

# Surrey Gazette

Produced & delivered at NO COST to local taxpayers across Surrey

**£136 million invested outside Surrey as County Council introduce waste charge p2**

**SURREY VOTED TO REMAIN**

**How our NHS will suffer outside of Europe p3**

## **COUNCIL TAX FIASCO** **Conservative budget condemned as £123m of unspecified cuts announced**

Liberal Democrats in Surrey claimed victory as the Tories abandoned their planned 15% tax rise in the face of overwhelming opposition from Surrey residents and Liberal Democrat councillors. The Council tax will now increase by 4.99% in April.

When the budget was set, Councillors across the Council Chamber were astonished to hear that no new government money had been agreed.

Leaked text messages between David Hodge, Leader of the Council, and government ministers show attempted discussions but both deny any increase in funding for Surrey. This means that the Conservative administration will be implementing £123 million of unspecified cuts to essential services - unless additional funding is provided.

### **Council Elections on 4th May**

It appears the u-turn has been agreed in a panic and was solely designed to save Conservative seats in the Surrey Council Council elections this May.

The Tories have made no attempt to sort out the financial mess they have created and have failed to provide any details on how the Council's budget is sustainable, which could lead to substantial Council Tax increases over the next few years instead.

Cllr Hazel Watson, Leader of the Liberal Democrat County Councillors said, "Liberal Democrats and Surrey residents, thousands of whom signed a petition, have forced the Conservatives to back down from their unpopular and unaffordable 15% council tax hike.

"But there is no certainty over where the money to avoid drastic cuts to essential services in the next financial year will come from.

"The reality is that the county council's finances will remain in a poor condition until a fairer funding arrangement for vital adult social care services is agreed with central government. This is what Liberal Democrats are calling for and this is what was wholly missing from the Conservative budget."

**AT RISK:  
ADULT  
SOCIAL  
CARE**



• Liberal Democrats have called for a fairer funding arrangement for vital adult social care services to be agreed with central government

**BACK PAGE: NHS FINANCIAL CRISIS**

# Gazette COMMENT

## Council Tax Rise

It's a difficult choice: massively put up the council tax to improve social care services or have a realistic Council Tax rise which those residents who are "just about managing" to pay their bills each month can "just about afford".

The Gazette believes the Liberal Democrats made the right choice backing a lower tax rise and stopping the 15% rise proposed by the Conservatives.

After all, many who are just about managing to pay their bills also need social care and support.

In addition, the increase in Council Tax hits those on fixed incomes, such as the elderly, hardest and too many residents of Surrey in these difficult times are already having to rely on food banks to feed their families.

The Gazette agrees that social care should be a national service like the NHS – funded centrally and consistently across the country and that a 5% Council Tax increase, which includes 3% earmarked for social services, is a fair compromise.

The general 2% rise should allow the County Council to continue providing its core services across a wide range of service areas although they should cut wasteful expenditure, for example, on glossy magazines that are little more than propaganda bulletins and reinvest the money saved in front line services.

The extra 3% rise for social services would also give a boost to social care provision and enable the County Council to argue for a new national settlement for social care funding.

## Property Investments

Any investor in property, even a County Council, must be clear that it is a good investment which will give a decent return. Surrey has a poor record of managing the properties it has with many empty buildings.

Now Surrey has run its cash reserves down below safe levels it must think again about putting our money at risk.

# CHARGES LEVIED AT SURREY TIPS

**Surrey Conservatives have sought to raise revenues by levying charges on residents disposing of certain household waste at the Community Recycling Centres and have limited the number of Centres which will take such waste.**

The result appears to be an increase in fly-tipping across the county, with District and Borough Councils, the National Trust, local landowners and farmers having to pick up the bill to clear up the mess.

Stephen Cooksey, Liberal Democrat Lead on the Environment at County Hall, said, "Thousands of residents have made it clear through signing petitions that this is a service that they want provided free of charges at the point of use.

"The County Council should not be introducing charges which just mean that other public organisations have to pick up the cost of clearing up the resultant mess."



• Surrey's beautiful greenbelt could soon look like this after the County Council introduced charges to recycle household waste

# Millions invested outside Surrey

**Surrey Conservatives have recently invested £135.8 million of your money in commercial property outside Surrey, such as, a retail unit in Macclesfield, a warehouse in Wiltshire, and a small retail scheme in Milton Keynes.**

They will now be appointing expensive property manag-

ing agents to manage this property portfolio and hoping that these experts know what they are doing – unlike a few years ago when the County Council ended up investing your money in Icelandic banks.

Will Forster, Liberal Democrat County Councillor for Woking South, said, "With

the County Council lacking expertise in managing these properties they have had to use expensive managing agents, reducing the investment returns.

"The money could be better invested in Surrey, in providing key worker housing and in helping the economy of our market towns."

**- 52% VOTED REMAIN IN SURREY -**

# OUR NHS & SOCIAL CARE NEED FOREIGN WORKERS

## Over 1 in 10 Social Carers in Surrey are from overseas

The Liberal Democrats are calling for foreign nationals working in the social care sector to be given the right to remain in the UK following the revelation that 11% of social workers at Surrey County Council come from overseas.

The figures obtained by Catherine Bearder, Liberal Democrat Member of the European Parliament for the South East, under the Freedom of Information Act, show that Surrey County Council is reliant on social carers from Europe and around the world.

The County Council employs 2,142 people in its adult social care department with 109 staff coming from other EU

Member States and 122 are from other countries.

With the County Council already struggling to care for older people, it will find it even harder to cope with its social care responsibilities without its foreign social carers.

The Liberal Democrats have previously called on the British Government to say that European citizens will have the right to stay after Brexit. This latest research highlights how dependent key public services are on EU nationals.

The Government has said that whilst negotiations on Britain leaving the European Union (EU) are ongoing the status of European nationals in the country will not change, but it has refused to guarantee they

could stay when the country leaves the EU.

Catherine Bearder said, "The health and social care system is under serious strain, and it is only kept going by hard working social carers from the EU.

"Surrey County Council and many other local authorities in my South East constituency have a disproportionate number of social workers from abroad - we need to keep them.

"The campaign to leave the EU promised there would be £350 million more a week to spend on our NHS, yet our health and social care services do not have the money they need and we could even see social workers lose their jobs as a result of Brexit."



• Liberal Democrat, Catherine Bearder. An MEP who will fight against a hard Brexit.

## COMMENT

European citizens working here in Surrey and across the country have a real upset and legitimate concerns about their long term status.

The Liberal Democrats will not stand by whilst our communities are divided by uncertainty. Regardless of the outcome of any negotiations with Europe around Brexit, EU citizens who have made our area their home must be allowed to stay.



# CALM THE TRAFFIC

Residents across Surrey are asking for traffic calming in residential areas – both in towns and in rural villages.

Yet the Conservative County Council that sets the speed limits after consultation with the police fails to prioritise the introduction of appropriate speed limits on residential roads and rural lanes.

In response the Liberal Democrats have called for the introduction of 20mph speed limits outside schools and in residential areas where this lower limit is requested by residents.

They have also called for a default 40mph speed limit on rural lanes rather than the current default 60mph national speed limit.

Dave Goodwin, Liberal Democrat County Councillor, said, "Traffic speed is a major issue across the County. The Liberal Democrats are listening to residents and, working with the Police, will deliver lower speed limits where these lower limits are appropriate."

Keep up to date with local news and information: [www.surreylibdems.org.uk](http://www.surreylibdems.org.uk)

# NHS NEEDS CASH INJECTION

- **Waiting lists set to rocket: rationing to follow**
- **Conservatives warn of further “painful” cuts**
- **Lib Dems call for £4bn extra urgent investment**

The NHS is facing a massive financial crisis.



Lib Dem Health Spokesperson, Norman Lamb MP, is calling for an NHS cash injection.

Britain's NHS and social care services need urgent help to tackle a massive financial crisis.

Thousands of operations were cancelled over the winter. Waiting lists are growing and deficits have hit record levels.

The Liberal Democrats have called on the Chancellor to deliver a £4 billion cash injection to stave off this crisis.

Liberal Democrat Health Spokesperson Norman Lamb MP said: "NHS staff are being put under unsustainable pressure. Councils are cutting back on care visits.

"We believe the Government needs to act now to deliver a sizable uplift in funding – especially in those authorities that have borne the brunt of funding cuts in recent years."

Fiona White, Liberal Democrat Social Services Lead at County Hall, says NHS and social care funding is one of the biggest issues facing the country.

Fiona White said: "I know from my role just how tough a job NHS and Social Care professionals face every day. They deserve to know the Government is supporting them by ensuring their services get proper funding."

## **Bring health and social care together**

As well as campaigning for a new funding settlement for the NHS, the Liberal Democrats want to transform Britain's health and care services.

They are calling for a cross-party commission to work to bring together health and social care so that services can be delivered seamlessly and in a more efficient way.

Norman Lamb said: "Money is only part of the solution. We want to see a fresh approach to delivering health and care services in the twenty-first century."

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• Hazel Watson - leading the Liberal Democrats in Surrey