

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

LOCAL COMMITTEE (TANDRIDGE)

DATE: 23 JUNE 2017

SUBJECT: PUBLIC QUESTION: LOCALISM FUNDING

DIVISION: CATERHAM ON THE HILL



Background

Mr Bob Milton, Chairman, Chaldon Village Council (CVC) asks:

Chaldon Village Council has fully embraced "localism" and has previously received a £3000 grant from SCC to carry out essential maintenance work around the Village.

Localism has been very successful applied in Chaldon, enabling local decisions to be made by local people who have a far greater awareness and understanding of the issues. Work has been carried out quickly and at a significantly reduced cost, compared to similar work completed by SCC.

On 21st April CVC, along with a number of other parish councils, received an email from Michael Dawson, Custom Service and Improvement Manager, Local Highway Service, stating that the funding available for highway work, including Localism, has been reduced. The email went on to advise that we should not incur costs ... in the expectation that funding would be provided by SCC.

A follow-up enquiry of Mr. Dawson revealed that it was highly unlikely that any funding would be available for Localism.

The email was the first notification that this council has received from SCC that Localism funding was being reduced. Our SCC Councillor was also unable to recall receiving any notification.

The precept for Chaldon Village Council is just £25000. The Localism funding has added an additional £3000 increasing our budget by over 12%. The removal of this funding will have a significant impact on our budget and prevent us from carrying out essential work.

The timing of this first notification of a reduction/loss of our localism grant has prevented CVC from putting in place alternative funding or increasing our precept for 2018/19.

When will we be notified of the Localism grant for Chaldon Village Council for 2018/19? Why was the notification of a reduction/loss of the Localism grant not communicated to CVC (and other parishes) much earlier? What assessment has been made on the impact of a reduction/loss of the localism grant on smaller councils? Will this impact on smaller councils be taken into consideration when considering the allocation of localism funding?

Question 2

Response:

It is acknowledged that the funding previously available under the Localism Grant Scheme is highly valued by Chaldon Village Council. The works carried out as a result of this funding are greatly appreciated and contribute to the amenity of the area.

The final approved 2017/18 budget for the County Council was not formally agreed by Cabinet until the end of March 2017. Budgets for individual directorates and services could therefore not be allocated until that approval was in place.

The Local Committee Chairmen were advised of the budget position on 10 April 2017 so that discussions could be held with the Members of their Local Committee. The Chairmen were also advised that all groups who had previously applied for a grant under the Localism Scheme would be notified.

The email sent to you on 21 April 2017 advised that "it remains the responsibility of the Local Committee to determine how it allocates its resources". It has therefore not been possible to provide any further information until the Local Committee budget has been agreed.

All grants under the localism scheme have to be applied for on an annual basis, and are supported by the Divisional Member. There has never been a commitment or guarantee of ongoing funding. Surrey Highways advised the Parishes and other organisations as a matter of courtesy, in advance of any decision being made by the Local Committees, so that unnecessary costs were not incurred.

The budget for 2018/19 has not yet been set and therefore it is not possible to say at this time whether funding under the Localism Grant Scheme would be available in 2018/19.

It is appreciated that the value of the grant is proportionately greater for smaller Parish Councils and community organisations. Unfortunately the Localism Grant Scheme is not available for any Parish or community organisation to apply for in the 2017/18 financial year, irrespective of size.

Suggestions and requests for highway maintenance in Chaldon Village can still be made through the Surrey County Council website or through your Divisional Member.

Contact Officer: Michael Dawson, Customer Service & Improvement Manager, 0300 200 1003