Dear Mr Blunt

Last week the Chairman of Citizens Advice Surrey (CAS) attended a consultation meeting for the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) at Surrey County Council, given by the Council’s Leader, David Hodge and the Council’s Director of Finance, Sheila Little.

From that discussion, it is very clear that the proposed budget settlement for Surrey County Council and the districts and boroughs in Surrey is far worse than the Council had anticipated and planned for, is possibly the worst offered to any County Council, is not sustainable, and will lead to serious and mounting problems for VCFS organisations. If it is not revised substantially upwards the likelihood is that the disadvantaged population in Surrey will face mounting problems leading to increasing demands from VCFS organisations, whilst at the same time funding that enables VCFS organisations to engage early on with individuals and enable them to resolve issues before they escalate will be severely reduced. This would result in a vicious circle, with mounting problems and diminishing availability of advice leading to mounting social and financial costs.

Notwithstanding the fact that Citizens Advice Surrey’s 14 member bureaux between them have some 700 unpaid volunteers, proposed budget cuts could cause serious and lasting damage to the service they are able to provide.

Our bureaux – Reigate & Banstead Citizens Advice is particularly affected as we are one of, if not the, poorest areas in Surrey with the highest number of Local Assistance Scheme requests across the county, one third of our wards are within the most deprived quartile in the county and nationally, despite the perceived wealth of Surrey, eleven of our wards are below the national average.

I am asking you to use your best efforts to ensure that the proposed budget settlement is reviewed and revised upwards.

Yours sincerely

Richard Hoffman

Vice Chair Reigate & Banstead Citizens Advice

