase housing supply for the Borough and provide an ongoing rental income stream for the Council.
- Restructuring the Council's management structure to make efficiencies and create better service synergies.
- Redesigning services to deliver savings including new innovative delivery models.

In order to deliver the foregoing, it is necessary that appropriate upfront resources are provided.

With council tax freeze grant at only 1% and given the pressures we are under, we are after careful consideration, protecting our taxbase by proposing an increase of 1.94% for 2015-16.

We do not make this decision lightly and are very mindful of the financial pressures on our residents at this time. The proposed increase on an average

band D household is equivalent to an increase of £3.47 per annum or just 7 pence extra per week.

This Conservative administration fully supports the Government's efforts to reduce the national deficit and improve public sector efficiencies.

The Council's priorities of Economic Development, Planning and Housing and Council Assets have informed the construction of the budget. We have invested in Economic Development making the Economic Development Apprentice permanent, and growth of some £23,000 has been found to move forward a number of inward investment initiatives; £590,000 of reserves are being used to resource key Staines-upon-Thames development projects which support both the economic development and asset priorities and will deliver ongoing revenue income; and pressures on temporary housing have been accommodated with the budget. In December we agreed an excellent deal for developing the Bridge Street car park site.

We are making £32,000 available to explore setting up a Business Improvement District for Staines-upon-Thames in a similar way to Guildford, Kingston and Camberley. This, if voted for by businesses, will generate significant ongoing additional funding for 5 years commencing 2016-17, achieved through a voluntary levy which would be used to meet business needs, for example funding events to attract increased footfall, or Christmas lights. This additional funding would be ring-fenced for solely for the benefit of businesses within the Business Improvement District area.

We are investing £300,000 of our treasury management funds into Funding Circle, a peer to peer funding arrangement, which will both give the Council a good return on investment but will also make funds available for small and medium size enterprises as an alternative to obtaining bank finance. Funding Circle provide appropriate risk evaluation ratings and risks would be spread through diversification. This is a practical way in which the Council can help local businesses to grow and has been adopted by other Surrey boroughs.

As always is the case, Cabinet, Management Team and Heads of Services have worked closely together to identify efficiencies and to balance the budget.

By protecting our income base we are ensuring that the Council can continue to maintain the support it provides to the voluntary sector which by value totals nearly £400,000 per annum. We strongly value our links with the Voluntary Sector and are proud to support this further example of partnership working to help local residents.

Community grants for Councillors have been increased by £500 per year for each Councillor to £1,000 from April 2015.

Interest rates remain at historically low levels and are likely to continue at that level for a while longer. The UK Base rate remains at just half of one percent, compared to this on our core investments we earned an average of 5.12% whilst maintaining a sensible approach to risk. Our diversified investment

strategy has continued to do well with ours being on track this year to generate £175,000 more than the budget target.

Those on the opposite side of the Chamber always like to challenge administrations on how much of the reserves they have used. Well, in each of the years under my Leadership the Council's reserves have risen.

With the Bridge Street deal we will see a very great increase in our capital reserves during 2015-16 and this in turn will enable us to maintain the capital programme, maximise investment income streams and be able to respond to strategic opportunities.

The Capital programme before the Council includes provision for several strategic acquisition strands.

- Firstly the programme builds in provision for up to £2m to acquire appropriate affordable housing to help ease the Council's housing pressures.
- Secondly, it includes £7m provision to provide the Council with the ability to move quickly if an opportunity arises within the Borough to acquire new more cost effective offices for the Council. This is in line with the decision by the Cabinet for us to pro-actively seek to acquire existing office accommodation rather than build new accommodation. This potentially will enable the Council to move more quickly to new accommodation, and represents better long term value than leasing.
- Recognising the value of enabling our older residents to remain independent, we are investing £250,000 in new Spelride buses

It is largely for these reasons that the Capital Programme provision for 2015-16 has been increased to £10.8m.

I am sure you will all agree that our local shopping areas are very important to our residents. I am delighted to announce the Capital Programme also includes £350,000 provision for enhancements to seven or eight of our shopping areas across the Borough. Building on the successful partnership with Surrey County Council with the Supporting Families programme, the County Council has agreed to consider match-funding our £350k so the enhancements will total some £700,000. This underlines our continuing commitment to supporting the local economy.

I intend to use this co-operation, as a platform, to consider a Strategic Board between Spelthorne and Surrey County Council, so as to better plan for major infrastructure initiatives.

It might have been tempting for us to have increased our largest fee income source by raising parking fees. However, we have continued to listen to the concerns of our retailers and local businesses and for the second year running this administration are not raising our parking fees.

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 in both private and public sector.

The Council has now reverted fully to the national local government employers' pay award annual settlement process. We already know the national pay deal for period 1st January 2015 to 31 March 2016 is for the majority of grades 2.2% (with higher percentage for the 5 lowest scale points). This has been built into the budget. We are recommending again (for the seventh year) that councillors forgo any annual increase in allowances.

We continue to be disappointed that local government is not being allowed to retain a larger proportion of business rates. For this Council potentially we retain 6.5% of the total business rates income we collect. Whilst we retain a limited proportion of any additional business rates collected, we are also exposed to additional risks with respect to bad debts and valuation appeals. An example of such risks can be highlighted by the impact of the recent Renshaw Industrial estate fire in Staines-upon-Thames.

However, for 2015-16 as one of the Surrey authorities with a higher rate of business rates growth we have decided to join what is known as the Surrey Business Rates pool which will enable us to retain 40% rather than 20% of any new business rates income growth. This will mean it will be even more important for us to carefully monitor business income and we have invested in improved processes to assist us with this. We will be working hard to encourage, retain and grow local business to maximise opportunities

In common with other Surrey districts and boroughs we have seen some four percent increase in our council tax base which has contributed some additional £250,000 towards the 2015-16 budget. This largely relates to the impact of the Council Tax Support Scheme bedding down.

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

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

Madam Mayor, I would like to now focus on some of the achievements we have made within our priority area of economic development.

A key priority for the Council is actively encouraging economic development. We are actively working to have a strong voice in this region's economic

development through working in partnership with the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

Competitiveness:

In the latest UK Competitive Index of 2013 Spelthorne has moved from 61st position to 13th out of 379 local authority areas in Great Britain. This proves how well our interventions such as the Staines-upon-Thames name changes, responses to aid businesses during flooding, are doing.

New Business Start-ups = Confidence:

There is good news for Spelthorne in the latest Start-up trends report. 65 new businesses started within the borough last month, the same amount as October and up 16 on November 2013. This leaves us 6th out of the 11 Surrey boroughs which is a healthy return relative to our size.

In terms of the rate of growth, the figures are very positive with Spelthorne ranking 24th out of the 326 English boroughs and districts i.e. in the top 10%. The year-to-date growth rate of 2.9% gives Spelthorne the fastest growing number of new businesses in Surrey the only borough with positive growth. The figures fare very favourably with Surrey as a whole (-8%) and our adjoining boroughs of Elmbridge (-11.9%) and Runnymede (-11.8 %) as well as bucking the trend of the rest of the country which has seen negative growth. We will continue to build on this and will not rest on our laurels.

Planning and Infrastructure Contributions - We negotiated £421,000 from 4 eligible schemes in the calendar year 2014 and over the same period secured approximately £560,000 in actual receipts. Receipts came from some of the 2014 schemes but also schemes negotiated in earlier years. A Community Infrastructure Levy will be introduced from 1 April 2015 and is expected to increase the amount of infrastructure contributions received to improve facilities for our residents.

We are working hard with housing partners to bring forward affordable housing units in the most cost effective way possible.

Flood Relief: Business Support Scheme

Vigorous negotiations with Government with regards to allocations for funding to support local businesses affected by the floods, saw the initial figure allocated rise from £35k to in excess of £300k of which £275k has been distributed directly to the bank accounts of those local businesses.

Waste

The DCLG funded waste project continues to increase the number of residents who can now recycle their waste at the kerbside. Since the project was implemented it has provided weekly enhanced waste services for more than 1500 residents across the borough, and diverted over 120 tonnes of waste from incineration to re-use.

Airport expansion

A major issue facing the Council, the residents and businesses of the borough is the process leading up to the national decision on the future provision of additional runway capacity in the UK. We have made it very clear that whilst the expansion is critical to our local economy, the challenges of noise, air quality, transport, and environmental issues need to be resolved. We will fight to ensure that any affected residents will get effective and comprehensive compensation if Heathrow is the chosen option.

The Council has achieved a number of projects for the benefit of the community in these particularly financially challenging times and include:

Supporting Families, the partnership we have undertaken with Surrey County Council and Elmbridge Borough Council and more recently expanded to include Epsom and Ewell has been nationally recognised as an example of best practice. We have helped ensure that Surreywide we have met the phase 1 targets and we are now moving onto an expanded phase 2. Most importantly the programme has already helped transform the lives of many families in the Borough.

Partnership to deliver services and ensure value for money

Working with Thames Valley Housing Association we have secured nomination rights to 29 housing units at the Bellway (Stoneway) scheme on the old Crooked Billet site. This will provide much needed affordable accommodation for those hard working families who cannot quite get onto the housing ladder without a helping hand

We have also delivered:

- 3 new play areas have been delivered in the last year in Stanwell as part of the Stanwell New Start scheme.
- We have successfully obtained £70k external funding from the Football Foundation to enable a major refurbishment of Kenynington Manor Pavilion.

Madam Mayor - I would like now to return to the detail of our budget and Council Tax proposals for 2015/16.

After excluding the £31.4m of housing benefits fully funded from government grant, our gross service revenue expenditure will be £24.0m. Deducting £9.7m of specific grants and fees and charges results in a net service expenditure figure of £14.3m. Our net expenditure next year, taking into account use of specific reserves and investment income is projected to be £13.1 million. Grants of approximately £2.9m and net retained business rates of approximately £3.1m produce external funding of around £6m million. This

leaves £7.2 million to be met from the Council Tax, which, after taking account of a collection fund surplus of £266,400 and a tax base of 37,971 properties at Band D, will require a Band D Council Tax of £182.44 to be levied.

As well as our own very small 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. These are Surrey County Council £1,219.68 (a 1.99% increase) and Police £215.89 (a 1.99% increase) which gives a total Band D Council tax of £1,618.01, giving a 1.98% increase overall.

Please note that the council tax figures for Surrey County Council produced in the Budget "Green Book" across the bands were out by a few pence. We have therefore circulated revised extracts showing the SCC council tax figures. These differences do not impact on the Budget and Council tax setting decision for this Council.

Madam Mayor before I conclude I would like to reiterate this administration's recent key achievements:

- Achieving an excellent rate of return on our investments which places us in a good position to reinvest additional capital receipts
- Increasing the Council's level of reserves
- Achieving a very considerable capital receipt for Bridge Street which will be re-invested to generate ongoing income streams
- Initiating the Towards a Sustainable Future programme to ensure that the Council is able to continue to provide the services needed by its residents.

Every one of these achievements will enable us to continue to deliver the services that our residents both deserve and expect from their Conservative Council!

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my thanks 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.

Madam Mayor, I should end by emphasising on our achievements and the progress the Borough has made under our Administration:

- We are successfully delivering on our programme of maximising value from the Council Assets with the very substantial Bridge Street receipt becoming available during 2015-16 to enable strategic acquisition and to be reinvested to generate ongoing income for the Council.

Council, 26 February 2015 - continued

- Despite the funding reductions we have maintained for our residents the Council's investment in Independent Living services, with the services provided by our Day Centres being expanded in partnership with Surrey County Council. The 2015-16 Capital Programme includes provision to purchase replacement Spelride buses which are so appreciated by our more vulnerable residents.
- We have continued to recognise the importance of ensuring the Council can appropriately respond to and support homeless people in the budget. For the second year running the Budget has incorporated growth to respond to pressures in this area. A practical example being the winter shelter in Walton we are supporting along with Runnymede, Elmbridge, voluntary and church groups.

I now formally move the recommendations of the Cabinet of 24 February 2015, as set out within the Green Book at pages 11- 27 of the agenda, detailing the precepts by the County Council and Surrey Police and the Band D Council Tax levy for the year 2015-16.

I am proud to stand before you and proclaim this Conservative administration has delivered quality and the best value for money services that matter most to our residents.

I believe that we have delivered what we promised.

Thank you Madam Mayor

Appendix B

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

Madam Mayor,

Members, Ladies and Gentlemen, Press

The recommendations this evening set out number of proposals within the budget for members to consider and approve, I agree with some of the comments made by Cllr Watts in his budget speech, some recommendation I am pleased to say will ensure continuity of the services that we and our residents value most. That said any ruling administration would produce a budget that protects the most valued front line services.

The current ruling party might well be surprised by my next comments, this budget is basically sound and certainly a step in the right direction, albeit there is still a need to improve even more our efficiency levels and yes we must invest for the future.

That said, we must invest in the right areas where we will get the best return on any investments made. There is a need to look at all areas of possible investment.

Sadly I don't see any forward thinking in this year's budget unless you consider the proposed selling off of Council assets has forward thinking, I only see disposal of Council assets has a retrograde step, so there is still room for considerable improvement.

The economy remains a challenge for us all, whilst the outlook appears more promising, economic growth is still very slow and not where one would hope it to be.

Uncertainties around Europe and beyond mean there is a need to remain both cautious and vigilant.

There is still a lot of work that needs to be done if we are going secure Spelthorne's economic future leading up to 2019/20 and beyond, 2019/20 is when the grant we receive from central government ceases.

I am delighted to see we are looking towards a sustainable future, of course I support that view for we must look towards a sustainable future, however how we achieve that is where there is disagreement between the parties'.

I said last year, it's not what is said within the budget, It's what the budget does not say, usually in any budget the devil is in the detail, this budget sadly lacks clear details in certain areas, therefore the devil will I suspect emerge throughout the coming 2015/16 municipal year.

People often ask me how do Councils arrive at their budget year on year, what happens or should happen, each departments spending patterns are

monitored throughout the year, that way you get an indication of where you can make savings or alternatively where growth bids are likely to be received from some service areas, some growth bids can be attributed to a Council's current corporate Priorities.

One such priority is the use of £531K from general reserves to fund delivery of towards a sustainable future, a significant amount of this funding will be used to engage property consultants relating to the redevelopment/disposal of Knowle Green and the acquisition of alternative Council offices.

I don't believe in disposing of Council assets as the best way forward to achieving a sustainable future, surely the right way is to make better use of those assets, not take the easy option of disposal.

Therefore the provision of £7 million from reserves for the purchase of alternative Council offices does not get my or Spelthorne Independent Party's support.

I am pleased to note that some provision is being made for the lower Thames flood relief scheme.

The 250k for spell ride buses I support.

I am pleased to note £32k is being made available to set up a business improvement district for Staines upon Thames.

I am also pleased to note there will be no increase in car parking fees' I feel sure this will be well received by the our retailers.

Albeit plans to sell off some Council car parks will not be so well received, especially when you consider our retailers are facing such strong competition from online shopping, disposing of our car parks will only succeed in driving more people to shop online.

It should also be noted that car parking fees are one of the Council's largest income streams. Therefore reducing the total of Council car parks we have does seem to go against supposedly encouraging economic development and growth in our town centres.

Economic development and growth can only be achieved if you put in place measures that will encourage people to use our shopping precincts, less car parking facilities are unlikely to encourage consumers to shop locally.

I read somewhere Spelthorne Borough Council is a strong supporter of business, but with regards to footfall in Staines it is the role of the retailer to enhance their offer to attract more people and business, I agree with those comments.

However ask yourself this question how is selling off some of our car parks for development demonstrating to the business community that this Council are strong supporters of business.

Madam Mayor

Tonight we have before us a proposal to increase Council tax by 1.94%. I question whether such an increase is necessary, we recently had the Council tax base raised by some 4% resulting in £250k unexpected extra income, has a result of the 4% rise.

Would it not be better to accept the 1% Government support grant worth around £35K which incidentally the Government will put into Council's baseline, meaning it's secured for the future? We have the 4% rise plus accepting the grant another 1% that totals 5% overall.

By not raising Council tax it would send a message to our residents that Spelthorne Borough Council recognised how badly the austerity programme introduced by the current Government and scheduled to continue well into the next parliament irrespective of the outcome of May's general election, has resulted in financial hardship for many families especially for those on lower incomes.

The amount our residents would be better off having no Council tax increase may be insignificant, however in the words of one supermarket giant, every little helps.

It should also be noted that over 100 local authorities across the Country have decided to take the government 1% freeze grant that's on offer.

I expect the current ruling party will accuse me of electioneering. That would be totally wrong, accuse me of caring for our residents, then yes I am guilty.

I will probably be criticized by the ruling party for not offering an alternative budget.

I can say it is almost impossible to deliver an alternative budget, to do that you need to be privy to all financial matters appertaining to Council business for which opposition parties are not.

The ruling party should consider this; we are a local authority, we are not in central Government, and at local level opposition parties are not the enemy; the economic climate is the enemy.

We should be working together especially if we want to achieve and deliver a sustainable future we can all embrace.

Madam Mayor

This budget has I have said already is basically sound, some good sections, some not so good.

Overall the budget relating to departments is what one would expect and are about right, some departments have identified where reduced expenditure could and have been achieved, you balance that out by for want of a better word taking from Peter and giving to Paul

Madam Mayor

Because of the 1.94% proposed increase in Council tax and the planned disposal of our present Council offices and number of car parks, which we are totally against.

Spelthorne Independent Party will not be supporting the budget recommendations before us this evening. If it were possible to break down the budget into certain sections we would give our support in those areas where appropriate, sadly that cannot be done.

Therefore we do not believe the overall budget recommendations before us this evening would be in the best interest of Spelthorne or its residents.

Thank you Madam Mayor

Appendix C

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

Thank you very much Madam Mayor

This is a strange environment to have a budget speech not specifically because local government is under a lot of pressure - been there before.

Not because there has been a general election looming - been there before. But because of the sheer uncertainty in the national picture.

Normally this close to an election, those of us who have been around for a few years or more can make a shrewd judgement on what is going to happen and how the cards are going to fall, and have an idea of what's going to happen down the road. This time round we don't.

Nobody knows what's going to come out at a national level and therefore none of us can make really sane, sensible long term predictions about what's coming out at the local level.

I do think in the light of that it is actually quite sensible to take a fairly pessimistic view because that's where all the signs seem to be leading. Should that change we'll be lucky, if it doesn't change we'll be prepared. So I think a general pessimistic view of what's going to happen, regardless of what happens at the general elections, and is the safe way to go at the moment.

Now normally the Liberal Democrat group would support the 1.94% increase in the Council Tax on the grounds of raising our base rate and not leaving us behind in the future.

But we may have had this unforeseen 4% rise in our base rate and in the light of that, this time, we cannot see any reason why we should take some more money from our residents. It might have been sensible to have taken the Government's 1%, yep, okay, we could probably live with that. But this 2% rise is not fair on our residents because like us they're in difficult times.

We have had some comments about CIL and PIC and how wonderful it is, and aren't we great for doing it. Well maybe my view is different. CIL and its predecessor came in six years ago, so why are we boasting about bringing in a scheme that will make money for this borough that we could have had six years ago. Think of all the revenue we've lost in that time.

And then we've got this lovely money for social housing, again I can't oppose that. That is something we need. We need it because of course we have a planning system that always rolls over, plays dead, and lets the developers off their contribution for social housing, so our residents pick up the tab. I don't really think that is particularly good, but you've got to have the money there because that is what we need.

I do think this is a budget with far too much asset stripping. I mean Councillor Ayers used the word sound, I use the word pretty. It looks nice, superficially it makes sense, rubber stamp it because you can't really argue against because you cannot find enough about it, but we don't either support the move out of this building, we see that as asset stripping. We have already heard of the assets and the revenue to be raised from bridge street car park.

That is significant and it is enough on its own to cushion the Council for the next 4 years, without selling off this building, without selling off car parks, which is why I think this budget is a panic measure of selling everything, we can rather than thinking and planning into the future.

Of course I welcome things like the business rate pool. That is very sensible. I commend the Leader for sorting that out. He has my full support, no problem.

The money for these Spelride buses and schemes like that, again, it is very nice and we have a common sense approach to things like that, we will certainly support those elements.

But in the end, when you dig down at this budget and look at the various budget headlines and you try and dig down below you really don't get very far. There is simply not enough detail. So we are asked to actually agree this budget on trust. Trust of a ruling group who spent £30,000 on a cabinet assistant because they couldn't do the job themselves. Trust on a ruling group who spent £60,000 on Laleham Park for nothing. Trust in a ruling group who spent £287,000 to resurface the top floor of the Elmsleigh Car Park. That might inspire your trust, it doesn't inspire mine and I can't support this budget.

Thank you.