



Tory Council's Finance Fiasco!

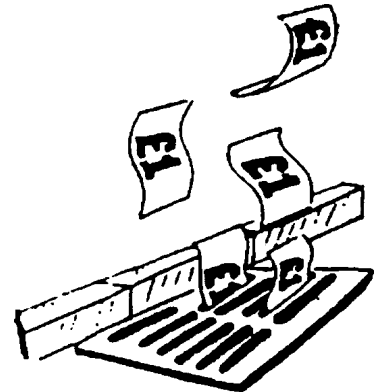
Your Liberal Democrat Councillors have slammed Conservative controlled Surrey Heath Borough Council for financial incompetence. They are seeking urgent answers to why the Council is almost £1million over budget.

At a recent Council meeting it was revealed that the Council was in the red for the 2005-06 financial year by nearly £1 million, leaving its reserves dangerously depleted. The council's 'current account' was more than £1.8 million in April 2004, but by April 2006 it is estimated that it will be reduced to £332,000.

Councillor Judy Douch told Focus *"This is a shocking state of affairs. There would appear to be no financial control being exercised by the Conservative administration. Increased spending on staff costs relating to changes in staffing are too blame"*.

Cllr Duncan Clark, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Liberal Democrat group, commented *"For staffing costs to be as far out of control as they are is outrageous and the implications of the problem are massive. In my view we should be considering some very serious steps indeed to establish what has gone wrong with the control procedures in this council."*

Cllr John Faulkner continued *"I would like to know why we have reached this point now without being made aware of this situation. Who was aware that the wheels had come off this Conservative budget? This finance fiasco is due to poor Conservative management - as simple as that!"*



New Licensing Laws Gag Residents and Councillors



Liberal Democrat Councillors have condemned the Labour Government's new Licensing laws which limit the part local residents can play in determining new applications.

Government regulations mean that only residents within 100 metres of an establishment are allowed to submit their views formally. Local councillors are also barred from representing their residents at hearings concerning applications from establishments from within their own ward. So much for increased local accountability!

Recycling - Getting It Right

Your Liberal Democrat Councillors recently spent a day with Eastleigh Borough Councillors to seek ideas on how to improve recycling rates here in Surrey Heath.

Lib Dem controlled Eastleigh is one of the top-performing district councils in the country for recycling. Currently they have a recycling rate of 35%, and they have plans to reach 40% in two years, and 50% in five.

Surrey Heath has a respectable recycling level of 26%, but this has not been increasing recently. Eastleigh is a little bigger and not as prosperous as Surrey Heath, but is similar in having a mixture of urban & rural areas.

The Surrey Heath team were welcomed by Keith House, Leader of Eastleigh Council, and Louise Bloom, Portfolio Holder for the Environment.

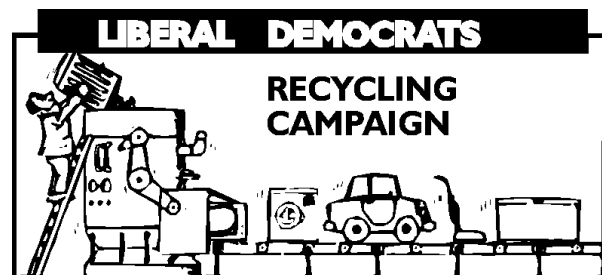
"The visit was very worthwhile", said Lib Dem Group Leader David Whitcroft. "Eastleigh's experience shows us what can be done with clear focus and imagination. The initiatives being adopted by Eastleigh are very relevant to our situation in Surrey Heath. Eastleigh's Lib Dem Council also appears to be more adept at obtaining government funding for their initiatives than the current Conservative administration in Surrey Heath".



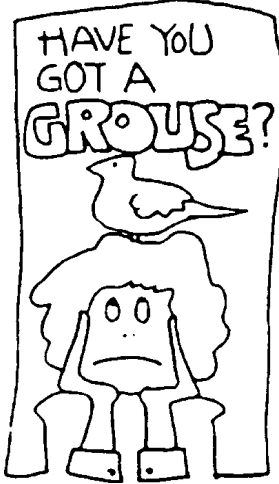
Cllr Keith House (Lib Dem Leader of Eastleigh Borough Council), Cllr David Whitcroft (Surrey Heath Liberal Democrat Group Leader), Cllr Louise Bloom (Portfolio Holder for the Environment at Eastleigh) and Cllr Judy Douch (Surrey Heath Liberal Democrat Environment Spokesperson) outside the Eastleigh Council Offices.

Cllr Judy Douch, the Lib Dem Environment spokesperson said: *"Eastleigh pioneered the system of alternate week collection of recyclables and non-recyclables. This is currently being implemented by many Councils, including Rushmoor, Hart and Woking, and is something that Surrey Heath is also investigating. However, the most important lesson we learnt was how critical it is to gain the support of the local community for recycling by providing education and information. Education is important not only when introducing a new scheme, but also to reinforce it as it is progressively rolled out."*

The visit was one of a number of activities being carried out by Surrey Heath Lib Dems to raise the profile of Environmental matters in Surrey Heath. A separate visit to Woking Borough Council was made recently by Cllr Douch to explore Woking's experience with renewable energy. Woking is a recognised "Beacon Council" for their work in this area.



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The Liberal Democrat Focus Team would like to hear from you....
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