

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 FEBRUARY 2010

BOROUGH OF SPELTHORNE

AT THE MEETING OF THE SPELTHORNE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, KNOWLE GREEN, STAINES ON THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2010

Amos Mrs P.C.	Forsbrey G.E.	Pinkerton Mrs J.M.
Bain Miss M.M.	Grant Mrs D.L.	Pinkerton Jack D.
Beardsmore I.J.	Hirst A.P.	Rough Mrs M.W.
Bell Mrs E.M.	Hyams Ms N.A.	Rough S.J.
Bhadye S.	Jaffer H.R.	Royer M.T.
Broom Ms P.A.	Leighton Mrs V.J.	Sider R.W.
Budd S.E.W.	McShane D.L.	Smith-Ainsley R.A. (Deputy Leader)
Colison-Crawford R.B.	Napper Mrs I.	Spencer Caroline (Mayor)
Crabb T.W.	Nichols Mrs C.E.	Strong C.V.
Dunn Mrs S.A.	Nichols L.E.	Thomson H.A.
Fairfax S.J.	O'Hara E. (Deputy Mayor)	Trussler G.F.
Flurry K.E.	Packman J.D. (Leader)	

Councillor Caroline Spencer, The Mayor, in the Chair

37/10 COUNCIL AWARDED THE INVESTORS IN PEOPLE [IIP] - 15 YEAR AWARD

The Mayor, Councillor Caroline Spencer, informed the Council that she would now invite the Leader, Councillor John Packman, to make a very special announcement about the prestigious Investors in People - 15 Year Award received by Spelthorne Borough Council.

The Leader advised Members that the Borough Council had recently received a '15 Year Award' from Investors in People UK to celebrate the fact that the Council had been continuously recognised as an Investors in People [IIP] organisation for more than 15 years. This was a fantastic achievement demonstrating an ongoing dedication to people and a commitment to continuous business improvement. The Council now joined a select group of businesses to achieve such a significant milestone.

Spelthorne was the first business in Surrey and only the second Local Authority in England and Wales to be accredited with IIP. Spelthorne recognised at the time that working to the IIP Standard could help the Council to attract and retain good people and improve overall performance. The Council's accreditation covers all Spelthorne's people who contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities and services - both Members and Staff - and reinforces the good practice on Members' Development which was also recognised by Spelthorne's commitment to the Members' Development Charter.

Over the years the IIP standard had been reviewed regularly to ensure it continued to be relevant and reflected good practice, and it remained relevant for Spelthorne as the Council strived for continuous improvement in changing and challenging times. Spelthorne's next IIP review was due in March 2010.

The Mayor presented the Investors in People - 15 Year Award to Jan Hunt, the Council's Head of Human Resources, who received it on behalf of the Borough Council.

38/10 PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

The Mayor outlined the Members' Questions procedure, which was circulated at the meeting, and advised that all questions and answers would, where appropriate, be read aloud [see also Minutes 52/10, 53/10 and 54/10 below]. In view of the number of questions received, the Mayor advised that she would not allow any supplementary questions to be asked at this meeting.

39/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F. Ayers, M.L. Bouquet and C.A. Davis and from Sue Faulkner, Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee.

40/10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2009 were approved as a correct record.

41/10 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR

Planned Mayoral Events

The Mayor advised Members of the following forthcoming events:

Staines Brass Band Concert – 28th February 2010 at St. Peters Church, Staines
Charity Ball – 20th March 2010 at the Orangery, Shepperton Studios
Staines Brass Band Concert – 28th March 2010 at St. Peters Church, Staines
St. Georges Day Lunch – 23rd April 2010 at the Thames Lodge Hotel, Staines
Civic Community Reception 13th May 2010 at the Orangery, Shepperton Studios

42/10 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader informed the Council that a Special Planning Committee meeting would be held at Kempton Park in April 2010 [actual date still to be confirmed] to consider the London Irish planning application.

43/10 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

First question from Mr. Don Cunningham:

"Following a lengthy Examination in Public, The Government appointed Inspector, satisfied herself as to the Council's plans to meet its housing targets until 2026 by confirming the 'soundness' of the Allocations Development Plan Document; and, in recently published correspondence, the deputy Leader Cllr. Smith-Ainsley stated that the Council, quote; "has no intention of exceeding the Government's housing figure."

Will the Leader re-confirm his commitment to the Allocations Development Plan Document and endorse the comments of his Deputy Leader? Further, will he also commit to standing against any attempt by developers to encourage this Borough to exceed its targets in order to alleviate development pressures that may exist within other districts in the South East Region?"

Second question from Mr. John Hirsh:

"At the time of the Primary held to select the Conservative candidate, Cllr. Philippa Broom was asked whether she supported any plans which might put this Borough at risk of suffering a net loss of its protected urban open space to development. She was unequivocal in her reply, that she was emphatically opposed to any such plans.

Would the Leader, on behalf of the Council, add his unqualified endorsement to the views expressed by Cllr. Broom; and, like her, signal his clear opposition to the prospect of such development, especially as it would reduce the 'absolute minimum provision standard' of 2.37 hectares per 1000 population?"

Third question from Mr. Ron Pettifor:

"Clause 2.10 of the Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document, adopted on 26 February 2009, states that over the next 20 years the Borough's population in the age groups 0-14 years and 24-44 years will fall and that all age groups over 50 will rise. The Council's objective 8 set out in clause 3.3 of the same document is to ensure provision is made for the needs of all sections of the community.

Would the Leader, on behalf of the Council, agree that in order to meet this objective it is important to retain all existing sports facilities, specifically those which meet the recreational needs of an aging population in Spelthorne?"

Combined reply by the Leader of the Council, Councillor John Packman, to the questions from Mr. Don Cunningham, Mr. John Hirsh and Mr. Ron Pettifor:

"The Council is required by the South East Plan to build 3320 dwellings between 2006 and 2026 and, through its Core Strategy and Policies and Allocations DPDs, has demonstrated how this and various other needs in the Borough can be met without developing any "inappropriate sites". Such inappropriate sites include protected urban open space as well as, for example, the green belt, flood risk areas and land used for open space sport and recreation.

I can assure you we have very clear policies to protect all such areas and it is vital to do so to meet the needs of all residents in both this and future generations.

Having spent a lot of time in getting our Core Strategy and Policies DPD and Allocations DPDs found 'sound' and adopted, I can assure you of my unequivocal commitment to see they are applied in a consistent and firm manner. Such commitment also equally applies to the six Local Plan policies we "saved" in 2007, which includes our Green Belt policy.

There is no requirement for this Council to consider providing housing for other parts of the South East Region over and above the allocation it has been given and any proposal suggesting this as reason to set aside any of our planning polices would, in my view, be fundamentally flawed.

However in giving this commitment you are seeking I would ask that you do not hold me accountable for any "misdeeds!" that might come down from Westminster in the future my authority does not extend that far."

Fourth question from Mr. Jim Kampta:

"In 9th February edition of the Evening Standard, Professor Kelly, an environmental health expert from Kings College, London, whilst giving evidence at the Commons Environmental Audit Committee, said that an estimated 3-5000 people were dying in the Capital each year, (in the worst cases 10 years prematurely) due to nitrogen dioxide particulates. He wanted action on cleaner air and urged a reduction in vehicles by at least 20-30%.

The Introduction to the Core Strategy and Policies DPD, para. 2.7 describes the whole of the Borough as an Air Quality Management Area because of poor air quality; and

para. 2.31 recognises that there is a particular concentration of poorer air quality around the Sunbury Cross junction. Local policies EN3 and CC2 provide for community protection against inappropriate development which may result in an increase in nitrogen dioxide emissions.

Will the Leader take this opportunity to re-affirm these policies and to denounce any development proposals which may result in an increase in such emissions?"

Reply by Councillor Simon Bhadye:

"The Council's Core Strategy sets out its very clear policy to improve air quality in the Borough and minimise its harmful effects and Policy EN3, to which you refer, identifies a number of ways in which this will be achieved. This includes requiring an air quality assessment, where new developments are likely to worsen air quality, and refusing them if their impact proves to be harmful.

We wish to assure Mr Kampta and all of our residents that we take this issue very seriously and undertake extensive and regular monitoring of air quality across the whole Borough to ensure our work is always informed by the latest available information. This enables us to carefully assess the significance of any potential air quality impacts on local people arising from proposed new development.

We should not forget that ultimately it is the responsibility of central government to determine the future policies on air quality."

Fifth question from Mr. George Rushbrook:

"Following concerns expressed in Parliament and elsewhere over the problem of "garden grabbing" by developers, the Government commissioned Kingston University to research and report on the problem.

In the course of their enquiries the University contacted every local Council planning authority in England requesting assistance.

This Borough's neighbouring Councils – Runnymede, Elmbridge, Hillingdon, Richmond upon Thames and Mole Valley responded to assist. Spelthorne Borough Council did not respond.

The extensive detailed University report has recently been published and resulting from this Government has seen fit to amend PPS 3 saying "*There is no presumption that that previously developed land is necessarily suitable for housing nor that all of the cartilage should be developed.*"

The Department for Communities and Local Government has written to all Councils and the Planning Inspectorate on 19 January 2010 to make this clear. They have added that these are local problems and the local authorities have the powers to enact policies to prevent or resist development of existing gardens. The existences of clear consistent local policies are essential when resisting such types of development."

"My Questions are:

"Why did Spelthorne Borough Council not respond to the enquiry?"

“In the light of the amendment to PPS 3, what steps will the Council be taking to introduce policies to deal with garden development and in what time scale?”

Reply by Councillor Richard Smith-Ainsley:

"The threat of any inappropriate development is always a matter of concern especially when it involves existing residential areas. That is why we included in our recently adopted Core Strategy and Policies Development Plan Document Policy HO1 which only encourages housing on suitable sites. Policy EN1 gives specific guidance on the 'Design of New Development'. It sets out the Council's policy to secure a high standard of design and layout and identifies a number of important requirements that must be met to ensure a development is acceptable.

These policies provide the basis on which poor proposals can be refused. For your information we often do refuse development and are generally well supported where cases are taken to appeal.

The recent research and subsequent guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government to all authorities has highlighted the powers authorities have to control inappropriate development by creating the right local policies. This advice is particularly pertinent to the 85% of local authorities who, unlike Spelthorne, have yet to adopt Core Strategies. Runnymede, Elmbridge and Hillingdon have no adopted Core Strategy to guide backland developments. Whilst Richmond has an adopted Core Strategy, this only dealt with broad strategic principles and they are only now just going out to public consultation on their pre-submission Development Management DPD, which will consider such issues. Finally, Mole Valley Council do have an adopted Core Strategy, but again the issue of backland development will be covered in a subsequent Core Development Management DPD, which has yet to be timetabled into their LDF programme. The Government Department also advised that it was amending its guidance in PPS 3 by repositioning one sentence from the Annex to the main part of the text. This has otherwise added nothing new.

Therefore, as we had already established our policy approach it was not considered expedient to respond to the Department on this particular matter.

There is, therefore, no need to amend our policies, but I am pleased to take this opportunity to announce that, as part of a longstanding commitment, we will be preparing a Supplementary Planning Document to support Policy EN1 and will be writing to all local groups shortly to advise them how and when they will be able to contribute to the process. We will also send Mr. Rushbrook a personal invitation."

44/10 PETITIONS

The Mayor advised that under Standing Order 15.2, a petition had been received objecting to Surrey County Council's proposal that Shortwood Infant School, Staines would close on 31 August 2010. Mr. Charles Doherty, for the petitioners, addressed the Council about the petition.

RESOLVED that the Council notes the petition and forwards it to Surrey County Council as the Local Education Authority.

45/10 DETAILED BUDGET 2010/2011

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the detailed Budget for 2010/2011 and on a formal proposal on a Council Tax for 2010/2011.

The Mayor referred Members to the Budget Book [green cover] reflecting the decisions and recommendations made by the Executive on 16 February 2010 and the precepts being levied by Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police which had been previously circulated to all Members.

At the invitation of the Mayor, the Council gave consent under Standing Order 18.4 for the budget speech of each of the Group Leaders to exceed 10 minutes.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor John Packman, made a statement on the Budget and Council Tax and moved the recommendations set out in the Budget Book (green cover). This was seconded by Councillor Mrs. Vivienne Leighton. The Leader of the Opposition Group, Councillor Colin Strong, also made a statement.

A copy of the Council Leader's and the Opposition Leader's statements were made available for other Members, the press and the public at the meeting. In addition, copies of the statements are **attached to these Minutes at Appendices A and B, respectively.**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Packman moved and Councillor Mrs. Leighton seconded the recommendations on the detailed Budget for 2010/2011, as set out in the Budget Book (green cover).

Councillor Packman requested, under Standing Order 21.4, that the voting on the recommendations be recorded.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (26)	Councillors Mrs. P.C. Amos, Miss M.M. Bain, S. Bhadye, Miss P.A. Broom, S.E.W. Budd, S.J. Fairfax, G.E. Forsbrey, Mrs D.L. Grant, A.P. Hirst, Ms N.A. Hyams, H.R. Jaffer, Mrs V.J. Leighton, D.L. McShane, Mrs I. Napper, E. O'Hara, J.D. Packman, Mrs J.M. Pinkerton, Jack D. Pinkerton, Mrs M.W. Rough, S.J. Rough, M.T. Royer, R.W. Sider, R.A. Smith-Ainsley, Mrs C.L. Spencer, H.A. Thomson and G.F. Trussler
AGAINST (8)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore, Mrs E.M. Bell, R.B. Colison-Crawford, T.W. Crabb, Mrs S.A. Dunn, Mrs C.E. Nichols, L.E. Nichols and C.V. Strong

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the growth and savings items as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer.
2. To approve a 0% increase in the Spelthorne element of the Council Tax for 2010/2011 and the following proposals:
 - a) That the Revenue Estimates as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer be approved.
 - b) That no money, as set out in the report of the Chief Finance Officer, is appropriated from General Reserves in support of Spelthorne's local Council Tax for 2010/2011.

COUNCIL, 25 February 2010 - Continued

- c) To agree that the Council Tax base for the year 2010/2011 is 40,388.20 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.

3. That the following sums be now calculated by the Council for the year 2010/2011 in accordance with Sections 32 and 33 of the Local Government Act 1992.

(a)	£55,300,800	Being the aggregate of the amount which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (2)(a) to (e) of the Act.
(b)	£42,920,422	Being the aggregate for the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3)(a) to (c) of the Act.
(c)	£12,380,378	Being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 32(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
(d)	£5,623,432	Being the aggregate sums which the Council estimates will be payable for the year into its general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates, revenue support grant or additional grant, increased by the sum which the Council estimates will be transferred in the year from its Collection Fund to its General Fund in accordance with Section 97(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Council Tax surplus) and increased by the sum which the council estimates will be transferred from its collection Fund to its General Fund pursuant to the collection Fund (Community Charges) Directions under Section 98(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 made on 7 th February 1994 (Community Charge surplus).
(e)	£167.30	Being the sum (c) above less the amount at (d) above, all divided by the amount at (c) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 33(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.

4. That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2010/2011, in accordance with section 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

VALUATION BANDS

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
111.53	130.12	148.71	167.30	204.48	241.66	278.83	334.60

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.

5. That it be noted that for the year 2010/2011 that the Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40, as amended, of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of the dwellings shown below.

Valuation Bands	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
Precepting Authority: Surrey County Council	744.24	868.28	992.32	1116.36	1364.44	1612.52	1860.60	2232.72
Surrey Police Authority	132.36	154.42	176.48	198.54	242.66	286.78	330.90	397.08

6. That, having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4. and 5. above the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets out the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2010/2011 for each of the categories of dwellings shown below.

A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
988.13	1152.82	1317.51	1482.20	1811.58	2140.96	2470.33	2964.40

46/10 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENTS STRATEGY 2010/2011

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investments Strategy 2010/2011.

RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy for 2010/11 as set out in the report by the Chief Finance Officer to the Cabinet.
2. Formally adopt the CIPFA publication "Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectional Guidance Notes" (The Code), published in 2009.

47/10 REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader of the Council, Councillor John Packman, presented his report, which outlined the various matters the Cabinet had decided since the last Council meeting.

48/10 IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Improvement and Development Committee, Councillor Mrs Jean Pinkerton, presented her report, which outlined the matters the Committee had scrutinised since the last Council meeting.

49/10 LICENSING COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor Robin Sider, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting. The Chairman placed on record his thanks to the Members and Officers involved for all their hard work on the various Licensing Sub-Committee meetings referred to in his report.

50/10 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Planning Committee, Councillor Howard Thomson, presented his report, which outlined the matters the Committee had decided since the last Council meeting.

51/10 MOTIONS

Under Standing Order 16.3, a Notice of Motion had been received concerning Planning Infrastructure Contributions.

Councillor Colin Strong proposed and Councillor Tony Crabb seconded the following motion:

“Council notes that seven of the eleven Borough Councils in Surrey, supported by the County Council, have introduced Planning Infrastructure Contributions that are levied on small scale new builds.

These contributions generate extra money for the County Council to spend on highways, education and libraries, and for the Borough to go towards extra community facilities, recycling and environmental improvements.

Council further notes that the Government is finalising regulations (that stem from the Planning Act 2008) to allow Councils to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy, with similar but wider objectives.

Council acknowledges the burden on the local infrastructure by the proliferation of small scale developments that fall outside the scope of Section 106 Agreements.

Council RESOLVES that, in principle, it supports Planning Infrastructure Contributions and will work to introduce such a levy as soon as practicable.”

An amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Richard Smith-Ainsley and seconded by Councillor Philippa Broom, as follows:

“In paragraph 2 after the word “money” insert the words “based on demographic changes”.

In paragraph 4 after the word “infrastructure” insert the words “in those seven Surrey Districts”.

In paragraph 5 delete all words after the word “that” and insert the words “This Council will continue to employ the most effective and justifiable means that are available for extracting Developer Contributions and other section 106 monies for infrastructure improvements.”

Copies of the amendment to the motion were circulated to all Members at the meeting.

Councillor Strong requested, under Standing Order 21.4, that the voting on the amendment to the motion be recorded.

Councillor Mrs C.E. Nichols left the Chamber in advance of the vote on the amendment.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (26)	Councillors Mrs. P.C. Amos, Miss M.M. Bain, S. Bhadye, Miss P.A. Broom, S.E.W. Budd, S.J. Fairfax, K.E. Flurry, G.E. Forsbrey, Mrs D.L. Grant, A.P. Hirst, Ms N.A. Hyams, Mrs V.J. Leighton, D.L. McShane, Mrs I. Napper, E. O'Hara, J.D. Packman, Mrs J.M. Pinkerton, Jack D. Pinkerton, Mrs M.W. Rough, S.J. Rough, M.T. Royer, R.W. Sider, R.A. Smith-Ainsley, Mrs C.L. Spencer, H.A. Thomson and G.F. Trussler
AGAINST (7)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore, Mrs E.M. Bell, R.B. Colison-Crawford, T.W. Crabb, Mrs S.A. Dunn, L.E. Nichols and C.V. Strong

The amendment was carried and the motion, as amended, became the substantive motion.

Councillor Strong requested, under Standing Order 21.4, that the voting on the substantive motion be recorded.

The voting was as follows:

FOR (26)	Councillors Mrs. P.C. Amos, Miss M.M. Bain, S. Bhadye, Miss P.A. Broom, S.E.W. Budd, S.J. Fairfax, K.E. Flurry, G.E. Forsbrey, Mrs D.L. Grant, A.P. Hirst, Ms N.A. Hyams, Mrs V.J. Leighton, D.L. McShane, Mrs I. Napper, E. O'Hara, J.D. Packman, Mrs J.M. Pinkerton, Jack D. Pinkerton, Mrs M.W. Rough, S.J. Rough, M.T. Royer, R.W. Sider, R.A. Smith-Ainsley, Mrs C.L. Spencer, H.A. Thomson and G.F. Trussler
AGAINST (7)	Councillors I.J. Beardsmore, Mrs E.M. Bell, R.B. Colison-Crawford, T.W. Crabb, Mrs S.A. Dunn, L.E. Nichols and C.V. Strong

The substantive motion was carried and it was **RESOLVED**, as follows:

Council notes that seven of the eleven Borough Councils in Surrey, supported by the County Council, have introduced Planning Infrastructure Contributions that are levied on small scale new builds.

These contributions generate extra money based on demographic changes for the County Council to spend on highways, education and libraries, and for the Borough to go towards extra community facilities, recycling and environmental improvements.

Council further notes that the Government is finalising regulations (that stem from the Planning Act 2008) to allow Councils to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy, with similar but wider objectives.

Council acknowledges the burden on the local infrastructure in those seven Surrey Districts by the proliferation of small scale developments that fall outside the scope of Section 106 Agreements.

Council RESOLVES that this Council will continue to employ the most effective and justifiable means that are available for extracting Developer Contributions and other section 106 monies for infrastructure improvements.

52/10 DURATION OF MEETING

As the meeting had lasted for nearly 3 hours and as there was still business to be transacted, at the request of the Mayor, the Council gave consent under Standing Order 5.1 for the meeting to continue until 10.45pm.

53/10 QUESTIONS ON WARD ISSUES

In light of Minute 52/10 above and in order to expedite the business of the Council meeting, the Mayor asked the Member who had submitted a Ward Issues question whether or not they wished the question and the answer to be read aloud. The Mayor indicated that if the Member concerned wished to receive a more detailed written answer to their question this would, where applicable, be passed to them after the meeting and would be recorded in full in the Council Minutes.

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs Sandra Dunn submitted the following question:

'What is the position of Spelthorne Borough Council with regard to the proposed energy from waste plant at Charlton? Does it support or oppose the proposal?'

Reply by Councillor Gerry Forsbrey:

"To date the outline proposals have only been described to the Council and residents. Surrey, we understand, are now working on a detailed proposal to be submitted in late summer as a planning application. Until the Council see these detailed proposals and understand fully particular issues, such as potential impact on transport and air quality, it would not be appropriate for the Council to make a statement along the lines suggested."

Written response by Councillor Gerry Forsbrey:

"Thank you for your question regarding proposals for Charlton Lane.

As you may well know, Surrey is rapidly running out of landfill sites for rubbish, and considerable emphasis is now being placed on minimising waste in the first place, followed by reuse and recycling. It is hoped this will greatly reduce levels of residual waste across the County. Authorities are also increasingly looking at food waste collection, which also requires processing.

Surrey is aiming to move away from the traditional approach of several large energy from waste plants, towards a cleaner and more advanced thermal treatment technology called gasification.

The proposed Eco Park at Charlton Lane will provide an opportunity for a number of advanced processing technologies (including gasification) to co-locate, alongside an innovation education centre. The aim of these technologies is to harness as effectively as possible the beneficial by products of waste.

For example anaerobic digestion of food waste will produce heat and gas which can make electricity of bio fuel. Gasification on the other hand, thermally heats waste and

turns it into gas, which is then burnt producing heat and electricity. The plant at Charlton would have a capacity of 60,000 tonnes of waste per year rather than the original energy from waste plants proposals of 140,000 tonnes per year.

To date, the Council and local residents have only seen outline proposals for the Eco Park. I understand Surrey are now in the process of working up detailed proposals, with the intention of submitting a planning application to the County in late summer. We will obviously be a key consultee in this process, and the local community will have the opportunity to give their views on the proposal.

At this stage, the Council have not seen sufficiently detailed proposals to enable it to fully understand the possible implications of the proposal on a number of very important local issues such as the impact on transport and air quality. Until we do so, it would not be appropriate to indicate support or opposition.”

54/10 GENERAL QUESTIONS

In light of Minute 52/10 above and in order to expedite the business of the Council meeting, the Mayor asked the Members who had submitted General questions whether or not they wished their question(s) and the answer(s) to be read aloud. The Mayor indicated that if any of the Members concerned wished to receive a more detailed written answer to their question this would, where applicable, be passed to them after the meeting and would be recorded in full in the Council Minutes.

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Ian Beardsmore submitted the following question:

“Why is there such a large mis-match between projected housing numbers on a site quoted in the Allocations DPD and the numbers which are actually achieved?”

Reply by Councillor Richard Smith-Ainsley:

"The primary purpose of the Allocations DPD is to identify the appropriate future use of 10 larger sites in the Borough. Where housing is proposed an approximate number of dwellings is also indicated.

The Councillor should NOT need it explained to him that the precise number of dwellings that may be appropriate for a site will of course depend on detailed design and in particular the size of dwellings that are eventually proposed. For this reason the Allocations DPD makes quite clear that the reason only an approximate number is indicated is because the precise form of development and exact number of dwellings is best determined at the detailed planning stage taking into account all relevant factors.

Developments will need to comply with a number of different planning policies and requirements. Where a proposal is unacceptable, for what ever reason, the Planning Committee can refuse planning permission.

In this way we ensure we get the right uses on sites through the Allocations DPD and the detailed planning stage and ensure the right form of development is delivered."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Colin Strong submitted the following question:

“Please could you answer the following three questions regarding house building numbers using the latest 2009 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and older AMRs for those past years not covered by the 2009 AMR.

Please provide the aggregate house building numbers for:

(1) Target build from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009 Actual (net) build from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009 Excess of Actual (net) over Target from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009?

(2) Target build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016 Projected build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016 Excess of Projected over Target from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016?

(3) Target build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026 Projected build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026 Excess of Projected over Target from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026?"

Reply by Councillor Richard Smith-Ainsley:

"I am advised that Councillor Strong wrote to the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy as recently as the 11th January 2010 with exactly the same question and received a detailed reply. I am therefore, I feel, entitled to suggest to Council that asking the question a second time is an abuse of this Council's normal operating procedures, if not in writing then in spirit. I would further suggest that the group sitting opposite abuse their position by taking advantage of this administration's open and transparent policies.

In drafting the questions in the way they have been presented, is I feel a deliberate attempt to confuse and mislead the residents of Spelthorne. Being aware that residents would be in attendance tonight and to assist them in understand the complexity of the matter I have arranged for copies of both the questions and the answers to be distributed. I do not, therefore, have anything further to say on the matter."

Written response by Councillor Smith-Ainsley:

"Email response to Councillor Strong dated 13 January 2010 from Heather Morgan, Head of Planning and Housing Strategy:

The following information responds to the three questions and sets out the sources of data as well as any important qualifications to the use of the figures.

Inevitably there are a large number of factors which are taken into account in preparing the housing figures in the AMR and from which the figures for future building are drawn. The following provides answers to the questions as presented and also sets out qualifications you will need to bear in mind in using the figures.

1. Target build from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009. Actual (net) build from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009. Excess of actual (net) over target from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2009
 - a. The target build for the period April 2001 to March 2009 was 1358 and comprised two elements:
 - i. 2001 to 2006 was set by the Surrey Structure Plan 2004. Policy LO6 (page 41) required Spelthorne to build 2580 in the period 2001 to 2016.

This represented a pro-rata rate of 172 per annum which for 2001 – 2006 was 860 (172 x 5yrs).

ii.2006 to 2009 was set by the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East. Policy H1b (page 55) which requires Spelthorne to provide 3320 for the period 2006 – 2026. This produces a pro-rata rate of 166 per annum which for 2006 – 2009 was 498 (166x3).

b. Net completions for the period 2001 to 2009 was 1843 (1292 for 2001 - 2006 and 551 for 2006 - 2009). This is the sum of the net completions in Table A1 (page 55) of the recently published 2009 AMR where net completion figures for all years from 1991 to 2009 are given. This gives a mathematical surplus of 485 for the period 2001 to 2009 (1843 minus 1358). The term 'surplus' for the period 2001 to 2009 however needs qualification. For the purposes of meeting the new South East Plan figure from 2006 any surplus for previous years cannot be counted. Therefore as at 2009 only such surplus as may have arisen from 2006 can be counted for the purposes of meeting the latest South East Plan figures. At 2006 the surplus over requirements was 432. At 2009 the surplus over requirements since 2006 is just 53.

2. Target build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016. Projected build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016. Excess of Projected over Target from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2016.

a. The target build for 2009 to 2016 is 1140. (This is calculated by taking the total SEP figure of 3320 deducting build so far (minus 551) to produce a residual pro-rata rate of 163 (rounded) per annum which for 7 years = 1141).

b. The 'projected' build figure for 2009 – 2016 is 1988.

i. It is made up of a combination of existing planning permissions, sites in the Allocations DPD and other larger sites identified in the Housing Land Availability Update – July 2008, and the extrapolation of trends for small sites under 0.4 ha and conversions. Each of these components for each year from 2009 to 2026 is shown in the Housing Trajectory on page 18 of the AMR in lines 7-9. Line 6 (coloured mid blue) shows the total - 'Projected annual completions (net)'. (Please note that due to rounding some figures in the trajectory will not add up exactly)

ii. Qualification is required on this figure and its use. The total represents a 'potential' or 'capacity' and is not intended as a guarantee of the total that will be built or a target. The government has required authorities to have a 'surplus' so that they can demonstrate 'flexibility' to ensure the figures they have to meet are delivered. It is recognized that some planned sites do not always come forward or at least when expected. Each year the AMR will review the 'potential' via an updated trajectory so the figures quoted are likely to change over time.

c. The surplus over requirement is 'projected' at 847 for this period. In part this reflects an expected front loading of housing completions generally toward the first half of the 2006 – 2026 period.

3. Target build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026 Projected build from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026 Excess of Projected over Target from 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2026.
 - a. The target build from 2009 to 2026 is 2769 (residual annual requirement of 162.88 x 17 years)
 - b. Projected build from 2009 to 2026 is 3747 (1988 from 2009-March 2016 + 1765 from April 2016 to 2026). As above, figures are taken from the Housing Trajectory in the 2009 AMR.
 - c. The 'surplus' is 978. (This 'surplus' is the total surplus over the whole period 2006 to 2026. (It should not be added to the surplus for 2006 – 2009 as this would represent double counting. The requirement for 2009 – 2026 of 163 per annum takes account of the surplus of 53 in the first 3 years of the plan period)."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Bell submitted the following question:

"When will the Council be making audio recordings of Council meetings available on the website? In addition to the Full Council meetings, which meetings does the Council intend to make available to the public? Will the proceedings of the meetings be edited?"

Reply by Councillor Howard Thomson:

"The Council has used sound recording equipment for a number of months now, principally in Council and Planning Committee meetings. Occasionally, licensing sub-committee meetings are also recorded. The purpose of recording meetings was to have a record of events in cases where there was a dispute about proceedings. A copy of the recording of Council and Planning Committee meetings is placed in the member's room as a matter of course so that councillors can access the information. It is not made available for the public unless there is a specific request.

The Council has investigated the use of sound recordings on its website, but there are a number of issues which need to be overcome. These are mainly around staff resources to ensure that the recording that is placed on the web is sufficiently "user friendly" so that residents can find the item they are looking for without frustration. As a matter of principle, I am happy that recordings should be made available, but only if it can be done within current resources. I would also add that, to date we have only had two requests, from one member of the public and one Councillor (who has made 3 separate requests), to listen to the sound recordings made. Further investigations are ongoing to look at the technical and staffing issues, but, because of the resource implications, no guarantee can be made about making the recordings available on the website at this time."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Mrs. Caroline Nichols had submitted the following question:

"I refer you to the question I asked at the Council Meeting 26th February 2009.

Please would you give an update on the staffing vacancies and output performance of the Environmental Health and Building Control Departments for the financial year 2009/2010?

In last year's reply, it was reported that the priority areas such as food safety inspections, health and safety inspections and pollution control inspections were on track for 2009/2010. Were staff levels maintained as predicted, what staff turnover was there over the last twelve months, and has output performance been maintained in these areas?

For 2010/2011 are service levels in Environmental Health and Building Control expected to be maintained at the levels budgeted for 2009/2010?"

Reply by Councillor Gerry Forsbrey:

"The team have 3 vacancies currently, whilst the performance continues to be good with 95% of food hygiene inspections completed, 80% of health and safety inspections and 100% of pollution control inspections.

The building control team has consistently performed well over the last year and income from their fee-earning work has remained robust, despite the economic downturn.

Service levels will be maintained for 2010/2011."

Written response by Councillor Gerry Forsbrey:

"The Environmental Health and Building Control Service has experienced some staff turnover in the last year.

The service currently has vacancies for a Senior Environmental Health Officer, a Pollution Control Officer and an Environmental Health Technical Officer. The full-time Technical Officer post is a new position, which was created as a result of savings made by agreeing to two requests for part-time working from existing officers. We are currently in the process of recruiting to these posts and have received a good response from applicants. It is anticipated that the service will be fully staffed within the next two months.

The volume of service requests received has remained high and there has been an increase in the number of businesses requiring food hygiene and health and safety inspections. The temporary loss of two members of staff has affected performance in the short-term and has required the reprioritisation and reallocation of work.

The Head of Environmental Health and Building Control is currently estimating that by the end of March 2010 the service will have undertaken 95% of programmed food hygiene inspections and 80% of programmed health and safety inspections, with more inspections being completed in 2009/10 than in the previous year. The service will also complete 100% of programmed pollution control inspections this year.

However, the success of Spelthorne's 'Scores on the Doors' scheme has led to a significant improvement in the hygiene standards of many food premises in the Borough, which should lead to a reduction in the frequency of inspections required for these businesses, freeing up time for officers to undertake other work.

The building control team has consistently performed well over the last year and income from their fee-earning work has remained robust, despite the economic downturn."

Under Standing Order 14, Councillor Lawrence Nichols submitted the following question:

"For each Car Park in Lower Sunbury, what has been the income received to date compared to the original budget?

In each case what has been the cost of setting up the charging system?

What are the expected annual costs of running the charging mechanisms including enforcement costs and any attributable business rates?"

Reply by Councillor Andrew Hirst:

"The question that you ask is quite detailed in the breakdown of income and expenses you have asked for by each car park.

I have a full written answer to all of your questions, which I will pass to you, but, in summary the costs of installing the necessary equipment in the five Lower Sunbury Car Parks has been about £18,500 in total. Based on income received so far we anticipate annual income in excess of £12,500. Ongoing costs associated with charges in the car parks (machine maintenance, cash collection) amount to less than £2000 per annum.

A quick calculation shows that the pay back period for this is less than two years after which time the income received will contribute to the maintenance costs and business rates of the car parks (which would have been incurred any way).

In this way the costs of running these car parks will fall upon the users rather than the general Council tax payers."

Written response by Councillor Andrew Hirst:

"There are five car parks in Lower Sunbury where charges are made. Two of these (Thames Street and Old Bathing Station) have been chargeable car parks for the whole of this financial year to date. Charging was only introduced during the financial year for the other three car parks (Walled Garden, Orchard Meadow and Sunbury Park / Green Street).

In answer to your question on income received then from the 1 April 2009 to 9 February 2010 the following income (after tax) has been received:

Old Bathing Station	£ 708.89p
Thames Street	£3,831.70p

The car park machines and signage were installed in the other three car parks in October / November 2009 and enforcement of the new charges commenced in December 2009. From December 2009 to 9 February 2010 income (after tax) was received was as follows:

Walled Garden	£358.13p
Orchard Meadow	£381.45p
Sunbury Park/Green Street	£705.15p

In addition to this, income is received from the sale of business and residents permits. So for this financial year £3340 has been received.

Individual budgets are not allocated for each of our car parks; rather an overall budget is set for car parks income and a budget code allocated for all of our smaller car parks combined. So far as costs are concerned the expenditure this financial year so far has been:

£2835 each for the Pay and Display machines installed in each of the three car parks where charges were introduced this year.

£270 per machine for installation.

£1734.51 for signage for all of the three car parks where charges were introduced this year.

£245 for installation of the signage.

The purchase price of the Pay and Display machines includes the first year's maintenance charge.

The annual costs of operating the charging mechanisms are:

£264 maintenance charge per Pay and Display machine.

There is also a charge for cash collection but it would not be appropriate to give an answer in public that could reveal the frequency or volume of cash collection from our car park machines. I am prepared to give Councillor Lawrence Nichols a private response to that aspect of this question.

There are no other enforcement costs involved as patrolling of these car parks is undertaken by our existing car parks staff. There has been no need to increase our staffing to accommodate enforcement of these car parks.

So far as business rates are concerned then so far this year the following business rates have been paid:

Thames Street	£3492.00
Orchard Meadow	£4365.00

The Old Bathing Station and the Walled Garden are not rated. We are pursuing with the Valuation Office whether or not business rates should be levied on any of these car parks together with the business rate that is levied on Sunbury Park which we are now investigating.

In addition to this there is also the question of maintenance of the car parks and whilst no money has been spent on these car parks so far this financial year, there will undoubtedly be maintenance costs in the future and this should always be kept in mind in support of our policy that in running the car parks the costs should be met by the users rather than fall on the general council tax payers."

APPENDIX A

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR JOHN PACKMAN
COUNCIL TAX SPEECH 2010**

Madam Mayor – I have great pleasure in presenting the Budget Report for the Municipal Year 2010/11. However, before dealing with the budget proposal I would like to summarise some of the issues that we have dealt with in finally arriving at a balanced budget, and look into the future at the issues that lie ahead.

A solid and firm financial base must underpin everything the Council does. Put simply, if we don't balance the books we cannot continue to provide the full range of services to our residents both now, and in the future, which is always uppermost in my mind. We are constantly reviewing everything we do, how we do it, and whether anything can be done better in partnership with others.

Whilst always seeking to keep the Council's finances on a sustainable basis I don't think there is anybody in the Chamber tonight who hasn't been affected in some way with the impact of the economic downturn on local residents and businesses. That is why we are not increasing our Council tax this year.

In seeking to set a balanced budget for 2010-11 the Council has faced its greatest financial challenge yet. I am proud to say we have tackled and overcome this challenge. This Council like businesses and households has been adversely affected by the credit crunch and the global economic downturn. The Council's various income streams such as planning fees, car parking and land charges have suffered as a result of the recession and I think it adverse when people question why the council takes these into account when finalising the budget. Without the income generated we would simply not be able to maintain the same level of service we provide for our residents. At the same time demand increased for a number of the services the Council provides including housing options, housing and council tax benefits and other services such as council tax and business rates collection are finding their role harder to perform. Some residents are less fortunate than others frequently through no fault of their own and need the support of the council and the understanding of the community in which they live in. We estimate the value of housing and council tax benefits we will pay out in 2010-11 will increase by roughly 25% on 2009-10. Despite these pressures the Government has stuck to its previously announced general grant increase for the Council of a mere additional £28,000 which represents a measly increase of just 0.5% which is equivalent to the Council receiving an additional 31 pence per resident to fund services. This small increase in grant will more than be offset by the £150,000 the Government is reducing our concessionary fares grant for 2010-11.

It has been said before but well worth repeating that the grant funding, we will receive will be just £63.87 per head of population for 2010/11; this is 19% below the national average of £78.40. This means we are losing £1,300,000 against the average district council. Districts continue to do particularly badly in the settlement with 40% limited to a 0.5% grant increase. We have, of course, protested against our harsh treatment and the lack of recognition of the financial pressures we are now facing. Needless to say we have not had a meaningful response!

As we are all acutely aware the credit crunch has seen interest rates fall to historically unprecedented levels. The UK Base rate remains at half of one percent. Just like businesses this has hit the Council's ability to continue to deliver the high levels of investment income which it had been achieving and which has previously helped fund the provision of many of the general services for the public. Currently our portfolio is achieving an average rate of interest of 2.7% i.e. more than 5 times the base rate, and we are beating our benchmark target. However, as some of our investments will mature in the coming year our ability to generate new capital receipts is currently constrained, our budgeted investment income is budgeted to drop by £600,000 for 2010-11. This is why it is justifiable for the Council in the forthcoming year during a period of low interest rates to use a small amount of its interest equalisation reserve, to support the revenue budget, which was built up over recent years from above target investment performance. A fine example of prudent investment. At some point interest rates will start to rise and our investment income will recover.

Some have queried why councils appear to have relatively large reserves? Councils such as ourselves need reserves to enable us to fund an ongoing capital programme, to have contingency monies to cope with unexpected pressures, particularly important in the uncertain times we are now facing. Six years ago the Council were using more than £2million general reserves to support the revenue budget. We could not go on haemorrhaging reserves so we have been gradually reducing use of general reserves so that next year we will not use any general reserves. The next step in our strategy will be to move to making revenue contributions to reserves to replenish them.

Like businesses and households the Council under the impact of the recession has had to tighten its belt and seek out even more savings than the savings it has already delivered over the last few years. From early autumn members of the Cabinet have been working closely with the Council's Management Team and heads of service to scrutinise all services budgets and to identify savings and additional sources of income. No stone has been left unturned. The budget being presented to the Council is underpinned by additional savings of £1.7m. Savings have been found across all services and at every level from Management Team downwards. There will be regular quarterly monitoring throughout the coming year to ensure that we successfully deliver these savings.

Additionally we have had in place the Budget Task Group chaired by Councillor Mrs Jean Pinkerton which has put in long hours reviewing all services' budgets and has made a number of recommendations to help the Council put its finances on a more sustainable basis for future years. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to both Councillor Mrs Jean Pinkerton and the Members of the Task Group and all the staff who have input into the work of the Group. This was a fine example of staff and councillors working in harness for the good of the council and the residents.

The Council is continuing to develop its Business Improvement Programme which by the end of the current financial year will have reviewed every service area and has exceeded its original target of delivering ongoing annual savings of £500,000 per annum – the current figure is £1,100,000 savings per year from now on. The Council has in place its own dedicated business improvement team which will help the Council improve further the efficiency of its services and which will in turn help deliver further savings.

As part of our belt tightening, this Administration is recommending that both Councillors and staff forgo any annual increase in pay or allowances. I must stress this does not in

anyway reflect on the value we place on the dedication and commitment of our staff in delivering services to our residents.

Given the financial pressures the Council is under it has been necessary to modify our approach to our use of general reserves in support of the revenue budget and we are using no general reserves to support the budget. This represents a reduction on the £175,000 used and built into the 2009-10 budget. I am delighted that we have achieved this earlier than we anticipated would be possible.

Whilst we have achieved a balanced budget for 2010-11 we know the future is looking extremely challenging. The Government is running up such high levels of borrowing as its answer to the economic situation that whatever party is in power after the next general election there will be very little left in the cupboard for future funding increases for local authorities. In fact it is highly likely that we will see a significant reduction in public sector spending with much lower levels of Council Tax capping, reductions in National Non Domestic Rates and Grants. We have already undertaken work in relation to identified future financial pressures particularly in 2011-12 when we are likely to face increased employer pension contributions and at the same time the Council will have to pay higher National Insurance contributions. I must stress that the Council is part of a **national** local government [pension](#) scheme and we are required to comply with the national regulations determining employer contributions. I am aware of people's distaste of local government pensions but it is a legal requirement [and part of the fair conditions of service in place to ensure that Spelthorne can recruit and retain staff to deliver the Council's services.](#)

We are putting in place several strategies to ensure that the Council is able to respond to these future financial challenges. The Business Improvement programme is being refreshed with the Chief Executive to chair the Business Improvement Board. We joined this month a procurement partnership with Elmbridge and Epsom and Ewell councils which we hope will help us achieve greater procurement savings. A clear demonstration of what can be achieved from joint procurement is the £100,000 plus per annum savings we have achieved as a result of procuring in partnership with Elmbridge a new Material Recovery Facility contract. Working in partnership with other authorities is the way forward in the future.

We have been reviewing management structures and have reduced the underlying employees' budget by £600,000 between 2009-10 and 2010-11. The staffing establishment over the last year has been reduced by a net [10.72](#) FTE. I should remind councillors that here in Spelthorne we have the lowest ratio of staff to residents compared to all the other districts in Surrey [that operate Streetscene services in house.](#)

We are putting in place more focused arrangements for driving forward partnership working with other councils and other partners both private and public sector. We are also reviewing our assets to look at those which might be under-used or surplus to requirements, and which might have an alternative use. This will include looking at ways of using our assets to generate ongoing income streams. This Council is actively supporting the Surreywide project looking at the use of public sector assets across Surrey. As a step in this direction up to 50 police staff will shortly move into the Council offices in 2010-11 which will generate additional income for the Council and facilitate closer working with the police.

In determining our spending priorities, we have taken into account the views of local people alongside our legal obligations, in order to provide a clearer focus on delivering what our residents require. The Budget Task Group has reviewed how our current priorities inform budget allocation decisions and have recommended that we review our corporate priorities. We will address this during 2010-11.

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

The Council successfully launched in November 2009 the Choice Based Lettings scheme giving more choice for tenants. The Council successfully led a partnership of three Councils and two housing associations on the implementation of Choice Based Lettings which will offer a choice of properties across Borough boundaries for which tenants will be able to 'bid' for.

We are on track for construction of the high quality, state of the art Stanwell Health and Community Centre to commence later this year. The deal has been signed and work will commence shortly.

Benwell Community Centre, and the Extra Care housing is coming to fruition and we anticipated completion day is late summer, [which will provide the first mixed tenure scheme with a community facility in Surrey. I am delighted to highlight that phase 1 of the Stanwell Newstart project has commenced construction.](#)

2009-10 saw further consolidation on the successful bedding in of alternate weekly collection with our recycling rate rising to [33.7%](#) and a significant reduction in the number of remaining difficult to collect properties. 2009-10 saw the successful implementation of an improved garden waste collection with the introduction of brown wheelie bins. This was so well received that we are now introducing a second round and with Spring around the corner and orders coming in daily this will soon be full.

Over a three year period we are investing £300,000 of the Council's money in our area regeneration programme for Ashford, Shepperton and Sunbury. I am delighted to say that we have been successful in levering in matched funding from Surrey County to increase the programme to £600,000. Residents have and are being given the opportunity to shape those proposals. The three project teams are making good progress working up proposals which will be implemented in the coming year. By improving the environment and the local scene hopefully this will encourage residents to shop and to support their local shops.

In 2009-10 in partnership with SLM we introduced free swimming for the under 16s and over 60s using the Government funding. This resulted in a 34% increase in the number of swimming sessions. Unfortunately the funding is for a limited period only.

Whilst the national statistics may suggest the UK economy is technically out of recession the economic situation remains bleak with a risk that it could deteriorate even further. This Council with its limited resources is doing what it can to help its community cope with the economic downturn. We have reduced the average time it takes the Council to pay suppliers down to just over 12 and half days and we are accredited to the Prompt Payment scheme. The Revenues Team have by pro-actively going out to businesses to increase the take up of small business rate relief (no additional cost to the Council) by 30% over the last year.

Despite the efficiencies we have delivered we have maintained our capacity to deliver frontline services. For example during the cold snap in January we continued to provide our core services such as refuse collection, meals on wheels, and running Spelride, which many of our residents recognised and complimented us on.

I would like now to return to the detail of our Budget and the Council Tax proposals for 2010/11.

Our net expenditure next year is projected to be £13.5 million. Grants of approximately £0.7m and Business rates of approx. £5.0m produces around £5.7 million and we plan to use £1.1 million from interest earnings and reserves. This leaves £6.701 million to be met from the Council Tax, which, after taking account of £55,510 from this year's collection and a tax base of 40,388 properties at Band D, will require a Band D Council Tax of £167.30 to be levied. This is a nil increase. Spelthorne Borough Council is one of only four local authorities in Surrey who have managed to set a nil increase for 2010-2011. It is perhaps interesting to note that if we still kept all of the business rate collected in the borough, we could levy a nil absolute Council Tax and still have lots of money left over!

To our own part of the Band D Council Tax will be added the precept from Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police, which are £1,116.36 and £198.54, respectively, which gives a total Band D Council tax of £1,482.20 – an overall increase of 2.2 %, which equates to an increase of £31.86 p.a. This increase is entirely due to the Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police Authority precept increases.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my thanks to Councillor Mrs Vivienne Leighton for her valued support and all other Cabinet Members as well as the Chief Executive and his Management Team and all the staff for their support and assistance in preparing this budget.

I now formally move the adoption of Minute No. 1575 – Draft Detailed Budget 2010/2011 - of the Cabinet meeting of 16 February 2010, as amended by the Budget Book [green book] and the separate paper previously circulated detailing the precepts by the Surrey County Council and the Surrey Police Authority and the Band D Council Tax levy for the year circulated to all Members.

APPENDIX B

SPEECH BY COUNCILLOR COLIN STRONG, LIBERAL DEMOCRAT - LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

BUDGET RESPONSE – 25TH FEBRUARY 2010

Madam Mayor,

I have pleasure in responding to the Leader's speech formally moving the motion to set the Council Tax for the year 2010/2011.

It has been an eventful 12 months and, as usual, before dealing with the finance proposals I shall summarise the past year as well as looking ahead at forthcoming challenges.

There are unsung heroes around us all the time: people who stay in the background, yet who enable our community to function. Penny and Ron Jones from Sunbury are such heroes but unsung no longer.

For more than 30 years Penny and Ron have taken care of many vulnerable children through the County Council's fostering service. I congratulate them for being honoured with MBEs for their excellent work. They are a special couple who thoroughly deserve their honours.

Speaking of heroes congratulations to Team Spelthorne who for the second year running came top in the Surrey Youth games. Unlike the 2008 event 2009 saw Team Spelthorne share the Overall Borough Trophy with Guildford.

Let us send our good wishes for a hat-trick of wins for the games in June.

Twinning links are not usually controversial but, as we say, Spelthorne is different.

In late 2008 the ruling group announced they wished to twin the Council with Grand Port Savanne on the island of Mauritius.

Last May the Conservatives pressed ahead and voted to formally sign the twinning link. The Liberal Democrats voted against. The truth is that Spelthorne has little in common with a tropical island situated in the Indian Ocean some 6,000 miles away.

Today, I can reaffirm the pledge that an incoming Liberal Democrat administration would scrap the Mauritius twinning link.

Madam Mayor,

Spelthorne residents have been badly treated by this Labour government. None more so than with the appalling decision to cap the Surrey Police Council Tax.

The Surrey Police capping order was voted through Parliament last July. The Conservative MP for Spelthorne failed to vote against the order. In fact not one Conservative MP voted against Labour's cuts. It was left to Liberal Democrat MPs to oppose this discredited Labour government.

What was the result of this capping?

It cost Surrey Police £75,000 to reimburse the Council's cost of processing the £130,000 Council Tax refund to local residents. A refund that amounted to just £3.24 for a Band D property.

This is a prime example of economic madness under Labour. First they take money away. Then you have to pay extra for the privilege.

Just imagine how £205,000 could be spent on policing within our Borough. Now remove that sum and you will understand how Spelthorne is suffering under a Labour government.

To add insult to injury when 2 Conservative Councillors tabled a motion last July in support of our police force we expected a lively debate on the police cuts affecting our Borough. We did not expect for the motion to be withdrawn at the last moment.

Actions speak louder than words – Labour imposed cuts on our Borough and the Conservatives did nothing.

Planning has had a high profile in recent years but for all the wrong reasons.

Last August we had a meeting with the Chief Executive where we presented a number of cases where it was clear to us that there were serious issues with the way those planning applications had been dealt with.

At that meeting we called for a thorough investigation into Spelthorne's planning system. As a group we are appreciative that our call was followed through and we now await the final report.

The Lib Dems are a pro-active group. Last October we led a debate on climate change asking the Council to sign-up to the national 10:10 campaign. This would have resulted in the Borough committing itself to reducing its CO2 emissions by 10% in 2010.

The purpose of this campaign is to get people to make immediate energy savings and to focus attention on reducing energy usage permanently. To date over 100 local authorities have signed up.

Faced with a comprehensive Lib Dem motion Conservative Councillors ducked the issue, referring it to the nine members of the Cabinet who ultimately rejected the chance to join the 10:10 campaign.

Such a decision was not unexpected from those who support expansion at Heathrow.

Ashford College and its uncertain future continues to be at the top of the Liberal Democrat agenda.

The closure announcement last October was a shock to residents and students across our Borough. More shocking was the Conservative response. Sensing a re-development opportunity the Council moved very swiftly to produce a Planning Brief that would steer the type of development for the college site.

The Liberal Democrat view then, and now, is that our priority is to safeguard the College and not to tout the site to developers.

The Conservative leadership were in such a rush to approve the Planning Brief that they scheduled a Special cabinet for late November just 8 days before the usual monthly meeting.

As a former student at the College I was appalled by this turn of events. At the special meeting I spoke against the Planning Brief and was pleased when the Conservative cabinet members performed a spectacular U-turn.

Looking ahead we have other challenges that face us.

Airtrack still threatens Staines and Stanwell Moor. As a Borough we suffer pain but no gain from the current scheme. If Airtrack is to proceed we want the best possible outcome for our residents.

The London Irish proposals in Lower Sunbury are well known. As I am not a member of the Planning committee I can freely state that I back the residents 100% in their opposition to both plans.

As Councillors we must make a stand against any loss of open space. These green areas help to protect our Borough from urban sprawl, enhance our environment and offer leisure activities to our residents.

All this could be lost forever.

Finally, the so-called "Eco-park". This is the County Council's grand plan for a dual energy-from-waste plant at Charlton tip.

At this time there are more questions than answers. Consequently we have serious concerns that Charlton is not a suitable site for importing waste from across the county and exporting electricity.

Budget 2010/2011

I turn now to the finance proposals as shown in the Green Book.

The financial position we, as a Council, find ourselves in is due to four contributing factors.

Firstly, the Labour government has steadily under-funded the amount of grant that is paid to Spelthorne.

Secondly, the Conservative administration has consistently run a budget deficit for many years. In order to balance the books they bridge the deficit by selling off assets and running down the reserves. Just like Gordon Brown's government they too have failed to tackle their budget deficit.

Thirdly, the recession has led to historically low interest rates. Given that the Council is so reliant on the use of reserves, falls in interest rates greatly affect the ability to generate investment income and thus balance the books.

The final factor is the political call from Conservative Central Office asking all Conservative-run Councils to work towards a Council Tax freeze.

These four factors combine to explain why the Conservatives are proposing cuts to front-line services that we, as Liberal Democrats, will oppose.

It didn't have to be like this. We warned for years that being deep in the red was not sustainable.

In 2007 with reserves melting away the ruling group voted for a policy that set the minimum target level of reserves at £31 million. This was the figure that was deemed necessary. Today, total revenue reserves stand at around £12 million.

The Conservative failure for over 10 years to tackle the budget deficit has meant that the four factors mentioned earlier have hit hard.

Their proposals show they have been forced to cut the budget deficit from an original figure of £2 million in the current financial year to £1.1million for the year 2010/2011.

So, how have they achieved the reduction?

Partly by generating extra income but also by slashing jobs in the following areas: street cleansing, support services, building control, planning policy and planning development control.

The truth is that these front-line jobs that are due to be axed make a real difference to our community.

In my speech 3 years ago I remarked that residents were seeing the effects of years of Conservative mis-management. Since then the situation has got worse.

Residents are angry about our planning system.

Assets such as Day Centres have been sold. In Sunbury: replaced with 5-storey over-development. In Stanwell: standing idle.

Residents are worried at the loss of much valued open spaces.

Police funding is cut and only the Liberal Democrats stand up for Spelthorne.

And finally we have proposals that will slash Council services further.

This budget is bad for the residents of Spelthorne and we shall oppose the motion.