



Surrey Council for Voluntary Youth Service
Supporting the Voluntary Youth Organisations of Surrey

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Dear Garath,

22 February 2010

Current Financial Position

There are two matters which are of concern to me on behalf of my Members. I do not intend that this should be a whinge, but rather an offer to work together at what we all know is a difficult time up and down the country.

Several Surrey Youth Focus Member organisations have received a standard letter from Henry Curwen dated 5 February, giving notice that the three year grants that many of us have received may be in jeopardy following your report to the Safer and Stronger Select Committee of 27 January, and the subsequent County Council Budget decisions on 9 February.

Clearly the County Council is entitled to make its decisions, and I understand the context of the Council only receiving the minimum Government grant increase of 1.5%, the need to cut spending by £20 mill in cash over the four years to 2014, and simultaneously to absorb growth pressures of £179 mill (Officer report to Cabinet 2 Feb paras. 44 and 45). We were consulted by Cllr David Hodge, the Deputy Leader about the draft Budget as part of a voluntary sector delegation before the Budget was finalised.

However it is one thing to be consulted about the strategic picture generally, and another to experience the unfolding of the detailed impact. At a strategic level it seems to me that the cuts are falling disproportionately on your Services to Young People, and I suspect you may feel the same way too.

Neither the Select Committee report nor the Budget report gave any particular detail about the cut-backs that you may now be working upon, and to which the letter of 5 February alludes.

It is now evident that the Youth Development Service is to take a £1.1 mill cut in 2010/11, and I realise this presents severe challenges. However I need to remind you that the County Council is a signatory to the Surrey Compact wherein it undertakes to give at least 3 months notice of any funding changes. Several voluntary sector organisations will be making key decisions about staff as to whether they can retain existing staff, fill vacancies, or be compelled to make staff redundant, giving proper notice which itself has to be funded.



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It is therefore imperative that you do not make key decisions divorced from knowledge of the impact that will occur in the voluntary sector. Simple mantras like “focus on targeted work” simply beg the question about what that constitutes, where are the grey areas, who is currently funded to undertake it, and so on.

My point is that at a time of acute difficulty for us all, I suggest we should be working together on this. I make this offer now in advance of any decisions about detail, because to do so after the event will be too late, and the adverse impact on the sector will be considerable. I do not want the sector to simply receive a list of cuts, of the sort intimated by the 5 Feb letter, but to be engaged in a consultative process beforehand.

My second concern is in relation to the Future Jobs Fund bid put together successfully by the Surrey Economic Partnership on behalf of a consortium of which we are members. I was advised by Mark Pearson of SEP that Surrey CC were to act as the bankers for the £2.4 mill grant, but I now understand that the whole project implementation has been handed over to you.

If I have got this right, could I just emphasise that Surrey Youth Focus is a member of the original consortium and I look forward to hearing about how you will engage with us, and others, to implement this important development.

Best wishes,

Yours,

Mike

Mike Abbott
Chief Executive

Copy to: David Hypher DL, Chairman, and all Trustees

Mrs Sarah Goad JP
Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey

The Rt Rev The Bishop of Guildford
Representing Faith Communities

Patrons:

Lady Toulson CBE
High Sheriff of Surrey 2009/10

Professor Christopher Snowden
Vice-Chancellor of University of Surrey

Mark Rowley
Chief Constable of Surrey

Mr Geoff Marlow
Chairman Surrey County Council

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