

## **Residents Association & Independent County Councillors Slam Ineffective Conservatives at Surrey County Council**

Residents' Association and Independent County Councillors at SCC have called upon the leaders of Surrey County Council to start looking after the interest of Surrey taxpayers and to publicly challenge the Conservative Government over the huge cuts to the Council's Rate Support Grant (RSG) planned for 2016/2017.

The draft financial settlement, which will be confirmed over the next couple of weeks, shows that SCC's RSG is due to fall by £49 million, from £110 million in 2015/16 down to £61m in 2016/2017 and £23m in 2017/18. The grants cuts are much larger and much sooner than originally indicated by the Government and will have an immediate impact on council services.

**RA County Councillor Nick Harrison**, Leader of the Opposition at SCC said:

"In December David Hodge the Leader of the Council was telling us all how David Cameron had written to the Council praising the Conservatives for their cost cutting measures. It's about time that Mr Hodge got onto the phone to the Prime Minister to tell him that this huge cut in funding is unacceptable and damaging to the Council's planned and phased efficiency savings. Mr Hodge is also the Leader of all Conservative councillors across England at the Local Government Association, and therefore has a direct line to ministers".

The cuts faced by SCC and other councils in Surrey, are far more severe than in any other part of the country, and 8 borough councils in Surrey will lose all of their Rate Support Grant over the next two years.

Haslemere **Independent County Councillor Nikki Barton** said:

"Every single Surrey MP is Conservative and several are Cabinet Members, but none of them are coming out fighting for Surrey's residents and opposing this huge and immediate cut in local government funding. The silence from our local County Conservatives is also significant. They may be from the same political party, but there are times when residents and services come before party loyalty".

RA and Independent County Councillors believe that the basic council services are now in real danger of being severely cut. Local Highway Funding was cut by 25% last year and plans were in place for another 25% cut in 2016/2017. **RA County Councillor Eber Kington** said:

"Before the Government's announcement of the £49 million reduction in RSG we hoped that we had persuaded the SCC Conservatives to restore some of the planned funding cuts to local highway maintenance. This now seems unlikely and if anything repairs to our roads seem to be even more under threat".

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February the County Council meets to agree its Budget for 2016/2017. County Councillor Nick Harrison said:

"The Budget Meeting will be a time for some very tough decisions. However it would be unacceptable if we went into that meeting knowing that SCC's Conservatives had failed to persuade their political friends in Government to treat the Council and the Surrey council taxpayer fairly and in line with the rest of the country".

**For further comments:**

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