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Friday 31st January 2014

No: 16177

Price 75p

## Referendum 'irresponsible' as SCC wants 1.99% tax rise

TAXPAYERS in Surrey can expect a bigger bill this year as Surrey County Council plans to increase its council tax share by 1.99%.

The proposed increase is 0.01% short of that which is needed to spark a referendum on the decision. Council leader David Hodge claimed that allowing a vote would be 'irresponsible'.

The new precept, which would raise £546 million in funding, is actually 0.6% less than the increase that would freeze their tax bills, a flagship Tory policy.

"We're proposing a 1.99% increase even though we've said we need 2.5% because any more means wasting up to £2m on a referendum and while this puts more pressure on services, we'll still be able to provide what residents want with this increase."

"It is clear to us that there is no guarantee this money will be in the budget after 2015/16. When we have the next comprehensive spending review, I don't think we will see council tax freezes."

The council has seen a £69m cut in its government grant since 2010, £56m of which it has retained through council tax increases.

He said that an additional £25m would be required to respond to the increasing needs of a burgeoning elderly population, while the rising numbers of school-age children would cost around £327m in school place funding by 2019.

and snow," he said. "The last thing we want to do is put the cost of everything up. But we received the lowest funding from government for a county council in the country."

The proposed increase is due to be discussed during a county council cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

### In brief

#### Kitchen fire from grill

FIREFIGHTERS used two breathing apparatus and a hose reel to extinguish a small kitchen fire in Claygate.

The crew from Painshill fire station was called to the house in Covert Road at 1am on Tuesday January 28.

A spokesman said the fire was caused by the grill being left on with a pan underneath while the occupants went to bed, filling the kitchen with acrid smoke.

The firefighters were called when a fire alarm in the house was activated.

#### Classroom plans submitted

A NEW classroom could be built at a school in Long Ditton to help meet demand for places.

A joint application has been submitted to Elmbridge Borough Council by the governors at Long Ditton St Mary's Church of England Junior School and Surrey County Council for the new building.

The classroom block would form part of the school's expansion project on its Sugden Road site.

It would allow Long Ditton St Mary's to offer 60 school places per year - a jump from the current total of 45.

The borough council is due to decide on plans by March 13, following a consultation.

#### Dog stuck in fox den

A DOG was rescued by firefighters last Friday after getting stuck in a fox den.

Crews from Chertsey and Guildford were called out to Walton Lane, Weybridge, at 2.35pm to free the unfortunate pooch, which had wedged itself in the hole.

The dog was freed in just over an hour.

## Driver despair at problem with potholes

By Charlotte Talbot

'DISASTROUS' potholes along a main road in Walton are making motorists' lives a misery.

Like many routes in the county, bad weather and heavy rain has left Rydens Road peppered with holes, causing drivers to swerve and damage their tyres.

The holes were filled in after Christmas but have reappeared just weeks later.

The situation is being made worse, according to residents, due to the number of lorries and HGVs using the route to and from the Weylands industrial estate - a problem they believe will only get worse if plans for a waste incinerator nearby are agreed.

Shaun Screen, a Rydens Road resident, said one of the issues is the noise created when vehicles drive over the holes.

"They make a lot of noise and wake my son up," he said. "Driving down the road is like driving in a third world country. It's so dangerous."

"The potholes are much worse towards the end of the road, nearer Esher Rugby Club.

"There were some down there that if a motorcyclist hit them, it would have been disastrous. They then came and filled them in but it has sunk immediately. So we still have potholes."

"If they just did a good job the first time round they would save time and money, and damage to people's cars. It's just a disaster, the whole road."

Christine Elmer, councillor for Walton South, said she was 'absolutely furious' about the situation.

"After Christmas, work was done which later opened up. Further infilling has been done recently."

"It is so sub-standard that we now have to drive at exceedingly low speed in order to avoid the holes, some of which are many inches deep."

Cllr Elmer said when driving along the stretch of road in the dark, it is 'impossible to tell where the holes are', and added she was recently jolted from her car seat when she drove over one.

A spokesman for Surrey County Council said the potholes, which they have located on the road, would be repaired.

They added: "We are currently in the process of spending millions of pounds on repairing damage caused to our highways by the severe weather."

People can report potholes with a precise location at [sur-reycc.gov.uk](http://sur-reycc.gov.uk), or by calling 0300 200 1003.



One of the potholes in Rydens Road, Walton.



Grahame Larter EN142240-06

Stephanie Jacometti (middle) holds the birthday cake with fellow members of Transition Cobham during their birthday party at Sainsbury's.

## Cake celebration for community group

A COMMUNITY group has been celebrating its first birthday with cake, new ideas and memories of the year gone by.

Members of Transition Cobham, which was launched last year by Stephanie Jacometti, got together to toast their success in a community room at Sainsbury's in the High Street.

Transition Cobham now has around 30 regular members and several different groups to pick from.

Members can join as many groups as they like, which include a group focusing on a campaign to get people in the community reusing plastic bags, one looking at setting up a community garden this year, and groups that focus on footpaths, cycle paths and public transport.

Miss Jacometti said: "I have always been interested in sustainability and the environment, climate change, and resilience. And here you learn new things and meet new people, that's quite a big deal."

One of the events Transition Cobham held last year was a clothes swap, which proved popular with members who wanted to get clothes in a sustainable way.

Now Miss Jacometti is focused on the year ahead.

She said: "One of our main projects will be the community garden. We are just waiting for the go ahead."

"This is all volunteer run, it is just people who are really passionate about it and want to get involved."

Similar Transition groups have already been set up in places including Dorking, Farnham, Ashted and Kingston.

To find out more about Transition Cobham visit [www.facebook.com/TransitionCobham](http://www.facebook.com/TransitionCobham).

## Plans for boatyard redevelopment sunk by council

PLANS to redevelop Taggs Boatyard in Thames Ditton to include riverfront apartments have been quashed.

The application to demolish the existing buildings on the site in Summer Road and construct flats above, was unanimously refused at the east area sub committee meeting on Monday January 27, much to the disappointment of the people who run the existing Taggs Island Boatyard.

The site plans included building a detached three-storey building with a boatyard and offices on the ground floor with eight flats above, plus a detached two-storey building at the front of the site, with parking.

Another application asking for consent to build in the conservation area was also refused as it would result in 'an unsightly gap and the loss of historic river frontage activities' associated with the area.

But before the meeting had even happened, Elmbridge planning officers recommended the application be refused, and at Monday's meeting councillors unanimously agreed with the recommendations.

The reasons for refusal include the development not being an appropriate use for a functioning flood plain, the residences are closer to the river than the existing boatyard and so would be detrimental to the views and vistas, and it would be highly visible and over dominant.

Loss of light to nearby properties was also highlighted, as well as that the flats do not make sufficient contribution to affordable housing.

The application, by Thorstone Riverside Ltd and Taggs Boatyard Ltd, proposed a financial contribution towards affordable housing of £154,565 and the provision of a single home for shared ownership affordable housing tenure.

The site has been a boatyard since the 1900s with the earliest map showing the boatyard as 1914.

Jeremy Munk, managing director of Taggs Boatyard Ltd, said: "The intention was for the commercial boatyard to continue, but make it look much better and also have the flats. That is the way it could have been financially done."

"The cost would have been covered effectively by putting the apartments in. It was a sensible idea. I'm disappointed. If it was a beautiful 14th century building that was being developed I could see their point."

Speaking afterwards, subcommittee chairman Cllr Shweta Kapadia said: "The committee felt that it would impact on the lives of people living on Thames Ditton Island. Whether the site needs developing or not, that is a matter for the developers. Of course that are free to appeal the decision."

The application attracted 42 letters of objection including Thames Ditton Island (M&S) Ltd stating the building line of the new development would be extended to towards the river, and that it does not include enough parking.

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