

# ***SURREY HEATH LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCIL GROUP***

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Date 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

**Embargo: None**

### **‘SURREY HEATH COUNCIL TAXPAYER CARRYING THE CAN FOR THIS DECISION’ – LIB-DEM LEADER, AFTER INDEPENDENT REPORT**

The independent report into the 2016 acquisition of The Square shopping centre by Surrey Heath Borough Council has concluded that the Conservative led Council failed to follow ‘good practise’ and paid a price for the centre at the ‘top end of the market.’

Cllr Mylvaganam, Surrey Heath Lib Dem Leader and Chair of the Council’s Performance & Finance (P&F) Committee, said after the latest meeting of the committee which received the report from experts Avison Young, “Clearly the basis of the decision making to purchase The Square was conducted in a totally incorrect manner by the Conservative led Council. Only one valuation for the property was obtained and that was at the high end of what the Centre was worth.”

There was confusion at the committee meeting, too, as to whether current Council Leader, Conservative Alan McClafferty, had been present at the Council meeting in August 2016 when the decision to proceed with the purchase was made. Cllr McClafferty claimed he had been present but two opposition Councillors who had been present claimed he had presented his apologies, a position supported by the official minutes of the meeting.

At the P&F meeting Councillor McClafferty stated that he ‘*Still thinks it* (the decision to buy The Square) *was the right decision.*’ He added, however, that the Council will ‘*certainly be looking to improve*’ by following the recommendations of the independent report.

“The Council Leader claims that the Council made The Square acquisition purely to regenerate Camberley Town Centre and not, as suggested elsewhere in the official record, in an attempt to generate income to offset losses in Government support to the Council,” added Cllr Mylvaganam,

Since the purchase of the shopping mall, in the 5 years, hardly any visible regeneration of the shopping centre has taken place and the rental income received by the Council has also **fallen** since this ill-considered purchase was made - at a time when everyone knew about the trend to internet shopping. Thanks to the Conservative led Council, the Surrey Heath taxpayer is carrying the can for this terrible decision.”

- Ends -

- Issued by: SH Liberal Democrats

Additional Watching / Reading - The “You Tube” link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GeLV6s475w> (from 1 hr :12 minute to the end),

## SOCIAL MEDIA VERSION

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At the P&F meeting Councillor McClafferty stated that he *‘Still thinks it* (the decision to buy The Square) *was the right decision.’* He added, however, that the Council will *‘certainly be looking to improve’* by following the recommendations of the independent report.

“The Council Leader claims that the Council made The Square acquisition purely to regenerate Camberley Town Centre and not generate income,” added Cllr Mylvaganam,.

In the past 5 years since the purchase of the shopping mall, little, if any, visible regeneration of the shopping centre has taken place and the rental income received by the Council has also **fallen from this** ill-considered purchase was made - at a time when everyone knew about the trend to internet shopping.

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