

### **Councillor Beardsmore's Budget Speech**

This is a strange budget. And I say that as someone who was actively involved in the National PR disaster of the Conservatives Budget at Surrey a couple of weeks ago. Nevertheless I intend to keep my comments quite brief

It is strange because this budget it is dominated by outside circumstances, largely beyond our control. The papers show there are far more risks to our budget from things beyond our control than things we can control. All this set against a background of savage and unprecedent attacks on local government by the Conservative National government. Who have finally been unleashed to make the vicious attacks on local government that was never possible under the coalition.

By the way have any of you seen the latest Tory attacks this time on education. Sunbury Schools alone are set to lose more than £2m or the equivalent of 38 teaching posts.

It is also unusual as it finally answers a decades old question- How long does take for Conservatives to realise that the Liberal Democrats are right. The answer to that is Answer 10 years. That is how long we have been telling you not to keep raiding reserves. Worse than this don't forget Just 20yrs ago we had £50m in the bank. I note the S151 statement records a balance of £14.5m So we have lost approx £1.7m every year for 20 yrs

Yet each year in the budget speech we have been told of the sound financial management by the Conservatives. Given the disreputable. history you can appreciate my scepticism at such statements.

BP has of course been mentioned and I have always said this was a good deal and I see nothing to change that opinion. But longer term even that is not good enough and we are facing a debt of 725k in year 2019/2020. Frustratingly that is nothing to do with Spelthorne's management of the finances but rather a punitive tax on us the Conservative Government because this is the money they are forcing us to pay them. Our 'Negative Allocation'

As I said this is a budget dictated by outside forces.

I welcome the fact that we are coming off the National pay standards and some of the money we have made from BP being passed onto staff in the form of a modest improved pay offer, as well as helping to address long standing recruitment problems.

We have gone for the maximum tax rise possible which is 50% above the current inflation rate an inflation rate that is at its highest for two years (By the way these figures are taken from the governments own office of statistics web site- the same one that tells you the true number of how many cars there are in Ashford Town) maybe Spelthorne needs me to give them the link.

However Question is Will our residents be all be getting a pay rise to compensate? For a tax rise 50% above inflation

Now of course I understand the logic of going for a rise 50% above inflation. As it helps future proof the tax base. The basic issue is of course the brutal Tory government we have to future proof against. Notwithstanding that I think given the savage cuts our residents are facing from the Tory run Surrey now was NOT the time to join in hammering our residents as well. We are led to believe we have a sound and strong finance base- so why wasn't some of that soundness passed on to our residents- Oh of course we have to defend ourselves against a Tory government who are taking  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a million from us in a couple of years time.

We are trying to invest in social housing. I recognise this the first Tory administration in a long while who is least taking the problem seriously and I will publicly support their efforts to cure the problem. But where I come from Prevention is better than cure. I accept this administration is at least attempting to be thinking and planning for a secure medium and long term future for the Boro but if so then prevention is the only option for this problem.

That of course means dealing with spineless and disgraceful way our planning department rolls over and plays dead on this issue. Anyone who was at the disgrace of a planning meeting dealing with Brooklands last week knows exactly what I mean. And before anyone jumps up and whitters on about our LDF and government rules.

Well it just proves again how rubbish our LDF is, more importantly I suggest they look at some of our neighbouring authorities who somehow avoid being a blatantly ripped off as we are.

As I said I was at the infamous Surrey budget meeting two weeks ago, followed by this one.

In all honesty both scathing indictments of local governance. And while both were down to whole sale failings by Conservative administrations I still retain enough integrity to be embarrassed by having had to be involved with them. Let's hope things will be better in the future

And the future is what it is all about. The future for all our residents So while I will fully support in the short term any efforts to cure the problem of social housing provision I will say this unequivocally that if you are serious about the future-prevention is the only serious option not cure.

What people need to understand is that social housing is crucial to the health of the Boro. Many of our support workers rely on social housing. People need to understand the real infrastructure threat is the human infrastructure our key workers. If we provide for them the future is one of serious problems. It actually also makes long term financial sense. Question is are you up for it?