

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SPELTHORNE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 20th March 2006 at Staines Methodist Church, Thames Street, Staines

County Council Members:

Mrs Denise Saliagopoulos (Chairman)*
Mr Victor Agarwal
Mr Ian Beardsmore*
Mr Laurie Burrell*
Mrs Carol Coleman
Mr Frank Davies*
Ms Denise Turner*

Borough Council Members:

Councillor Gerry Ceaser*
Councillor Edward Culnane*
Councillor Denise Grant*
Councillor Peter James*
Councillor Jack Pinkerton*
Councillor Robin Sider*
Councillor George Trussler*

*** = present**

(All references to items refer to the Agenda for the meeting)

74/05 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Agarwal and Mrs Coleman, Surrey County Council and Councillor Forsbrey, Spelthorne Borough Council. Councillor James attended as substitute for Councillor Forsbrey.

75/05 MINUTES (Item 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2006 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

76/05 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

Mr. Davies declared a prejudicial interest in respect of recommendation 5 of item 8 as a trustee of CREST and left the meeting during consideration of this item.

77/05 PETITIONS (Item 4)

Two petitions were received; one from residents of Shepperton Road, Laleham concerned about the spate of road traffic accidents along the stretch of the road into Laleham Village and

one signed by 613 people opposing the proposed closure of four youth centres within Spelthorne.

78/05 MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME (Item 5)

Thirteen Members' questions were received as set out in the annex attached together with the answers given.

79/05 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (ITEM 6)

Nine public questions were received as set out in the annex attached together with the answers given.

80/05 LOCAL COMMITTEE FORWARD (ITEM 7)

Resolved:

To approve the dates of the Local Committee for the Municipal year and to note the proposed forward programme.

81/05 MEMBERS' FUNDS (ITEM 8)

It was reported that £750 from Mrs Saliagopoulos' allocation had been agreed under delegated authority for contribution to Spelthorne Youth Council.

Resolved:

1. To note that the £1,000 paid to Surrey Police for Community Speedwatch to purchase 2 sets of equipment (2 radar guns, 4 reflective jackets and 4 signs) would purchase only 1 radar gun, 2 reflective jackets and 2 signs as costs of the guns had increased to comply with the Home Office requirements for the guns.
2. To note that the Laleham Cricket Club had given assurances about fundraising and community use and the £2,500 capital funding previously agreed by the Local Committee had been released.
3. To note that the £4,000 previously approved for the position of part time temporary Co-ordinator to develop the Stanwell Children's Centre would not be required pending ongoing discussions about the Centre development that the £4,000 had been reallocated to the five Members who had funded this post.
4. A contribution of £400 be made to the 4th Staines Brownies for equipment to be taken equally from those Members with funds remaining.
5. To defer consideration of the request from CREST for £2,300 pending an approach to the Elmbridge and Runnymede Local Committees to contribute one third each given the charity covered those Boroughs in addition to Spelthorne.
6. A further £1,000 be paid to Surrey Police for Community Speedwatch to enable the scheme to be extended in Spelthorne.
7. To note that £1,850 remained of Members' revenue allocation for 2005/06 which could be allocated under

delegated authority before the end of the financial year if suitable projects could be nominated.

8. To contribute £6,751 of capital monies to Ashford Community Association's project to repair their roof subject to sight of their accounts and that the Association did not hold large assets.
9. To contribute £6,000 of capital monies towards the replacement of bollards in Spelthorne.

82/05 LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE – PRESENTATION BY CHRIS WHITE AREA DIRECTOR (ITEM 9)

The Area Director gave an oral update on the work of the LSP over the past year and the key themes being covered by the partnership.

83/05 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE – PRESENTATION BY CHRIS WHITE AREA DIRECTOR (ITEM 10)

Resolved:

The Area Director gave an oral update on the work of the various community safety groups working in partnership within Spelthorne to tackle the community safety agenda.

84/05 AREA TRANSPORTATION FUNDING – PRESENTATION BY PAUL FISHWICK AREA TRANSPORTATION DIRECTOR (ITEM 11)

The Area Transportation Director gave an oral presentation on the various sources of funding to the transportation service and areas of responsibility and the need to prioritise works given the pressure on resources.

85/05 SPELTHORNE LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AREA LOCAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAMME BID 2006/07 – 2011/12 (ITEM 12)

Revised Annexes C – F were tabled for Members' information.

Resolved:

1. The LTP programme bid for the year 2006/07 be approved.
2. The LTP programmes and indicative bids for LTP 2 for the years 2007/08 and 2011/12 be approved in principle.

86/05 ANNUAL HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE SPELTHORNE TRANSPORTATION SERVICE 2006/07 (ITEM 13)

A revised report had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting with some revised wording and updated Annex B.

Resolved:

The Annual Highway Maintenance Management Plan for the Local Transportation Service in Spelthorne for 2006/07 be approved.

87/05

LOCAL ALLOCATION 2006/07 (ITEM 14)

The Local Transportation Manager suggested that the penultimate description in Annex B be amended to read “Waiting Restrictions Amendments and DPE Task Group support” and under fees and consultation costs to £7,500.

Resolved:

1. The forward programme as indicated at Annex B be approved as amended.
2. The remaining funds be allocated as identified.

88/05

CHRISTMAS PARK AND RIDE (ITEM 15)

Resolved:

The report be noted.

89/05

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members would be advised of the next meeting to be held in June.

The meeting which commenced at 7pm ended at 9.20pm

Chairman.....

**Annex to the Minutes of the SCC Local Committee in
Spelthorne held on 20th March 2006**

AGENDA ITEM 5 and 6 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC

In view of the large number of questions on this occasion and the similarity of some questions, the questions and answers were combined into subject matters where appropriate instead of setting out the questions in the order that they were received.

Transportation related questions:

Councillor Pinkerton asked the following question:

“Could I please be informed about the latest position on parking in Elizabethan Way and Close Stanwell that formed my question at the last meeting? I have been involved in this since 2002 when the first petition was sent to SCC and some movement would be appreciated.”

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following answer:

“At the last meeting of this Committee I confirmed that in September 2003 the Committee had resolved that no further action to provide a parking area at Elizabethan Way / Elizabethan Close should be taken at that time. Hence, the proposal was not progressed. There is no funding allocated to on-street parking and the scheme would need to be prioritised with other schemes seeking funding under the objectives of the Local Transport Plan.”

Councillor Pinkerton asked the following question:

“Could I please be informed why the list given to us at the last meeting shows items under Decriminalisation of Parking priorities that are causing concern to Spelthorne residents who think we have got it wrong?

1. Removal of parking restrictions on High Street Stanwell.
2. Feltham Hill Road Crossing near Park Road.
3. Parking by Airport Staff near the shops requiring a waiting restriction.

I have a list of 15 items in Stanwell needing attention sent to Committee many times since 2003. Some have recently been achieved but if necessary and because this is a new committee I can review and send it. Thank you for repair of the potholes in Rosefield Road Staines where I live but could you let me know the plan used to establish priorities on this and other transport matters as a new Member?”

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following reply:

“All waiting and loading restrictions across the Borough were checked against the Traffic Regulation Orders in preparation for Spelthorne Borough Council to take on Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Powers. At that time some discrepancies were found and markings on the ground were altered to conform to the Orders wherever possible. No yellow lines had been laid along

High Street, Stanwell outside Nos. 1 – 15 and 77a – 81 although those lengths were included in the Traffic Regulation Order. The yellow lines were marked on the ground but residents complained about the newly laid restrictions and, as the lack of restrictions at those locations had not previously caused a highway problem, were recommended for revocation at the last meeting of this Committee.

The provision of waiting restrictions at Park Road by Feltham Hill Road did not achieve a sufficiently high priority to be included on the list of restrictions to be provided, within the next list of amendments.

Parking near the shops in Clare Road has been added to the list for consideration at the next review.

All roads on the County public highway network are inspected at regular intervals for defects. Such inspections, which encompass both carriageways and footways, are carried out by the Council's partnering contractor, who has accepted legal responsibility for highway defects. Any potholes or trip hazards considered dangerous are treated on an emergency basis. All defects are rated according to severity in accordance with nationally agreed standards, and are recorded electronically. Surrey County Council has a rolling programme of major and minor maintenance works which is updated annually. This programme is based on bids submitted by each area office, and such bids are based on the ratings recorded within the highway management database. Proposed schemes are assessed objectively on technical grounds, which may take into account matters such as skid resistance, structural strength and traffic volumes as well as visual appearance."

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

"Residents of Denman Drive estate have complained about the condition of the raised flower beds by the shops in Denman Drive, which need to be tidied up and planted out. Who is responsible for the maintenance of these beds, and when can the residents expect this work to be carried out?"

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following reply:

"There is no specific County budget for maintenance of garden areas. However, it is anticipated that this area will be tidied once per year by the Community Gang. The first such exercise is planned to be carried out next month, at which time a bark mulch will be applied in order to suppress weed growth."

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

"At the meeting of the County Council on Tuesday March 7th, I asked a question about the problem of HGV's using our roads which display 7.5t lorry ban signs. In her reply, the executive member for Transport directed me to the Local Committee for information about the Freight Quality Partnership. Could we please be given more details and information about this partnership? Are any members on the partnership?"

The executive member also stated that lorry management measures will be concentrated on in the strategy for the Local Transport Plan, how exactly will these be implemented in Ashford, especially in the most affected roads, namely Clockhouse Lane and Fordbridge Road, where 7.5t lorry ban signs are being ignored at the moment?

Is the freight website referred to in the executive members' reply up and running? If not, when will it be available?"

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following answer:

"Close working between County and Borough Officers with the freight industry resulted in the establishment of a Freight Quality Partnership in 2003-04 for the Spelthorne and Elmbridge Borough Areas.

The partnership seeks to balance the concerns of local residents on the environmental impact of lorries on communities with the operational needs of major freight distribution centres based in the area. It seeks to develop effective lorry management measures to limit their impact and address a wide range of freight related issues on the proposed replacement of Walton Bridge.

The enforcement of 7.5 tonnes weight restrictions will remain the responsibility of Surrey Police.

Outline information is available on the Heavy Goods Vehicles website."

Councillor Sider asked the following question:

"Is the Area Transportation Director aware of the poor road surface on the approach to Walton Bridge from Shepperton, and is he aware that this has been reported several times by residents, and that it now poses the problem of road safety. Can he inform me when repairs are likely to be effected?"

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following reply:

"We are aware of the condition of the carriageway in Walton Bridge Road, and following an inspection earlier this month by our partnering contractor, two Category 1 potholes were filled. This temporary repair failed and had to be carried out a second time, but it is planned to instigate permanent repairs within the next two months."

Councillor Sider asked the following question:

"Can the Area Transportation Director inform me why the service road in Green Lane, Shepperton has been allowed to deteriorate into such a bad state that there are now over 30 locations where there is no tarmac on the road? And can the Area Director also inform me when the road was last inspected and the result of that inspection. And will the Area Director also note that the state of this road was reported by myself well over 12 months ago."

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following answer:

"The service road from Green Lane to Gaston Bridge Road, Shepperton is programmed to be resurfaced next month."

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“Can we please have an update on the replacement tree by Ashford Memorial?”

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following answer:

“We are unable to plant a replacement for the cedar tree in the same planter due to the presence of roots and stump remaining from the old tree. It will be necessary to excavate a new tree pit adjacent to the old one, but its exact location will be determined by the presence of existing underground services. We shall of course endeavour to keep the new planting site as close as possible to the old one. An order has been raised to excavate trial holes in order to accurately determine the new planting site.”

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“What, as a percentage, do Ashford Council Tax Payers contribute to Surrey, and, as a percentage, what is spent in Ashford by the Transportation Department?”

The Area Transportation Director (North East) gave the following answer:

“It is difficult to directly compare council tax funding to expenditure within a given service due to the complex way in which Surrey is funded. However, I can inform members that 13% of the County Council’s Revenue budget is spent on Transportation.”

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“I receive complaints from my constituents on an almost daily basis regarding the condition of the pavements in Ashford. In the leaders Budget speech at the February Full council meeting, he stated that more money would be available for transportation, will some of this be spent on repairing the pavements in Ashford?”

The Area Transportation Director (North East) gave the following answer:

“The County public highway network is inspected at regular intervals for defects. The Council’s partnering contractor, who has accepted legal responsibility for highway defects, carries out such inspections, which encompass both carriageways and footways. Defects are rated according to severity in accordance with nationally and locally agreed standards, and are recorded electronically. These defects are funded from the revenue allocations that have been made available within each district area. This funding is targeted towards where there is greatest need and the funding is not ‘ring-fenced’ to footways or carriageways.

However, Surrey County Council has a rolling programme of major and minor maintenance works, utilising the Capital funding that has been made available. The rolling programme is updated annually on an engineering basis. This programme is based data collected by the County Council’s Materials Laboratory as well as local knowledge provided by the local office

on a bid submission basis. Proposed schemes are assessed objectively on technical grounds, which may take into account matters such as skid resistance, structural strength and traffic volumes as well as visual appearance.

A proportion of the Capital funding is due to be allocated to footway works and a provisional footway refurbishment bid for the Spelthorne area has been submitted comprising six sites, one of which is in Ashford (Poplar Road). We do not yet know whether finance will be forthcoming for any or all of the bid areas. It should be noted, however, that of the footway schemes completed this financial year within the Spelthorne area, approximately 80% by value were in Ashford. Bids for footway refurbishment schemes are submitted on a purely objective basis formulated by reference to condition reports compiled by our contractor's inspectors and Best Value condition surveys undertaken by the County Council's Laboratory."

Mr Carruthers asked the following question:

"An up to date list of Section 106 money for Spelthorne area was given at the February 2006 Local Committee Meeting, and this gave the usual listings at the original receipt values. Section 106 cash is held in separate Trusts, one per planning approval, and it cannot be used for any other purpose than that specified in the relevant planning conditions. Please will you confirm that the Trustees of all these Trusts are Spelthorne BC and Surrey CC?

All this money in interest though, has now been held for a long time, some of it for many years, on deposit, and has now accrued a large sum in interest. How much is this please? I asked this question of Phil Walker County Assistant Director Finance several times but am still awaiting an answer. Who has been holding the money, who now has it, where is the accrued interest now, who controls and accounts for this income and where? Are there accounts to see for the periods from original acquisition for any of this cash? How do the Trustees ensure that all the benefit from Section 106 cash is limited to the discharge of the relevant planning condition?

Clearly this Section 106 money and its income should be entirely at the disposal of the Spelthorne Local Committee. Bearing in mind the additional work that could be carried out at this time when cash is in such short supply, will the Local Committee monitor closely and identify all this accrued income to ensure that Spelthorne benefits? Do the time limits apply to the income as well as to the original capital sums? If so has any yet been returning having not been spent in time? Has in fact any of this money been used for any other purpose? What are the Trustees doing about their responsibilities in accounting for this income? Where is it sticking to the system, and who is blocking its use?"

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following reply:

"I confirm that Surrey County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council hold the funding for the S.106 Agreements within Spelthorne. As interest is accrued it is added to the initial sum. Expenditure is closely monitored and no funds have been returned to the developer due to not having been spent

within agreed time limits. Funding has been spent on the purposes for which it was intended.

The updated S.106 Schedule will be included in the June issue of the North East Area Spelthorne Local Transportation Service Newsletter.”

Caroline Nicholls asked the following question:

“Consultation TP26 Linear Park and Cycleway

Please can you let me know when the public consultation process is due to start, what it will consist of and who will be consulted. Can I receive a copy of the consultation document without having to request it?

TP26 is important to many in the community because it forms a big part of the only extensive off-road route through Lower Sunbury and it links several schools.”

The Local Transportation Manager gave the following answer:

“The route to be considered by public consultation is to be informally agreed at a meeting of Surrey County Council and Spelthorne Borough Council Members and Officers together with representatives of the Lower Sunbury and Kempton Park Residents’ Associations. This meeting has been extremely difficult to arrange but following that meeting a full public consultation will be carried out with residents who would be directly affected by the scheme and other interested parties. I shall ensure a copy of the consultation document is sent to Caroline Nicholls.”

Questions related to funding for One to One:

Councillor Sider asked the following question:

“Can the Area Director inform me why, without any investigation or consultation, funding for the registered charity ONE to ONE has been withdrawn by Surrey County Council North West Area Management Team Grants Panel (Adults and Community Care), thereby placing the charity in a difficult financial position which has resulted in the project co-ordinator being served redundancy notice?”

Councillor Pat Weston, Mayor of the Borough of Spelthorne asked the following question:

“I am dismayed by the news that 1-2-1 is to have their funding stopped. 1-2-1 is a friendship scheme that links people with learning difficulties and people in the community.

The aim of 1-2-1 is to increase awareness and understanding of people with learning difficulties. The emphasis is on creating friendships so that members can enjoy everyday activities that you and I take so much for granted such as visits to shops, restaurants, the cinema and so many other places that they may enjoy these activities in a safe environment. Volunteers’ make contact and encourage taking part in all kinds of activities including sports, arts and craft, music and quizzes.

Without 1-2-1 these people will stagnant and will become withdrawn.

I have since learned that Carol Box who is the project co-ordinator of 1-2-1 has since been made redundant taking effect from April

Surely one of your priorities is 'Care in the Community'. These people are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the community and need your support.

I am well aware of the money constraints that are placed on us all but I implore you to reconsider this funding."

The Rev David Priddy, Ashford Common Baptist Church asked the following question:

"With the Adults and Community Care team undertaking a Strategic Review of Short Term Respite for those with Learning Disabilities and their Carers, why has the grant to One to One (NW Surrey) from the Carers' Development Team of the same part of the County Council been zero-funded this year when One to One provides a key part of the respite for many of their clients on a low cost voluntary basis? Is this another case of the lack of joined up thinking which is evident in the proposed closure of 4 of the Spelthorne Youth Centres, some of which are also bases for the voluntary sector which provide many services to priority need groups?"

The Carers Development Manager gave the following answer:

"One to One had applied for a grant for the financial year 2006/7 under the National Carers Grant Funding administered by Surrey County Council. While it is true that the organisation has previously had such grant funding, their request for further grant support had to be considered in the same manner as for other schemes. Many of these were also seeking renewed funding.

The County Council, like many other funding bodies, receives many more applications for funding than it can support, Demand for Carers Grant funding is, regrettably, always higher than we are able to supply. As such there can never be a guarantee that funding will automatically be renewed, and furthermore no funding is guaranteed as permanent and is always subject to review.

The allocation of the Carers Grant is determined by five area panels. One to One's application was copied and sent to North Area (as 96% of their project takes place in our North area) and also to North West (as 4% takes place in our North West area). The letter that One to One received from me referred to the North West panel's decision. This panel decided against funding the project as it only supported one North West client last year.

However, the application is also being considered by our North Surrey area panel and One to One will very shortly be hearing from the North panel with their decision on the bid."

Questions related to proposals to close Youth Centres:

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“At the very well attended public meeting at the Ashford Youth Centre on Monday 6th March, the unanimous feedback was that Ashford does not want to lose its youth club. Anthony Durno, the head of youth services, who attended the meeting, stated that he would feed back the comments and concerns to the senior officers, however, in reply to a message that I sent to the BDR team, pleading with them to withdraw the proposal to close the Spelthorne youth centres, they stated that they were not aware of any meeting at the Ashford Youth Centre. I also got the impression from the reply, that the decision has already been made.

Could Anthony Durno please tell us why he did not feed back to the BDR team, about the Ashford Youth Centre meeting?

Assuming that the youth centres have to close, what other provision has been made for the various users of the Ashford Centre? There are many groups that use these premises, and I would expect that these implications would have been considered before the proposals were made. Where will the enterprise club take place? Where will the youth club meet? Where will the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme meet?

On the Surrey County Council Website, the BDR proposals show a chart on which Youth Centres show implementation of the proposals starting 27th March, how can this be before the council are voting on it on April 11th?

It also shows under Summary of Logic/assumptions: A proportion of the capital receipts of £6.5m can be reinvested to improve young people centres. What will the proportion be? How much of that proportion will be spent in Ashford on youth services?

Under Validation Summary: "Figures presented appear to be valid from purely financial perspective. Cannot though validate what impact these changes will have on service delivery" Has the impact on service delivery now been validated?"

The Acting Head of the Youth Service gave the following answer:

“The Acting Head of the Youth Development Service confirms that he attended the public meeting at Ashford Youth Centre on the evening of Monday 6th March. Following this he fed back to the BDR Families Stream Leader, the YDS Manager Seconded to BDR who is working with the two "sponsor members" and also he had a meeting on the 9th March where he fed back from the public meeting to the Portfolio holder for Schools, Children and Community Services. In terms of the perception that decisions have already been made it can be confirmed that the decision is to be made on the 11th April.

The list is a proposal, awaiting decision on the 11th April. If the centre is to close it is hoped that hirers of the centre will find alternative venues to hire.

“The Enterprise Club will not be closing it will just take place in a different

venue. The session will continue to take place on a Friday at the same time as well. It is important to note that the youth service provision in the Borough will not be diminished due to BDR it will mean however, that some sessions and projects will take place in alternative appropriate venues. I cannot comment on which projects will be taking place where until the BDR process has been completed.

In relation to the list on SCC website It can be confirmed that the list is a proposal list and appropriate implementation will follow the decision of the 11th.

Under Validation Summary -The task under the BDR is to reduce revenue costs and maintain / improve service delivery. The Youth Development Service was praised in its Ofsted report and is seen by the inspectorate as good and good value for money. This makes it one of the top performing Youth Services in the country. The Service has developed a number of delivery methods including centre based provision, detached work, mobile projects, outreach, residentials, cafe projects, schools based work, partnership working and music projects and will continue to meet its priority - the delivery of Youth Work. If the service continues to run the number of centres it currently has the revenue required for the upkeep and day to day running of these buildings will have an adverse affect on staffing budgets therefore reducing the number of Youth Workers the service is able to employ resulting in a reduction in the prime purpose of the Youth Development Service the delivery of Youth Work.”

Mr Jason Ritchie asked the following questions:

“1. Why have Surrey CC employees, who have recently issued with notices of vulnerability, now been told this week they have a week to apply for new jobs (closing date Monday 20th March)? How can this be if the final decision is supposedly not made until April 11th and in theory some of these youth centres could be saved and the jobs along with them?

2. Can we please have a firm location, size (i.e. number of rooms etc) and opening date of this proposed new centre supposedly being created in the Sunbury/Ashford Common area?

3. Could the Councillors not use some of their annual allowance (i.e. 2006/7) each and give it to the Spelthorne youth centres facing closure to keep them open, given that all areas of the community use these various centres?”

The Area Director gave the following reply:

“In order to reduce the period of uncertainty for staff and to put the County Council in a strong position to implement its reorganisation, recruitment is taking place in parallel with the consultation process. All appointments are subject to the decision taken on April 11th by the Council and staff are aware of this.

In relation to Mr Ritchie’s second question the Acting Head of Youth Service advises that the reduction in the number of centres is a proposal and no

decision has been made at this time. The proposal also included a re-provision of a centre in the Sunbury/ Ashford Common area. A specific location has not been identified. If the Council decision regarding the BDR proposals on the 11th April results in a reduction in the number of centres an appropriate transition plan will need to be agreed for each of the affected centres.

In relation to the use of County Councillor allowances, I am not sure if Mr Ritchie is referring to the allowances received for the duties performed by elected Members or their Local Committee allocation for community benefit projects. Neither source would be regarded as appropriate to support the revenue costs of youth centres. The Council's budget is developed as a whole package and it would make no sense for reductions in one part to be bailed out by another. Also these sources of funding would provide no long-term security for the activities. A key element of the Business Delivery Review is to place services on a sustainable financial footing."

Mrs Caroline Hunter, Volunteer Rep for the Charity "Contact a Family", and parent to two young people who use the Spelthorne Youth Centres, asked the following question:

"Over the past month, Spelthorne residents and some local councillors have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the proposed Youth Centre Closures in Spelthorne, and to gain valuable feedback.

I am sure that all of the Councillors who were present at the Public meetings held to discuss these proposals cannot fail to have been moved and impressed by the passion and commitment of all those fighting these cuts. There was a real desire to work as a Community to save these precious Centres, and despite the short timescale given, there are already working parties looking into alternatives such as Trusts, help from National Charities etc. should that become necessary.

We heard from young people, from parents, from teachers, from the Police, from the disabled, from the elderly, from the Community Centre users – without exception, everyone we have spoken to or listened to feels that this is a short-term fix, that will have major long-term repercussions.

In the light of this information and this unanimous show of support from all Spelthorne residents, my question is this:

Can each of the County Councillors for Spelthorne, and especially the Councillor who will be representing us on the Executive Committee, give us their assurance that they will truly reflect the feelings of the Residents of Spelthorne, and vote against the proposals to close ALL four centres in our area on the 11th April?

If some Councillors feel they cannot yet give that assurance, when will they be in a position to indicate how they will vote, and what else can we as local

residents do to help them make the right decision for all Spelthorne residents?”

The Chairman gave the following reply:

“Can I thank Ms Hunter for recognising the efforts that Councillors have made in relation to the proposal to close youth centres, but all of the thanks should go to residents and especially the young people themselves who have made such helpful comments and suggestions on the proposals.

The County Council is in a very difficult position, but for the right decisions to be made, all of the arguments must be on the table and your Councillors will continue to ensure that the persuasive case that we have made for Spelthorne’s facilities continue to be heard at County Hall.

You have asked the individual County Councillors to state whether they will be voting against the closures. I am clear on my position but I think it only fair to point out that a package of difficult decisions is coming forward to the Council meeting on 11th April. Whilst consultation with the Trades Unions, and engagement with users and partners is continuing, County Councillors may feel it is premature to give a definitive response at this time of listening and understanding.

The Council meeting will, of course, be in public and if you were free, you would be able to attend the meeting and observe the debate.”

Questions related to Day Centres

Mrs Coleman asked the following question:

“In his budget speech the leader also stated that more was to go to Adults and Community Care, could some of this go towards keeping our Spelthorne Day Centres open? As these should really be the responsibility of the County.”

Mr Nichols of Sunbury asked the following question:

Disposal of Community Centres

“There is much concern across Spelthorne that Surrey County Council and Spelthorne BC are about to engage in a mass disposal of our community centres. In particular, the relatively deprived community around Sunbury Cross is on the hit list to lose three centres - Benwell day centre, Sunbury youth centre and Churchill Hall. What dialogue has taken place between the two Councils and how will these closures benefit the community?”

The Area Director and the Operations Manager Adults and Community Care Services gave the following reply:

“The long standing support by Borough and District Councils in Surrey for day centers is much appreciated. This provision is, of course, entirely legitimate

and has reflected the powers available to those Councils to improve the quality of life in their communities.

Like other areas in the public sector, many of those services are being reviewed to ensure that they are targeted on those most in need, and this is happening at a time of financial constraint.

The resources of the County Council referred to by Mrs Coleman have already been allocated to the budget for services for families, but as the comments already show the County Council and the Borough Council are working closely together.

Decisions on alternative uses of property take place on a regular basis between the two Councils and with other agencies. Sometimes, the judgement will be made that there is a need to realize the capital value of a site in order to generate receipts for investment elsewhere.

Adults and Community Care has responsibility for providing for the unmet social care needs of the residents of Spelthorne whose needs fall within Surrey County Council eligibility criteria of critical and/or substantial. Currently Surrey County Council discharges its duty by paying a grant of £40,000 towards the core costs of running the Day centres in addition to funding the full costs of the personal care and support provided to seven people in high need who currently attend the Benwell Centre.

We have been in regular discussion with Spelthorne Borough Council regarding the proposed changes in the provision of Day Services in Spelthorne. Adults and Community Care is committed to continuing to work in partnership with Spelthorne Borough Council to ensure that the proposed changes in service, particularly Day Centres and Community Meals target those older people in highest need. We therefore support the continuity of Day Care Services targeted towards frail older people in high need. We would anticipate continuing the current arrangement whereby Surrey County Council provides the care element for identified frail older people attending the day centre located in Sunbury. We feel that Benwell Day Centre facility for older people in high need has been very successful. Ideally we would prefer this to continue on the same site. We realise this may not be possible and strongly support a similar service from at least one day centre which should be located in a central position in Spelthorne. Ideally we would wish two day centres to be available with care support based either end of the Borough, thereby making them more accessible for a greater number of people. Our contribution to core funding is confirmation of Adults and Community Care's view that the continuation of day services as both a maintenance and preventative service for older people is important and valued. We indicated in our written response to Spelthorne Borough Council's Older People's Review that Adults and Community Care want to work with the Borough Council on a strategic basis to plan for what we all know will be a considerable increase of older people.

We have proposed that any changes in the use of the day centres should be focused on meeting key priorities in the government's agenda, particularly to maximise choice and assist in maintaining the independence of adults and older people. We would therefore support the provision of extra care housing on sites that may become available through the proposed day centre closures.

To support adults with disabilities, we need to continue on the current path of localising day services to provide opportunities for greater integration. The joint use of existing facilities to support these developments would be welcome."

Councillor Pinkerton asked the following question:

"I would like to know why Surrey County Council have proposed not to fund the provision of Day Centres for the Old, Clubs for the young and libraries for all, which are legally their responsibility? Government funding is made available to SCC for their welfare and SCC also receive approximately two thirds of the Council Tax paid by residents. We are all representatives of the people and it has been made clear to me these facilities are what the people want at my personal visits and the political meetings held to create unrest. They all understand that more efficient use of the facilities will have to form part of the package.

We are told that SCC is increasing investment in improving services for elderly people by £25.7 million and an extra £14.4 million for schools and young people so why cannot SCC provide people with what they want out of this increased investment and maintain and even increase their excellent historic record?

The public in Spelthorne, in fact all of Surrey are aware that Local Authorities have been short changed by Government as identified by the nation-wide Local Government Association but for many these facilities are the highlight of their life and as there is extra money why deny the public what they want."

The Area Director gave the following answer:

"Councillor Pinkerton has effectively answered his question - the County Council does not have the resources to fund all of its current services. Alongside that, the nature of service delivery is always evolving. Opening hours of libraries can be extended - with the staffing resources coming from the closure of some other libraries. We know that approximately 50% of Youth Work is not delivered in Youth Centres, and that outreach work, and the use of other venues is popular.

The County's Business Delivery Review has tried to address in parallel the challenges of financial constraints and service re-design. The engagement process with service users and with partners - with decisions not due to be taken until April - has proved a very valuable exercise, and an influential one. Cllr Pinkerton may be aware that the County Executive will be recommending, for example, that 4 of the libraries proposed for closure are not closed.

Investment decisions for 2006/07 have been taken with as much skill as possible, but clearly the financial climate is such that some of those decisions will inevitably be the 'least worst', a situation that I know is appreciated by the Borough Council."

Questions related to the BDR generally:

Mr Carruthers asked the following question:

"I asked a question at the February Meeting of the Local Committee, but unlike all the other questioners present was not allowed to ask the usual a supplementary question. The written information that was given by the Officers as the answer, in fact did not address the particular point and question that I had asked.

This was: - "as leaders of this authority should not the Country Councillors set an example in cost reduction by cutting their own not inconsiderable Council earnings by say 10% each?" I ask this question again.

One of the councillors pointed out and of which I am aware, that the level of councillor allowance is recommended by an independent body, but then all salaries to anyone paid for by the Council are recommended and are to national standards. The point is that Councillors are there to make decisions, not just to do what officers tell them, or to float wherever the tide happens to take them, and if they expect others to take reductions or reorganisations are recommended, they should set an example. The restriction should particularly apply to them as well as everyone else, and they should be seen to lead and not just passively pretend that somehow they are not directly involved.

We now have Borough Councillors present here, and they are in a similar position having it seems just voted to themselves an increase of about 3% in their allowances, apparently tamely nodding it through time when their Council is proposing to close Day Centres and halve Spelride transport because of lack of available Council cash. Are you following their example?

So should not the Councillors do what they are asking everyone else to do, tighten their belts, take a reduction or at least not have an increase, and lead with the respect of the community?"

The Area Director gave the following reply:

"Mr Carruthers question effectively seeks an answer from each County Councillor and Borough Councillor, and I think that it is up to them to respond or not, given the large number of questions and business that the Committee has to manage this evening.

It was acknowledged in response to Mr Carruthers last question that at times of financial constraint a symbolic act of belt tightening would appeal to some - others may regard it as no more than tokenism. Belt tightening can be demonstrated in a number of ways and I would want to reassure him that huge amount of additional work has taken place to solve the financial

problems and consider alternative ways of delivering services. County Councillors have been a part of this, with many attached to project teams, and organising meetings in their Division, particularly where service changes have been suggested.”

Keith Johnson asked the following question:

"As a retired council tax payer I am extremely concerned that I am witnessing the proposed disposal of community assets when the payments I have made have outstripped inflation.

In ten years my contribution to SCC's council tax has risen 209%. My contribution to SCC ten years ago was 5.5 times that to Spelthorne. In my current tax bill it is now 6.5 times that to Spelthorne.

Spelthorne compared with other boroughs has over-exceeded its new housing targets and therefore is increasing its proportional contribution to the County.

Spelthorne has areas of deprivation and high crime compared with Surrey as a whole.

I should like to know

- (1) What public consultation is made about the disposal of property assets which SCC holds on trust for the community?
- (2) How does SCC justify taking a draconian attitude towards Spelthorne when it has provided more than its fair share of asset provision in terms of gravel winning and land-fill at the same time as bearing the adverse environmental consequence?
- (3) How does SCC's policy on the provision of facilities and services for the young and elderly make Spelthorne a better place in which to live in the future?"

The Area Director gave the following reply:

“Mr Johnson’s question raises borough, county and national issues – funding of local government, the relationship between SCC and SBC expenditure over the last decade, housing provision in Spelthorne and gravel extraction. I am not sure that the following answer does justice to his broad canvas. I hope it is proportionate given the number of questions before this meeting.

In relation to the disposal of property assets, public consultation will vary depending on the land in question (e.g. green belt, playing field, commercial premises.) Property is used to aid the provision of services and as services change so the need for property will change. As said above, there can be a need for assets to be realized for investment; there may be opportunities for partners to take over assets through good partnership working the Council strives to make the best decision on the evidence before it – unfortunately the opportunity to enhance community provision is likely to be but one of a number of options before it.

The County has not taken a draconian attitude towards Spelthorne. Part of its function is to look at the county as a whole, as it is doing in the case of

minerals. He is right to point out that some areas, like parts of Spelthorne, have been at the forefront for many years in meeting the County's needs for various types of minerals. No doubt other parts of the county make a disproportionate contribution to other issues.

The county's services for the young and elderly have been externally assessed as providing very good services. There are always improvements to be made. The "Business Delivery Review" Process has been as much about seeking improvements, as it has been concerned with living responsibly within the financial resources made available to the county."