

MINUTES OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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 2019 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell	A.E. Friday	D. Patel
C. Barnard	N.J. Gething	O. Rybinski
R.O. Barratt	A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader)	D. Saliagopoulos
I.J. Beardsmore	I.T.E. Harvey (Leader)	J.R. Sexton
J.R. Boughtflower	N. Islam	R.W. Sider BEM
S. Capes	A.T. Jones	R.A. Smith-Ainsley
S.A. Dunn	J.G. Kavanagh	B.B. Spoor
Q.R. Edgington	A.J. Mitchell	H.A. Thomson
M.P.C. Francis	S.C. Mooney	H.R.D. Williams

Councillor J.M. Pinkerton OBE, The Mayor, in the Chair

Apologies: Apologies were received from the Deputy Mayor, Councillor M.J. Madams and Councillors S.J. Burkmar, R. Chandler, S.M. Doran, P.C. Edgington, T.J.M. Evans and V.J. Leighton. Also from Mr Murray Litvak, Chairman of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee.

41/19 Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 December 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

42/19 Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

43/19 Announcements from the Mayor

The Mayor had circulated leaflets for her upcoming events which included:
Wednesday, 13 March - Race Night at Kempton Park
Friday, 22 March - Spelthorne's Got Talent
Tuesday, 23 April - St George's Day Lunch
Saturday, 27 April - Mayor's Charity Ball

44/19 Announcements from the Leader

The Leader made the following announcements:

“Firstly, I am pleased to announce that on Wednesday 30th January HRH Princess Alexandra paid a private visit to the Sunbury Walled Garden to view the Embroidery collection.

The new combined reception is now fully reopened and most of the work to relocate staff into renovated offices in the East and South Wings are complete. Congratulations to Siraj and his team for delivering this.

The redevelopment of the Bugle is to all intents and purposes complete and we will be welcoming our first tenants in the next couple of weeks.

Despite the efforts of a few we are now receiving very positive Press coverage, a very fair and balanced article appeared in this Monday’s Financial Times and I was able to explain our rationale on BBC5Live This is Money programme this morning. We are anticipating further positive exposure shortly.

As mentioned at our December Council meeting, we are continuing to work with Staines Park Residents Association towards a “Fields in Trust” commitment for Staines Park.

Our Capital Strategy has been published and property investment FAQs have been added to the website and social media accounts to explain the reasons behind our ambitious, yet prudent, strategy and what is enabling us to achieve.

We have responded to Heathrow’s latest consultation on proposed changes to airspace and future operations. These changes will have an impact on the whole Borough, not just those towns and villages closest to the airport, and don’t just relate to a third runway: they include changes to existing airport operations including the potential for an additional 25,000 flights.

Our response to the consultation includes the following points:

- We oppose an increase in flights before the third runway is operational and interim measures that will result in newly overflowed areas
- The Compton departure route, which results in low flying planes across our Borough, should be removed as soon as possible.
- A night-time ban should mean just that, except for emergencies; and fines for breaches of the ban should be used to compensate affected communities.

The consultation closes on 4 March 2019.

Comprehensive responses were also sent in respect of Surrey County Council’s recent consultations which proposed changes to five County Council service areas. Whilst we understand the financial pressure that the County Council is under, we will continue to look carefully at the changes to these services and make representations, where appropriate, to minimise adverse impacts.

Our Council has been working with partners to improve the CCTV coverage in Sunbury with new cameras being installed at Spelthorne Grove and Sunbury Cross roundabout. There are further plans to improve CCTV coverage in other parts of the Borough.

Clare Road shopping parade is the latest area to benefit from improvements following works to the shopping parades in Edinburgh Drive and Groveley Road. Works to improve Woodlands Parade, Ashford are expected to start soon.

As Members will recall we have been working on an initiative called “Every Ward at its best”; a project to deal with problem sites across the borough which could be an annoyance or an eyesore to residents and which would benefit from a fresh approach. The aim of the project was to help tackle these low level issues in a way that could lead to small but noticeable improvements to the Borough.

A Spelthorne restaurant owner was convicted of food hygiene offences and ordered to pay a total of £3,970 including fines, a victim surcharge and prosecution costs. We seek a high standard of food hygiene to protect our residents and will work to maintain this.

During the recent cold snap, the Council helped four street homeless clients into emergency accommodation, with an opportunity to explore ways to help them in the longer term.

The Council’s website has been refreshed to make it easier for people to find information that’s relevant to them and easier to view on mobile devices.

Spelthorne MP Kwasi Kwarteng took the Speaker’s chair for a lively common’s style schools’ debate supported by the Parliament Education Service.

We held a very well attended Budget Business Briefing at BP last Friday morning.”

45/19 Announcements from the Chief Executive

The Chief Executive made the following announcement:

“I should like to put on record my appreciation to all colleagues at Knowle Green for their sterling support and cooperation throughout the consolidation of our operational footprint into two wings of our Civic offices – codenamed Project Lima. As members will have registered, the reoccupation of the ground floor and the commissioning of a new integrated reception marks the final stage of the project that will pave the way for the west wing to be converted into 25 affordable housing units – a physical manifestation of our commitment to putting the communities we serve at the very heart of everything we do.”

46/19 Questions from members of the public

There were no questions from members of the public.

47/19 Petitions

There were none.

48/19 Treasury Management Strategy Statement

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2019/20.

The proposed Strategy represented an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness.

Resolved to approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2019/20.

49/19 Revenue Budget 2019/20

The Council considered the recommendation of Cabinet on the detailed Revenue Budget for 2019-20 and the proposed Council Tax for 2019-20. The Mayor referred councillors to the Budget Book (green cover) reflecting the decisions and recommendations made by Cabinet on 20 February 2019, including the precepts being levied by Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police.

The Mayor asked the Council to agree, in accordance with Standing Order 20.4, that the respective Budget speeches of the Group Leaders may each exceed 10 minutes in length if necessary.

Resolved to agree that the respective Budget speeches of the Group Leaders may each exceed 10 minutes in length if necessary.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey and the portfolio holder for Finance, Councillor H.R. Williams, made a joint statement on the Budget and the Council Tax and moved and seconded the recommendations on the detailed Budget for 2019-20 as set out in the report circulated in the Budget Book. The Leader of the Ashford and Staines Residents' Group, Councillor D. Saliagopoulos then made a statement. Councillor I.J. Beardsmore, Leader of the Liberal Democrats declined the opportunity to make a speech.

A copy of Councillors Harvey and Saliagopoulos speeches are attached to these minutes as **Appendices A and B** respectively.

At the conclusion of the debate on the Revenue Budget, the Mayor explained it was a legal requirement 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.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (23)	Councillors I.T.E. Harvey (Leader); A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader); M.M. Attewell; C. Barnard; R.O. Barratt; J.R. Boughtflower; S. Capes; M.P.C. Francis; A.E. Friday; N.J. Gething; N. Islam; A.T. Jones; J.G. Kavanagh; A.J. Mitchell; S.C. Mooney; D. Patel; J.M. Pinkerton; O. Rybinski; J. Sexton; R.W. Sider; R.A. Smith-Ainsley; H. A. Thomson; H.R.D. Williams
AGAINST (2)	Councillors D. Saliagopoulos; Q.R. Edgington
ABSTAIN (3)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore; S.A. Dunn; B.B. Spoor

Resolved:

1. To continue the Council's Local Council Tax Support Scheme with the current rules and regulations;
2. To continue the complete disregard of war pension / armed forces pension income from benefit calculations;
3. The growth and savings items as set out in the report's appendices;
4. The Council Tax Base for the whole council area for 2019/20. [Item T in the formula in Section 31b(3) of the local government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "act")] should be 39,688.00 band D equivalent dwellings and calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purpose for 2019/20 is £202.44 Per Band D equivalent dwelling;
5. To approve a £5 or 2.53% increase on Band D in the Spelthorne Borough Council element of the Council Tax for 2019/20. 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 2019/20.
 - c) To agree that the Council Tax base for the year 2019/20 is 39,688.00 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.
6. That the following sums be now calculated by the Council for the year 2019/20 in accordance with Section 31 to 36 of the Local Government Act 1992:

A	107,042,500	Being the aggregate of the amount which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of
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		the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
B	99,008,100	Being the aggregate of the amount which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act
C	8,034,400	Being the amount by which the aggregate at (A) above exceeds the aggregate at (B) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year
D	202.44	Being the amount at (C) above divided by the amount at 5c (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 Section 34(1) of the Act.
F	202.44	Being the amount at (D) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (E) above by the amount at 5c

		(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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7. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2019/20 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 £
134.96	157.45	179.95	202.44	247.43	292.41	337.40	404.88

Being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (F) 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.

8. That it be noted that for the year 2019/20 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:

Precepts issued to the Council

	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Surrey County Council	969.00	1,130.50	1,292.00	1,453.50	1,776.50	2,099.50	2,422.50	2,907.00
Surrey Police & Crime Commissioner	173.71	202.67	231.62	260.57	318.47	376.38	434.28	521.14

9. 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 as the amounts of Council tax for the year 2019/20.

The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive in accordance with the principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

As the billing authority, the council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK Local Government Finance Act 1992.

50/19 Capital Programme 2019/20

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Capital Programme for the period 2019/20 to 2022/23 in the light of the available resources and the corporate priorities and the Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 to 2022/23.

Resolved to approve:

1. the Capital Programme for 2019/20 to 2022/23
2. the Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 to 2022/23

51/19 Capital Strategy

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Capital Strategy.

The aim of the Capital Strategy was to provide a clear and concise account to residents and other stakeholders of how the Council is going to prioritise its capital expenditure in the short, medium and long term, and how it manages risks with respect to delivering those capital objectives.

The proposed Capital Strategy had been created in line with guidance documents provided by CIPFA.

Resolved to adopt the Capital Strategy as attached to the supplementary agenda.

52/19 Pay Award 2019/20

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Pay Award 2019/20.

The proposal had been subject to consultation and negotiation with UNISON.

Resolved to approve the 2019/20 pay award of 2.5% to all staff.

53/19 Pay Policy Statement

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

The Pay Policy Statement set out the Council's policies on a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff and the lowest paid employees, including:

- Remuneration of its Chief Officers
- Remuneration of its lowest paid employees
- The relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and the remuneration of those employees who are not Chief Officers
- The publication of and access to information relating to remuneration of Chief Officers.

Resolved to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2019/20.

54/19 Members' Allowances 2019

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019/20, as set out in Annex 1 to the Independent Remuneration Panel's report.

Resolved to approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the Members' Allowances Scheme 2019-2020, as set out below:

Allowance	Current amount	Number	Recommended Allowance for 2019/20¹
Basic:	£6049	39	£6200
Special Responsibility:			
Leader of the Council	£13911	1	£14259
Deputy Leader	£9182	1	£9412
Cabinet Member for finance	N/A	1	£9412
Cabinet Members	£6956	6 ²	£7130
Spelthorne Joint Committee Chairman/Vice-Chairman	£4877	1	£4999
Planning Committee Chairman	£5564	1	£5703

Licensing Committee Chairman	£4869	1	£4991
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman	£4869	1	£4991
Audit Committee Chairman	£3479	1	£3566
Opposition Group Leader	£3241	1	£3322
Co-Optees' Allowance	£1000 (Chair) £500 (Vice-Chair)	1 1	£1000 (Chair) £500 (Vice-Chair)
Total Budget	£336,095		£346,735

¹ On an assumption of a 2.5% staff pay award

² Based on the existing Cabinet and excluding the Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Finance

Allowance for expenditure incurred in relation to Approved Duties (Schedule 1 to Scheme)	Unchanged allowances for 2019/20
Dependants' Carer's Allowance	Reimbursement of actual costs incurred

Travelling and Subsistence Allowances	
Motor Mileage Allowance (per mile)	
Cars	Up to 999cc – 46.9p 1000cc – 1199cc – 52.2p 1200cc and over – 65p
Motorcycles	24p
Cycle	Nil
Day Subsistence Allowance	Reimbursement of actual costs incurred

55/19 Laleham Park

Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the capital programme provision for the demolition of Laleham Park Pavilion and toilets, and replacement with a new toilet facility and hardstanding area for mobile catering.

Resolved:

1. to approve the capital programme provision of £200,000 for Laleham Park Pavilion is carried forward from 2018/19 to 2019/20 and
2. that the capital provision is increased by £50,000 to a total of £250,000.

56/19 Joint Appointments Panel for Independent Persons appointments 2019

Council considered the recommendation of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee on the appointment of Independent Persons 2019–2023.

Resolved:

1. That the Monitoring Officer (Michael Graham) be authorised to establish a Joint Appointments Panel with participating Surrey councils' monitoring officers so that the Panel may:
 - (a) advertise for, short-list, and interview candidates and
 - (b) make recommendations to the respective councils for the appointment of Independent Persons under Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011, for a four-year term of office expiring in May 2023;
2. That the Independent Persons appointed by this Council be entitled to receive the same level of travelling expenses as are provided for councillors under the Scheme of Allowances for Councillors; and
3. That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to withdraw from joint arrangements in the event that we are not content with the process or proposed appointments, and make separate arrangements for Spelthorne Borough Council to appoint its Independent Persons.

57/19 Review of procedure for Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship

Council considered the recommendation of the Members' Code of Conduct Committee on the Policy on Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsorship.

It was moved and seconded that the Policy on Gifts Hospitality and Sponsorship be amended as proposed in the supplementary agenda papers, and subject to the following changes proposed by the Committee:

- a. That the nominal value for gifts be raised to £50;
- b. Offers of hospitality open to all members to be recorded by officers
- c. Gifts below the nominal value received by Refuse operatives, Community Day centre staff, Meals on Wheels and Spelride drivers from grateful members of the public are not required to be recorded

- d. Gifts below the nominal value received by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor, in the course of fulfilling their civic role are not required to be recorded.

The Monitoring Officer thanked the Committee for their consideration of his report on the Policy and advised the Council on the recommendations before them.

Councillor H.R. Williams moved and Councillor I.T.E. Harvey seconded an amendment to the recommendation as follows:
under part a. – amend the words “be raised to £50” to read “remain at £35” and remove part d. in its entirety.

The Leader, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey, called for a recorded vote on the amendment.

The vote was as follows:

FOR (21)	Councillors I.T.E. Harvey (Leader); A.C. Harman (Deputy Leader); M.M. Attewell; C. Barnard; I.J. Beardsmore; J.R. Boughtflower; S. Capes; S.A. Dunn; Q.R. Edgington; M.P.C. Francis; A.T. Jones; S.C. Mooney; D. Patel; O. Rybinski; D. Saliagopoulos; J. Sexton; R.W. Sider; R.A. Smith-Ainsley; B.B. Spoor; H. A. Thomson; H.R.D. Williams
AGAINST (6)	Councillors A.E. Friday; N.J. Gething; N. Islam; J.G. Kavanagh; A.J. Mitchell; J.M. Pinkerton;
ABSTAIN (1)	Councillors R.O. Barratt

The amendment was carried.

The Council then voted on the substantive motion and

Resolved that the Policy on Gifts Hospitality and Sponsorship be amended as attached and subject to the following changes proposed by the Committee:

- a. That the nominal value for gifts remain at £35;
- b. Offers of hospitality open to all members to be recorded by officers and
- c. Gifts below the nominal value received by Refuse operatives, Community Day centre staff, Meals on Wheels and Spelride drivers from grateful members of the public are not required to be recorded.

58/19 Report from the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor I.T.E. Harvey, presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 February, which outlined the matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

59/19 Report from the Chairman of the Audit Committee

The Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor H.A. Thomson, presented a report on behalf of the Chairman, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

He also made the following statement:

“At the Audit Committee on 5th February, the external auditors signed off, with an unqualified opinion, the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17. This opinion had been significantly delayed due to the amount of time KPMG has spent coming to a view on its Value for Money opinion.

Members will be aware that KPMG has issued a qualified adverse opinion on the Council’s 2016/17 arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, or ‘Value for Money’ opinion. This was in relation to the purchase of the BP campus. It is important to understand that the ‘Value for Money’ opinion is not about a judgement on whether the BP transaction itself represents “value for money” for the Council, but rather is a the auditor’s view on whether the governance arrangements would result in decisions that are likely to contribute towards value for money. The auditors did comment to the Committee that if the value of the transaction had been lower the opinion would have been “non-standard” rather than “adverse”

The Council has put on record that it disagrees with the auditor’s findings that there were ‘significant weaknesses’ in those arrangements, for the following reasons:

- The Council’s failure to publish decisions delegated to officers in the correct format in the Council’s view has no bearing on securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- The Council provided an audit trail of the decision making process consisting of a large volume of documentation in the form of emails. Due to the timing of the BP purchase, teleconferences were necessary between our advisors, senior officers and councillors. These emails ensured a written record of decision taking and the discussions which took place during those calls.
- The Council had fully considered the financial impact on the Authority at the end of the BP 20 year lease. It had assessed alternative use values for the site, bearing in the mind the strength of the location close to an expanding Heathrow and a future Crossrail 2 station, with reports from competent professionals which had been shared with the auditors.
- The Council had considered and took into account Counsel’s opinion on the proportionality of the BP investment in making its decision. The fact this consideration was not documented has no bearing on whether the Council can deliver its services and secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.”

60/19 Report from the Chairman of the Licensing Committee

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

Councillor D. Saliagopoulos asked what was being done to address the numbers of taxis parking outside the rank on Gresham Road. Councillor Sider explained that attempts to increase ranks both at this location and in the town centre had not been successful. He offered to raise the matter with officers and respond directly to Councillor Saliagopoulos.

61/19 Report from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor S.C. Mooney, presented her report which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

62/19 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.

Councillor Smith-Ainsley thanked the principal Planning Officer, Russ Mounty, for his comprehensive report and presentation on the Shepperton Studios application. The debate on this matter of national significance, heard at Committee on 12 February, had been a credit to the Council.

63/19 Motions

No motions were received.

64/19 Questions on Ward Issues

There were no questions on Ward issues.

65/19 General questions

No General questions were received.

Councillor Ian Harvey and Councillor Williams**COUNCIL TAX SPEECH 2019****Cllr Harvey**

Madam Mayor – I am pleased and honoured to present, on behalf of this Conservative administration, the Budget Report for the Municipal Year 2019-20, and to reflect on the achievements of our administration over the last year in maintaining the Council's finances on a sustainable basis, protecting and enhancing delivery of services and starting to deliver much needed affordable homes for our residents.

For the third year running **we have set a below inflation council tax increase [when compared to RPI]** whilst delivering a balanced budget without the use of reserves. For the second year running we have kept our capital financing on a more sustainable basis by making a revenue contribution to fund non-income generating capital expenditure. We continue to focus on investing in our staff, assets and services to ensure we can deliver the high- quality services our residents and businesses deserve.

As pulling together the Budget is a team effort involving both officers and Cabinet members I would like, with your permission Madam Mayor, to ask our Finance Portfolio Holder to present the detailed financial elements of the speech in a moment.

On the agenda of this Council we also have the draft Capital Strategy approval, which has been reviewed and commended through a scrutiny process led by our Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Capital Strategy clearly articulates the journey we have been on from generating additional income to closing the Council's underlying Budget gap, to generating income to offset revenue impacts of the initial stage of our housing delivery programme, to where we are now where we feel we do not presently need to seek further purely commercial investment acquisitions. We will instead focus on delivering homes and regeneration within the Borough. Over the next 5 years we are looking

to deliver more than 600 new homes. Our Finance Portfolio Holder will talk in more detail later about the Capital Strategy.

Along with Councillor Williams, my aim is to give Members an understanding of the context we have been operating in, our approach to this new budget, and the achievements in this third year of my office as your Leader.

During the last twelve months, this Conservative Administration and senior officers have continued to build on the achievements of the previous year by further growing our commercial property portfolio to generate a significant and sustainable income stream for the Council. This enables us to offset revenue impacts of our housing delivery programme. Our commercial property portfolio value is now approximately **£1billion** and is generating an ongoing net revenue contribution of **£10m per annum** to support the provision of services. This is after meeting all costs including interest, which for clarity is fixed for the duration of all loans, and crucially capital repayments. This has offset the very substantial loss of grant income from central government and other funding cuts and has enabled us to address the impact of new service delivery challenges such as the Homelessness Reduction Act, taking effect last April, and to address organisational resilience issues.

During 2018-19, we acquired from Brockton Capital, 3 best in class offices in Reading, Slough and Uxbridge. People may be wondering about the location of these acquisitions. All three are very much within the Heathrow economic functional area which is a major driver of the prosperity of the Borough. They are all relatively close, with Reading being the furthest away from here at 30 miles. All three are located close to key transport infrastructure being opposite or next to railway stations. Reading will benefit from Cross Rail. Unlike our previous acquisitions at the point of acquisition they were not fully let, however they come with rent and rates guarantees for two years for two of them and four year guarantees for the third and we have already let more than 16,000 sq feet of the initial vacant space, with interest being shown in a further 172,000 sq feet equivalent to 70% of the initial vacant space. We are employing agents to actively market the available space and we have a strong pipeline of

interest. We are on track to be fully let on all three before the guarantees expire. As has been explained to Councillors at several sessions at our Overview and Scrutiny Committee, these acquisitions have been underpinned by extensive due diligence and worst case scenario modelling. I know some people find it difficult to get their heads around how we have been able to afford to borrow so much money and why we have been doing so. Firstly, we can fix long term loans at extremely low rates of interest by borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board. Secondly, we are making very prudent investments which will deliver income that more than covers interest, capital repayments and management costs. We have taken particular care to assess the sites we have purchased ensuring they are located in areas which will continue to be in demand in the future, for example by selecting sites close to key transport infrastructure. We have also very carefully evaluated the financial health of prospective tenants in our commercial assets and continue to do so on an ongoing basis to pick up early warning signs. We borrow to acquire prime assets in order to deliver long-term robust income streams which are being used to continue to support the provision of services and to fund the first phase of our housing delivery programme.

It is important to stress once again that we are not investing in order to benefit from increases in the sales values of these properties. We are not “betting on the property market” as some ill-informed, and presumably politically motivated, commentators have suggested. We are investing for the rental income these properties generate, which is guaranteed for the long term – typically 10 to 25 years at the time of purchase.

These acquisitions mean that we are able to put forward a balanced budget, strengthening our resources and service delivery capacity even though 2019-20 will be the third year in which this Council will:

- receive no general Revenue Support Grant from the Government;
- have a 21% (£198 thousand pounds) cut in our New Homes Bonus Grant;

- and reduced funding from Surrey County Council for recycling and Independent Living support – to date approximately a five hundred thousand pounds.

I am pleased to say that, for the third year running, **we are putting forward a balanced budget without any use of reserves. Indeed we are adding £6m to reserves which contribute to our commercial assets sinking funds. The fact that we are adding to reserves rather than drawing them down like a number of Councils is reflected in a good set of scores from the new CIPFA resilience index.**

Not only are we putting our revenue budget on a sustainable basis, we are also maintaining the funding of our Capital Programme on a more sustainable footing after decades of relying on selling assets and spending capital receipts. For the second year running, we are ensuring that capital spending, which is not funded by specific grant and which does not generate future income streams (for example housing development) or cashable savings, will be funded from revenue contributions to capital. In this budget there is a seven hundred and forty seven thousand pound revenue contribution towards Capital.

In contrast to our position of continuing to maintain our budget on a sustainable basis, Surrey County Council faces very significant financial pressures and is balancing its 2019-20 budget by a combination of £82m of service transformations, use of reserves and additional income from business rates. This has had a knock-on adverse impact on the Surrey districts and boroughs, such as ourselves. Since 2017-18 Surrey County Council cuts have effectively switched £five hundred thousand pounds, of expenditure from Surrey's budget to Spelthorne's, and this figure will no doubt increase in future years.

This Councils has actively responded to the five consultations recently undertaken by Surrey County Council on service changes including Children Centres. We have robustly sought to ensure that the needs of our residents are heard and taken into account in any service changes. We have not only managed to avoid significant frontline service reductions, but we are investing in staff, assets, and

resilience. The main areas of investment in this budget relate to Staffing, Environmental Health and ICT which I will now say a bit more about before describing the context of the Budget:

Staffing

We need to retain skilled and dedicated staff in order to deliver our services to our residents. In recent years we have lost staff even to smaller neighbouring councils in a number of professional service areas. I am pleased to say that our Council has successfully negotiated with the local Unison branch a Collective Agreement for pay and conditions. This will enable us to flexibly respond to the local circumstances facing this Council and to seek to make fair pay increases which will assist us in recruiting and retaining staff. Subject to affordability, we will seek to at least match the headline national employers' percentage increase going forwards.

We have built in provision to cover up to 2.5%, into the budget for 2019-20 for the first pay increase under the Collective Agreement, the cost of this is three hundred and thirty thousand pounds.

We are investing additional funds to strengthen our skills and resources in our Environmental Health, and ICT teams.

Despite generating an additional rental income since 2016-17 of approximately by now, ten million pounds per annum, and delivering staffing efficiencies, we continue to face the primary challenge of ensuring the Council's financial viability in the face of national future uncertainty. The options open to us are maximising value from assets, generating new income streams and delivering services in new and more efficient ways. Our Administration will continue to pursue all of these activities in a business-like manner.

I would now like to pass over to Cllr Howard Williams, our Portfolio Holder for Finance, who will explain the finer details of this proposed Budget for 2019-20.

Like most of the UK public sector and particularly local government, this Council is facing a challenging financial future, not only because of expected future cuts but also because of financial and economic uncertainty. 2019-20 will be the third year we do not receive **any** revenue support grant whilst being expected to take on additional service responsibilities, such as those required under the Homelessness reduction Act. We have been facing the prospect of having to pay the Government a grant of seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds, ie effectively a negative grant. We are pleased to say that the Government listened to the representations of ourselves, other Surrey Councils and similarly affected Councils and has dropped the proposals for now. However beyond 2019-20 we and local government as a whole face significant funding uncertainties as we await the outcome of the Spending Review in the summer of this year which will determine how much the Treasury will allow the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to let councils retain the taxes, fees and charges they earn. We then also have the so called Fair Funding Review which will determine how that pot is divided up, and then we have the implementation of the so called “75 per cent” business rates retention scheme nationally. Under the business rates retention scheme we believe there is a significant risk there will be a transfer of funds away from Surrey councils and also from lower tier districts and boroughs to upper tier counties. We also anticipate that the Treasury will seek to recover the £750k per annum “negative grant” from us in the guise of another “initiative”. In our outline budget projection we are assuming a reduction in our funding allowed by central government of more than £1.5m

In the last two years we have started to experience adverse knock-on impacts from Surrey County’s financial difficulties including reductions in funding from County for independent living services and reductions in our recycling income. Current estimates put the cost of these cuts at five hundred thousand pounds to Spelthorne. Additionally of course we face inflation pressures which for some supplies have been significant for the last year. A “perfect storm” of continuing cuts and large cost

increases in supplies brought on by Brexit uncertainty could be around the corner. These factors reinforce the need for us to continue to seek out opportunities to generate additional ongoing income streams and deliver further service efficiencies over the next two years.

Before I focus on our Revenue Budget I would like to touch on our Capital Strategy and the approach we have taken to managing risks with respects to commercial asset acquisitions we have made. As the Capital Strategy makes clear, contrary to the impression given by some media coverage, having successfully closed the underlying revenue gap created by withdrawal of government funding, we are ceasing to actively pursue commercial acquisitions out of the Borough and are now focused on driving regeneration and housing delivery within the Borough. As well as acquiring the high-value, high-profile income-generating commercial properties focused on by the media, we have also been buying smaller, strategic sites in the borough that can be converted into residential properties. We now have sufficient land and property as a result of these smaller, strategic acquisitions to provide over 600 new homes over the coming 5 years. The focus of any finance-raising initiatives will therefore be on shorter term requirements to cover shorter term cost pressures. We will continue to manage very carefully our commercial property portfolio, with regular reports on the Portfolio as a whole, monitoring the financial health of tenants, and using internal and external expertise to manage the properties. We are currently setting aside £6m per annum to build up our sinking funds to cover future risks.

I echo the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in commending the Capital Strategy document. The Strategy clearly sets out the journey we have been on with regard to acquisitions and now with respect to delivery of housing to meet the needs of our residents. The Strategy sets out how we manage risk. We are aware that there has been some critical press coverage of our approach to acquisitions, but one has to query the motivations behind some of these reports and also to recognise that a number of these reports have been ill-informed and very misleading. Every policy we follow, every action we take is put in the public as is our Capital Strategy. It is written with the layperson in

mind, no specialist knowledge is needed to understand it and it will be available on the council's website. We also invite those who criticise our strategy to offer their valid alternatives.

Just before Christmas last year, the Government announced further loosening of the controls over council tax increases, but only for Police and Crime Commissioners who will now be allowed to increase Band D council tax by up to £24. The limits of (the greater of) 3% or £5 per year on a Band D property remain applicable to districts and Boroughs. In our case a £5 increase equates to a 2.53% increase (as opposed to 2.6% last year). We have given very careful consideration to the setting of this year's council tax. We know that household budgets are under pressure, with many finding that incomes are not keeping pace with inflation. We also know that residents do not want us to reduce or cut valuable services. And we need to bear in mind the need to prepare for potentially very significant funding reductions from 2020-21 onwards possibly in excess of £1.5m. We have decided to increase council tax for 2019-20 by an amount that is lower than the maximum increase allowed by the Government. We will increase our council tax by 2.53% or £5 on a band D property. This is slightly less than the rate of inflation and less than the increases in council tax being made by Surrey Police (10% or £24 on Band D) and Surrey County Council (2.99% or £42.21 on band D). This will be the third year in a row when we have managed to set a council tax increase below the inflation rate as measured by the Retail Price Index.

Our proposed increase on an average band D household is equivalent to an increase of £5 per annum or just under 10 pence extra per week. Coupled with the fact that Spelthorne retains just over 10p in every £1 of council tax we collect on behalf of ourselves, the police and the County, we believe this demonstrates our commitment to keep our portion of the bill as low as we can whilst protecting local services.

Interest rates continue to remain at historically low levels and, with current economic uncertainties, are likely to continue at these levels for a while longer. The UK base-rate is currently just three quarters of one percent. In contrast, we earned an average of 4.4% on our core cash investments

whilst maintaining a sensible and prudent approach to risk. Our investment strategy for our cash reserves which we are continuing to shape and improve is doing very well. An average rate of return of 4.4% is an excellent return compared to the 0.5% many councils continue to accept.

Madam Mayor - I would like now to return to the detail of our budget and Council Tax proposals for 2019/20.

After excluding the £32 million of housing benefits which are fully funded from government grant, our gross service revenue expenditure will be £31.3 million. Deducting £10.3m pounds of specific grants, fees and charges, results in a net service expenditure figure of £21.0 million. Once we take into account, gross commercial income of £50.6m, interest on invested funds of £1.3m, the contributions to sinking fund reserves of £6.4m and revenue contributions to capital (seven hundred and fifty thousand pounds) and debt interest and loan interest and repayment of £36.5m, our net expenditure next year is projected to be twelve million seven hundred and eighty nine thousand pounds. New Homes Bonus of approximately seven hundred and fifty four thousand pounds and net retained business rates, and associated section 31 grants totalling approximately three million nine hundred and eighty one thousand pounds produce external funding of around five million three hundred thousand pounds. This leaves eight million, and fifty three thousand pounds to be met from the Council Tax. Taking account of a collection fund surplus of £19,000 and a tax base of **39,688** properties at Band D, will require a Band D Council Tax, of £202.44 per annum to be levied, for the Borough Council element of the bill.

There will be precepts from Surrey County Council and Surrey Police added to Council Tax. Both these organisations have also faced difficult decisions on council tax levels and, unlike Spelthorne, will be increasing their share of Council Tax by the maximum amount possible. Surrey Police will increase council tax by 10%. Surrey County Council in response to its funding gap is looking to raise its general council tax element by 2.99%. to **£1,453.50** and Surrey Police by 10.1% to **£260.57**. To reiterate, Spelthorne's element of the Band D council tax will increase by 2.53% to £202.44. This

makes the total Band D Council tax £1,916.51 which is a 3.86% increase overall. The Borough increase as a percentage is less than the amounts increased by Surrey County Council and Surrey Police. This means the Borough Council share of the total Council Tax bill for residents drops even lower to just 10.6%.

However, Madam Mayor there is still more work to be done to ensure that we continue to stay on a strong sustainable financial footing.

I would now like to pass back to the Leader, Cllr Ian Harvey

[Cllr Harvey](#)

With our ambitious but prudent financial strategy we are ensuring that the Council can continue to support the voluntary sector to the sum of approximately three hundred thousand pounds per annum. We strongly value our links with the voluntary sector who do an excellent job of helping those in need in our Borough.

The Capital Programme before the Council includes:

- £10.1 million in 2019-20 to complete the Ceaser Court housing development of 55 flats
- Five million pounds for completing the conversion of West Wing of the Council's offices here at Knowle Green in to 25 affordable housing flats
- Twenty eight million pounds for the Thameside mixed residential, office and retail development in Staines-upon-Thames
- One million five hundred thousand pounds for development of affordable housing at the White House site.
- Forty million pounds for potential regeneration and strategic acquisitions within the Borough
- Seven million and ninety thousand pounds for design and early stage work on progressing a replacement Spelthorne Leisure centre. This will progress following further consultation on the evaluation of alternative sites within the Borough.

- £2.6m on refurbishment and building plans to improve the supply of emergency accommodation for families and singles in the borough.

The Capital Programme provision for 2019-20 totals seventy eight million pounds, the majority of which is focused on moving forward our housing delivery projects

We will seek to build upon our existing partnerships and drive forward partnership working with both private and public sector organisations where appropriate.

Subject to affordability, we will undertake, under our local Collective Agreement, that we will always seek to at least match the headline national employers' percentage increases. This will enable us to improve staff recruitment and retention, so protecting the quality of service delivery for our residents.

In the meantime in order to meet our future financial challenges we will focus ever more closely on:

- maximising income from assets,
- procurement savings
- flexible use of technology
- looking at how we deliver and prioritise services to residents
- reducing the running costs of our operational assets. Most notably we are reducing the size of our office footprint, which both enables the creation of 25 affordable housing units, while also reducing our office running costs (business rates, heat and light etc), The project to reconfigure the Council Offices is now virtually complete.

Madam Mayor, I have rightly concentrated on our achievements with regard to Financial Sustainability and I would like to now to illustrate briefly some of the achievements we have made within our other priority areas of Economic Development, Housing, and Clean and Safe Environment.

Economic Development

- We have a strong voice in this region's economic development, working in partnership with the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). We are focused on how we can use this

relationship to leverage funding in the future to support regeneration projects within our Borough

- We organised the first ever Spelthorne Means Business Awards last October which was hugely successful and will be back by popular demand later this year. This show cased the health of our local economy and the dynamism of businesses within the Borough
- Speaking of the health of the local economy we were delighted to see Primark open in Staines-upon-Thames last year and to then be followed by the opening of Decathlon and the Premier Inn. There have been set backs with the departure of Waitrose from the town, and it is disappointing to see the Waitrose site still empty. However, we have a new Iceland store in the High Street which opened just this Tuesday, and we look forward to the arrival of Lidl to the town. I would also like to express our happiness that the future of HMV in Staines has been secured and we look forward to HMV's centenary celebrations in a few years! Compared to many towns the occupancy rates in our towns, in this challenging climate for the retail sector, is quite good
- We have continued to actively support the Staines-upon-Thames Business Improvement District which has run a number of events and has completed a successful pilot of monthly Sunday (second Sunday of the month) farmers' markets. As an initiative to support footfall the Council agreed to make parking in the Council-run car parks free after 4pm on the three Thursdays in the run up to Christmas. In the new financial year we are launching with the BID, a pilot scheme discounted parking for the Staines-upon-Thames retailers employees to help the retailers retain staff and improve utilisation in our car parks.
- We continue to lobby actively for the Transport for London Oystercard and Zone 6 to be extended to the Borough and are funding a study to set out the business case.
- We recognise and welcome the major positive impact Heathrow airport has on our economy and the potential boost to that economy of an expanding airport. However, we also need to

ensure that we very thoroughly and robustly evaluate and respond to Heathrow's expansion plans particularly with regard to airport facilities which will be pushed into the north of the Borough and with respect to the need that noise and pollution impacts are mitigated as far as possible for our residents. This has generated significant additional work for the Council which we cannot deliver with existing resources. Although we are receiving some financial reimbursement from Heathrow, the net underlying full year impact will be sought from Heathrow to alleviate any further budgetary pressure.

- We supported the Surrey's councils successful bid to become a 100% Business Rates retention pilot for 2018/19 and this in turn has enabled us to earmark funding to leverage additional Enterprise M3 and private funding to enable the implementation of superfast fibre broadband to 3,000 homes and businesses in Staines-upon-Thames shortly which will give a major competitive edge to the town and will help our businesses thrive.
- The additional retained business rates has also enabled the Council to fund the setting up of the Heathrow Launchpad (despite the name there is no sponsorship or involvement from the airport) to act as an incubator supporting start up and small businesses in the Borough and to help them grow and thrive.
- We have continued to move forward our bid to the Department for Transport for a Southern Light Railway (SLR) link to Heathrow. Whilst some bids have fallen by the wayside we are still in the competition. If we are successful with the bid the building of the link would not only improve access to the airport for the many residents who work there, but would also have a transformative impact on Staines-upon-Thames confirming it as an airport city and boosting the economy of the Borough. Unlike the competing heavy rail proposals, Spelthorne's SLR link would not damage Staines Moor, a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Housing The level of building activity can be a good barometer of the health of a local economy. In the last financial year we saw 250 net additional dwellings constructed. Just 9 of these were 'affordable' dwellings. We also had 1010 homes under construction and planning permissions for a further 947 homes. The Planning Team has worked extremely hard and made good progress in moving the Local Plan preparation forward. The draft Local Plan will be released for consultation later this year.

Under our administration this Council is now starting to deliver much needed affordable and other types of homes for our residents

- **Churchill** – I am delighted to say that in October we handed over the keys to three extremely happy local families to move into our affordable homes in Churchill Way, Sunbury. These families had been on our Housing Register.
- **The Bugle** – Similarly I am pleased to report that practical completion on the 8 flats at the Bugle took place last week and tenants will move in early March. Again we using the accommodation to address the needs of people we have been supporting and in doing so we also make significant savings on our homelessness budget.
- **Ceaser Court**- We are making good progress with Ceaser Court (formerly Benwell House). We are about to appoint a contractor for the main works which will get underway shortly and will be completed in 2020. This will deliver 55 flats.
- Last April saw the implementation of the **Homelessness Reduction Act**. As the Housing Options team reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee last month we prepared thoroughly for the new processes and have coped well. Spelthorne's numbers of families in temporary accommodation have since the new Act commenced remained relatively stable, whereas many other councils have proportionally seen significant increases in their numbers.

This partly reflects the excellent preventive work of the Housing Options Team and in part is a sign that through our various initiatives we are starting to make an impact

- One of those initiatives which we are proud of is the Rent Assured scheme which has seen the number of homes put through the scheme by private sector landlords rise to approximately 70.

Clean and Safe Environment

- We continue to see a steady uptake in our garden waste collection system and will aim to introduce further recycling streams during 2019 to help towards achieving 50% recycled.
- As part of our WW1 commemorations in 2018 we committed to the planting of 851 trees, 1 for each of the soldiers, from what is now Spelthorne, who lost their lives during or after the war as a result of injuries sustained in battle. We have already planted the first 100 trees in the Centenary Wood in Laleham Park and a further 200 across the Borough. We will continue to plant during 2019 until all 851 are in place.
- As part of its response to its financial pressures, Surrey County Council has taken control of the income from recyclable materials away from districts and boroughs. This has resulted in a cumulative fall in income for us since 2018-19 which will increase further in 2020-21 to £197,000 per annum.

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

- Delivering additional affordable homes to meet the needs of our residents
- Pro-actively pursuing initiatives to ease the pressure on our homelessness register
- Having generated £10m of ongoing net income per annum to enable us to protect and enhance the services for our residents in contrast to some other councils in Surrey and many across the country.
- Continuing to maintain an excellent rate of return on our financial investments which places us in a good position to reinvest additional capital receipts

- We have continued to invest in delivering our Independent Living Services, with one hundred thousand pounds capital being spent to improve facilities at the Greeno Centre.
- Equally we have responded to the needs of our younger residents maintaining and refurbishing play areas in our parks.

These achievements enable us to continue to deliver the services that our residents both deserve and expect from this Conservative Council!

I would like to thank Councillor Howard Williams, our Financial Portfolio Holder and also all other Cabinet Members, as well as the Chief Executive and his Management Team especially Terry Collier and his financial colleagues and all the staff for their support and assistance in preparing this budget. In November we organised a moving 100 Years Remembrance of the ending of World War One at Knowle Green with local schools. Michael Graham, the Head of Corporate Governance and a host of volunteers put a great deal of effort into making this a successful and memorable event.

Before I conclude, in looking back over the last year, I would like to once more highlight the sad passing of Gerry Ceaser last year. Gerry, through his variety of roles, including as former Leader of this Council and Mayor and his work with charities had given so much to the Borough and we will miss him. Sadly Gerry Ceaser was not the only former Mayor of this Borough to pass away in the last 12 months. We also lost Sam Budd who was a real gentleman and will also be sadly missed.

Standing here looking back on the three years of my administration, I can say with confidence that we have put the Council's finances on a much more robust basis, enabling us to invest in improving resilience and avoid the type of cuts some other councils in Surrey are now facing. This Conservative administration will continue to ensure that the Council delivers quality and the best value for money services that matter most to our residents and businesses. We will in particular seek to provide services the most vulnerable in our community need. From what I have set out in this speech with respect to our achievements over the last year and our approach to ensuring a sustainable future, everyone can see that we are delivering on our promise that ***Spelthorne Means Business.***

I now formally move the recommendations of the Cabinet of 20 February 2019, as set out within the Budget Book, detailing the precepts by the County Council and Surrey Police and the Band D Council Tax levy for the year 2019-20 and commend this Budget to the Council.

Thank you Madam Mayor

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**Budget speech of the Leader of Staines and Ashford Residents' Group –
Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos**

Madam Mayor, thank you very much.

I believe as the opposition that it is very easy for us to criticise and slam your budget proposal this evening.

I would like to thank our Chief Executive, officers and members of staff involved with the work on the budget; thank you also to the Deputy Chief Executive for the time he took last week, presenting the proposed budget to the Opposition Groups here at this Council. Certainly we would recognise the work of your Portfolio Holder for Finance (again we have said this publicly in the Council before).

Madam Mayor, something the Council has not however allowed for: a risk down the line, a very significant risk, which should be marked as red; perhaps not within the next couple of years but certainly it must be considered a long term risk – I talk about the Women in this borough who expected to retire at 60 – when suddenly the Government announced they were to work until the age of 67. (Some of the advice was to “get an Apprenticeship) where am I going with this: Many of these women will be pushed in poverty, will need help with council tax rent etc, and call on a plethora of help from the local authority; This Council will have to foot the bill. Madam Mayor, I did try to put before the Council a question on the matter of womens pension but it was turned down as irrelevant. Is it irrelevant? Not to the women it isn't and certainly not to this Council.

We constantly hear that Surrey County Council is to blame. Yes they are for the Services they provide that have failed; is this why at the Presentation I mentioned above, we were told that it is “and I quote Madam Mayor, “unknown as to the extent of impacts and whether SC is sustainable long term”. What does that mean to this Council and the people of this Borough?

I would like to mention the billion pound or so the Council has spent on acquisitions of properties in and out of the borough. It is a matter of record that we did not disagree with the principles of this; however, the debt is becoming a bit uncomfortable; Property seems to be a bit of a risk business when we think about the uncertainty of Brexit – we certainly hope not. Lets remind ourselves again that the debts the Council amasses is a debt which belongs to every resident in this borough.

We cannot expect the local taxpayers and the residents of this borough to keep paying out and paying out – for what they perceive as cuts to services (many of which are beyond our control).

The budget you propose, through you Madam Chairman is one which is sound in many areas, but full of uncertainties in others. Will the Government or wont the Government short change us over the New Homes Bonus; will the

Government or wont the Government reduce the Grant by £3m? As I said above we major so much on what Surrey will do or what Surrey will cut next – but these are uncertainties. We know that they are potentially running out of reserves? That is also an uncertainty.

We understand that the uncertainty of Brexit is not in our control as a Council; however we do believe that the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee should have looked at this in more depth. You may recall that Cllr Quentin Edgington raised this very point recently. Although we do not believe we will be impacted to bad locally relating to the services this Council provides; we are not looking at the impact to Health and Social Care and possible issues – in addition to the dire straits they find themselves in now. We must not work in silos and need to work more closely with our Health and Social Care professionals in this borough. We should be having regular dialogue with our GP's – this is how a difference could be made in this borough in any event.

There has been confirmation I believe that Surrey Police has proposed an increase of 10.14%? The Borough crime statistics have been published and it was interesting that some parts of the borough have very high crime; we do hope that the proposal by the Surrey Police Crime Commissioner to put 100 officers back on the beat – takes this borough into consideration and puts officers where we need them in this borough.

You talk about the proposals to increase the Council Tax and the fact that they are minimal. That gives you an extra income of some £30 odd K? and according to the briefing I received on the budget, (All to get an extra income of £31k) so (in your words) “will generate income with a marginal impact!!!! So why even take it from residents? To do what with exactly?

It would have been a gesture to our residents to have kept Spelthorne's Council Tax to zero this financial year. We should have looked at this; the residents of this borough are sick of paying out and paying out - you have missed a huge opportunity! We can do better than this for our residents. I am sorry but we cannot support the Council Tax rise the Conservative Group propose, for the reasons I have highlighted this evening.

Thank you very much Madam Mayor.