

Council 29 July 2015: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Responsible Officer:
1.	Mr Palmer	<p>Given that Swale Borough Council had an underspend of over £1 million pounds in the last budgeting year, of which around £120,000 could have been forwarded to Parish and Town Councils as was the case in the overwhelming majority of local Districts, can the Leader now release that money to those Councils - many of which may have to cut services as a result - and guarantee that any such central government funding received in the current budgetary year will be forwarded to Parish and Town Councils accordingly?</p> <p>In 2014 the Local government minister Brandon Lewis told council leaders they must “justify to their council taxpayer” any decisions to withhold council tax support funding from parish and town councils. How and when did Swale Council justify this withholding of this money from Town & Parish councils.</p> <p>There are 346 billing authorities of which only 16 have withheld this money from Parish & Town councils in 2014/15; Swale Borough Council is one of the 16.</p>	Leader of the Council	Nick Vickers - Head of Finance
<p>Response: Thank you for your question. For the 2013/14 financial year the Government no longer identified a distinct element of funding for the Council to fund Council Tax Support for parish and district councils. That was a decision of Government linked to the changes which they made to Council Tax support.</p> <p>We considered how we should handle this and decided that rather than having a long lingering reduction in the amount of funding we passed on, linked to our drastic reductions in Revenue Support Grant (reduced by 32% 2014/15 to 2015/16), we would cease support in one go. Unlike this Council, parish and town councils are not capped for Council Tax increases.</p> <p>The average parish/town council precept in the Borough is £32.98, so on average households are paying 63p a week. On that basis I am confident that the actions of this Council have neither had an adverse impact on services, nor placed an intolerable burden on householders.</p>				