

## BUDGET SPEECH BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Madam Mayor, members it is my pleasure to propose the budget for 2011/12 and I have a seconder, who will speak to take you through the detail. It is a strange situation in council that the budget is introduced by the leader, not by the finance portfolio holder who has beavered away over many long months to present the figures for this meeting. I would like to thank Cllr Mike Band, Paul Wenham the deputy chief executive, his officers, executive members and members of committees that have considered the budget proposals and made recommendations to us.

2010 was a difficult year: the election gave us a new coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and the grant settlement announced in December has been challenging. It would have been whichever party won the election, however the grant for 2011/12 requires this council to make £2 million of savings. The total cut in grant income is some 18.2% not the 4.2% reduction the government talks about in spending power.

I constantly hear radio and TV reports of the massive cuts in local authority front line services: that is not the case in Waverley. The fourth budget of this administration before you, achieves savings and maintains our statutory front line services with no council tax increase. We will still empty bins every week with alternate weekly collection, we will continue to sweep our streets, there are not huge cuts proposed in our front line services. A Band D tax property in Waverley will pay Council Tax of £161.91 just 45 pence a day. These proposals take into account our budget consultation of last year.

Four years ago, we promised to return planning decisions to committees of local members, making decisions for their own towns and villages – we did that in the first year of this administration. This budget allows us to continue with this successful committee system

Four years ago we promised to update leisure centres and play areas, we have refurbished leisure centres at Cranleigh and Farnham and commissioned a new leisure centre for Godalming. We have improved children's play areas all within budget. We propose to continue with the new Godalming centre. In addition proposals will be placed before you as trustees for the Shottermill trust for improvements at the Herons, Haslemere.

We undertook to balance this council's budget within the four years of this administration. This was achieved within three years and these proposals continue with a balanced budget. Again congratulations are due to Cllr Band, my predecessor Cllr Gates, officers and members for this success

We also undertook to improve waste collection and the environment in our Borough, with particular attention to cleaner streets and I have an announcement to make regarding this.

In our first year we introduced fixed day collection, which I know Cllr Reed has criticised as a waste of money. I cannot agree that the two additional collections and the certainty of the collection day are a waste, they are a service to our residents and put our Waverley residents first.

This year I put an additional £73,000 into street cleaning. This was a priority in our independent survey of residents and gives the ability to keep our streets cleaner. As a result during November when we were able to remove more leaves from our streets, our recycling rate increased as a result. This extra money remains in the budget for next year.

On waste collection, we have been restricted by the contract entered into by the previous administration, in all good faith I hasten to add, but we are now approaching the break point where we can amend or re-tender.

I can announce today that we are in negotiations to change the system of collection, by removing the baskets and replacing them with a second wheelie bin for all recycling which would be mixed. This will allow us to take additional material for recycling, cardboard and all plastics for example and has the added benefit for residents of ease of movement. If returned to office it is my intention to introduce this system subject to the necessary support from the disposals authority Surrey County Council, as soon as possible. This should increase our recycling rate dramatically, up to some 66% and is good for the planet and good for the residents of Waverley.

As a result of the work of Jon Poore and his staff on the Foresight project they have identified over £1 million of savings and the star chamber process has continued to deliver savings, for which I thank our chief executive and all portfolio holders and heads of service. As a result this budget will continue to provide the funding to maintain our front line services. We regret having to reduce grants to some of our voluntary groups but hope that the concept of the Big Society will encourage others to fill the gap left by the small reduction in public funding. However, we are aware of the wonderful work done in our day centres and the need for funding and we have been able to protect them. We continue to support community partnership schemes with £596,130 and Waverley voluntary grants panel with some £48,000.

Madam mayor, on the housing revenue account, this is the final year of negative subsidy, with in 2011/12 a negative payment of £12.8 million the highest in the South East, equivalent to 51% of rent income or £50 per household per week – a total disgrace.

The government guideline for rent in Waverley properties is an increase of 7% which is high and Cllr Band will say more about this shortly.

We have applied for £10 million of Decent Homes backlog funding from government and await the outcome of that application. This was a strong bid and we are hopeful of a substantial award. Tenants will also help to pay for decent homes with £776,000 from revenue and we have allowed enough in the capital budget to complete the windows programme.

Council is reliant on budgets to function but of course we do many other things, we have been actively involved in a number of matters that affect our residents, not the least of which has been the future of health provision in the Borough and I would like to thank members of all groups who have given great support to our discussions and representations, which have certainly highlighted the fact that this rural area exists - as does the provision of Fire and Rescue services which is a matter on this evenings agenda – there is more work to do and I am sure we will again all pull together for the benefit of residents.

Madam Mayor, in difficult times this is a robust and realistic budget for Waverley declared by BBC TV South the district most able to deal with government cut backs. Our prudent management of finances at Waverley have put us in a position to maintain and improve our services to our residents and put Waverley first.

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