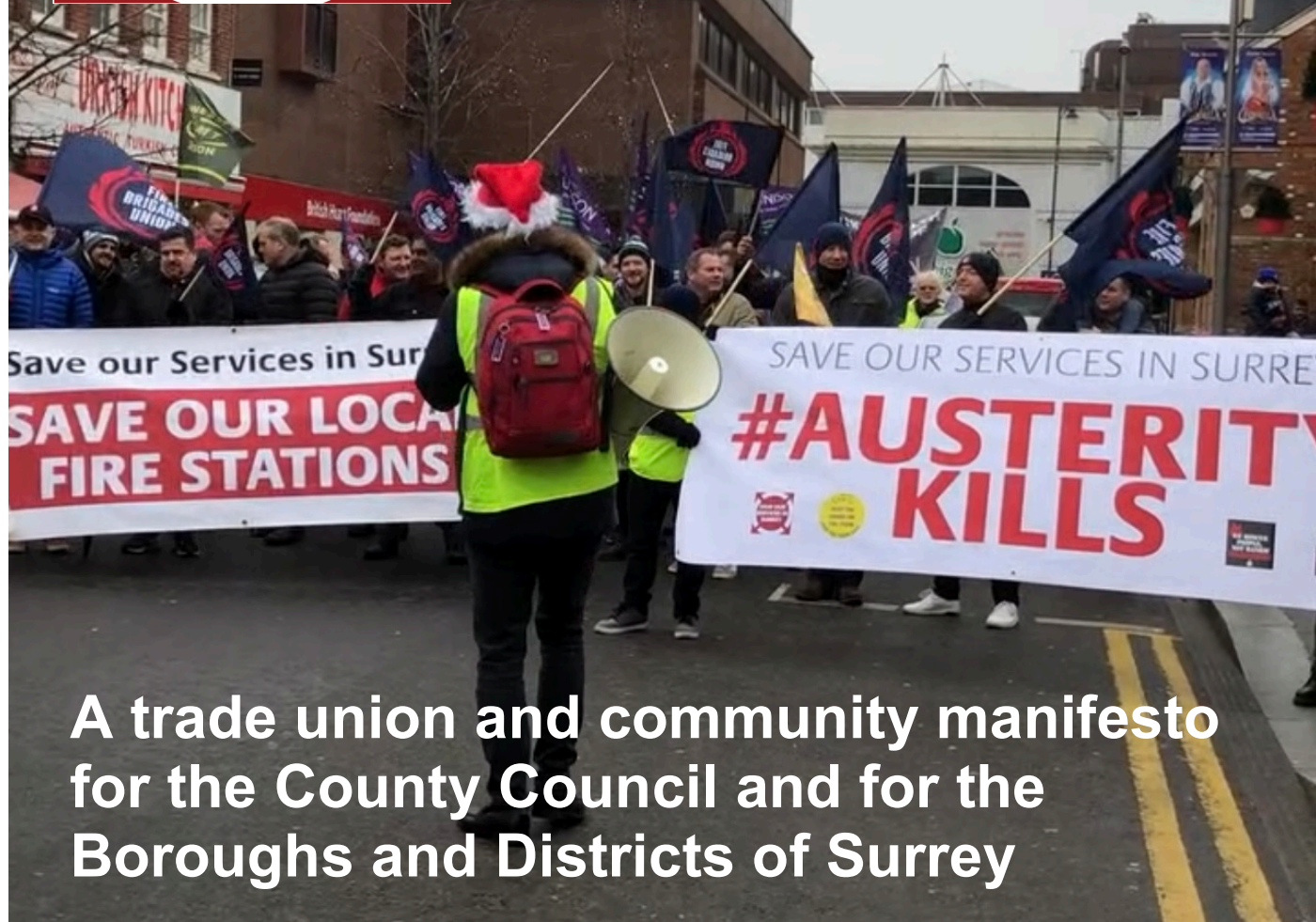




**SAVE OUR
SERVICES IN
SURREY**

A People's Budget for Surrey



**A trade union and community manifesto
for the County Council and for the
Boroughs and Districts of Surrey**

NO CUTS – IMPROVE SERVICES – FIGHT FOR FUNDING

Save Our Services in Surrey is a network of trade unionists, socialists and community campaigners. We have produced this manifesto based on dozens of submissions from council workers and service users, who are in the front line of public services. Almost all of the public sector trade unions were involved in compiling this important document, along with Labour, Green, Peace Party and Socialist Party activists and interested residents.

This manifesto was adopted unanimously at our conference in Woking on 24th September 2022.



INTRODUCTION

This 'budget' (or manifesto) is not linked to any one political party. It is a grassroots attempt to outline what we believe councillors need to do to tackle austerity, public service cuts, the climate emergency and the cost of living crisis.

We are calling on all progressive candidates in County and Borough Council elections in Surrey to take up and campaign on these demands and – most importantly – to carry them through if elected. It is no good anymore for councillors to just say 'we cannot do anything', 'we have no choice'.

We stand alongside those taking action against climate change; workers in any sector fighting for a fair pay rise; women combating street harassment; housing campaigners fighting evictions; disabled campaigners and anti-racism activists, to name but a few.

Save Our Services in Surrey will be at the heart of any struggle that is a step towards a society in which people can enjoy life to its fullest without the fear of unemployment, homelessness, poverty and discrimination and we are proud to offer this manifesto as a starting point for a real fight back in the council chambers of Surrey.

So, if you are a council candidate (or if you are interested in standing) and you pledge that if you are elected you will go into the council chamber and vote against all cuts, closures, privatisation and other austerity politics – and will fight for the manifesto which follows - we will publicise this to our growing network. You will be part of a team of cross-party, committed candidates prepared to work together for the good of the workers and residents of Surrey.

Everyone who is prepared to stand up to the establishment politicians at the ballot box. Every trade unionist, anti-cuts campaigner, community activist and all those who want to see an alternative to austerity politicians and want to fight for the demands below, is welcome in Save Our Services in Surrey.

You can contact us for more information at saveourservicesurrey@gmail.com.

FUNDING

The manifesto below obviously could not be fulfilled with the current level of government funding provided to councils. Any council led by councilors who supported the People's Budget would have to be prepared to lead a major campaign amongst the people of Surrey and the workforce (through their trade unions) to force the government to provide the necessary resources.

In the meantime, however, councils could immediately implement many of these demands by using prudential borrowing to invest and create revenue income (through council house building for instance) and by the use of reserves. In short, we believe that the best way to mobilise the mass campaign that is necessary to defend and improve council services is to set a budget that meets the needs of the local community and demand that government funding makes up the shortfall.

We also reject all unaffordable increases in taxes, rents, fares and service charges to compensate for government cuts. We support the reversal of the Tory tax cuts for the rich and call for the adequate resourcing of HMRC to stop tax avoidance and evasion by the super-rich and by multinational companies.



OUR PEOPLE'S BUDGET

HOUSING

- Build quality council homes now. Councillors must have the courage to implement a social and genuinely affordable housing programme, constructed by a building department run directly by the council or through vetted and reputable Housing Associations.
- Council homes must be built to a high standard, be sustainable and have accessibility as a central feature.
- Use councils' powers to compulsorily register private landlords and set-up council run lettings agencies, as the means to tackle repair standards, high rents, over occupancy, extortionate letting fees etc for private rented homes.
- Make sure those suffering on the streets are given immediate decent and comfortable accommodation and the necessary support to transform their lives.
- Enforce policies to ensure the safety of local people, acting immediately on cladding and fire safety – by doing the work and billing the government. Use compulsory purchase orders, where necessary.

EDUCATION

- Make free school meals available for all, including during school holidays - for primary and secondary schools.
- Provide free local subject and specialist expert support advisors able to visit schools on request.
- Improve and extend library services (including in schools).
- Provide additional staffing, for smaller classes and provide better equipment.
- New focus on accessibility of education, for people with additional needs and disabilities, including funding and vocational training.
- Two weeks work experience and careers guidance for all secondary pupils.
- Bring education up to 18 back into the full control of the council thus eliminating the involvement of private (profit-making) companies into this essential social service.
- Make sure the Early Years sector receives an increase in the hourly rate to enable sufficient quality affordable places. Employees in the Early Years sector receive quality training and support provided by the Local Authority.
- Syllabus to include African and Asian history.

HEALTH

- Fund free therapies (eg occupational therapy and speech and language therapy) for easy, early access for all ages.
- Improve adult mental health services
- Work in partnership with health Integrated Care Boards to reinstate FREE dentistry services to all. Develop NHS dentist provision to meet local demand.
- Reverse any local privatisation of health services.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Free specialist activity clubs for children during school holidays eg camping/sailing/riding.
- Early, easy access to child mental health services for all children (overhaul and go far beyond CAMHS).
- Reverse the cuts to Special Educational Needs (SEND) provision. Enable all children to attend a local school that meets their needs or provide reliable, free transport to an appropriate school.
- Introduce local replacements for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for all 16-18 year-olds who stay on in education.
- Reinstate childcare provision in Sure Start centres where this has been cut and reopen all the centres closed since 2010.
- Re-open closed youth centres and restore lost youth services, starting now to put into place the foundations of a genuine national youth service.
- Stop the sell-off of playing fields and sports facilities to developers and private leisure companies, and invest in sports and recreational facilities and services.
- Empty high street shops, for example, could be taken over and transformed into sports or cultural facilities and spaces for all sections of society.

TRANSPORT

- Free public transport for all Surrey residents.
- Public ownership and responsibility for all bus services in Surrey.

EQUALITY

- Produce a detailed Equality Action Plan covering all protected characteristics, including race and ethnicity, based on data around outcomes for different groups.
- Carry out robust Equality Impact Assessments on all council projects and proposals.
- Working age people with disabilities to receive adequate benefits, to meet accessibility needs, including independence grants. Direct payments to be assessed on the basis of need and not budgetary constraints.

SOCIAL CARE

- Bring back service provision for older persons into democratic local authority ownership and control.
- Improve maintenance of accommodation.
- Ensure a safe working environment for staff and residents including annual safety certificates for all homes, working with trade union Health and Safety Reps.
- Free high quality care, with dignity for those needing it, including the elderly (either in their own homes or via council/community centres).
- More Surrey Social workers (more funding to recruit, 'to grow our own' and to retain quality staff).
- End procurement of services where provider has a profit motive.
- Audit the cuts to social care provision in Surrey, since 2007, in the name of "efficiency" and "encouraging independence" and produce a report on the impact of those cuts
- Reverse the council expenditure on private contracts, as well as the associated reduction in care provided to vulnerable people. All of this funding to go to providers who are not for profit.
- All community services (Elderly, Learning Disabilities etc) should be free and meet individual needs.

SURREYCHOICES

- Reverse the recent £3 million cut to the Surrey Choices Budget.
- Reverse the reduction in staffing establishment, and the associated reduction in care provided in Surrey.
- Bring adult day services back under SCC control and ensure parity of terms and conditions and benefits with equivalent council roles, to improve recruitment and retention.
- Invest in making employment with SC attractive, filling all vacancies.

LIBRARIES

- Increase staffing so that all library branches have paid staff and each branch has enough staff to meet public demand.
- Renovate libraries in old buildings showing considerable disrepair and safety issues.
- Increase the budget for new stock and replacement stock for damaged goods, which has shrunk considerably over the last decade.
- Currently reservations are £1.75 at the counter and £0.75 online. The £1 additional service charge should be removed as it disproportionately affects borrowers who can't afford a smartphone or computer.
- Substantially reduce the prohibitive cost of DVD rental for borrowers (£2) and Audiobook CDs (£3) or eliminate these fees entirely.
- Increase evening opening times for people at work.
- Make sure all libraries have accessible toilets for public use.
- Increase our efforts to help older people and people struggling with digital access.
- Start a mobile library initiative.
- Accessible toilets in all libraries.

JOBS, PAY AND CONDITIONS

- Immediately implement a £15ph minimum wage for all directly employed staff and those under council contracts, and ensure a year-on-year above inflation pay rise, including those who are under 18 years old.
- Immediately reduce the working week (eg. 32 hours over 4 days) with no loss of pay.
- Introduce a high-quality apprenticeship scheme with trade union rates of pay, proper training, and a guaranteed job at the end.
- End the use of zero-hour contracts by the council and by any company undertaking work for them.
- Provide facilities and public support for trade unions fighting in their local authority area for such standards in the private sector and exclude firms that have participated in blacklisting from tendering for public contracts.
- Implement the UNISON trade union's ethical care charter to end '15-minute maximum' visiting slots, zero-hour contracts, and unpaid travel time to support workers and make sure those in need get the care they need.
- Commit to jobs for life and ban short term/fixed contracts. (As a minimum give 5 year secure contracts).
- A fair and fully funded pay rise for all public service workers.
- Care staff should have a decent wage structure, the necessary IT equipment, a 4 day (32 hour working week) and a food allowance for staff on overnight shifts.
- Time and a half overtime pay for all staff.

FIRE SERVICE

- Reverse all cuts to fire service budget since 2010.

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- Recognise the climate emergency and take real, practical steps to reduce the council's carbon footprint towards zero.
- A regular (i.e. every 30 minute) bus service between the main metropolitan areas.
- Regular buses going cross county and not just north south into London
- Free bus travel for all.
- A regular service up to at least 11.00 pm at night.
- A regular service for rural areas particularly in the south of the county.
- Introduction of bus only lanes in Guildford, Reigate and Redhill.
- All buses to become low carbon, non fossil fuel by 2025.
- Bus routes not to compete with train routes, e.g. leatherhead to Epsom.
- Electrification of the Dorking to Guildford line to be made a priority.
- A review of cycle lanes in Surrey to be undertaken, with all main roads to have separate clearly marked cycle and bus lanes and 500 miles of clearly defined cycle routes separated from roads.
- Secure cycling parking in main centres.
- A network of on street electric car recharging points reserved for electric cars.
- Expand pedestrianised zones in Urban areas.
- Ensure existing pedestrianisation zones are 24 hours.
- Late night weekend buses & trains on Friday & Saturday.
- Provision of Cycleways similar to London 'Quietway' scheme (i.e. a network of cycle lanes between urban areas that use backroads for less confident cyclists.) This could be included to include routes around difficult geography (i.e. large hills) to encourage less able cyclists.
- New cycleways to be built by taking road lanes away.
- Bike storage on residential roads (similar schemes around London).
- Improved modal integration (i.e. buses timed to arrive with trains).
- Blanket reduction of speeds on non-arterial roads to 40.
- Blanket reduction in urban speeds to 20.
- Commitment to not increase car parking provision.
- Increase in car parking fees for ICE cars & removal of free parking.
- Closure of streets around schools during pick up/drop off.
- Ensure that routes followed by cyclists, on- and off-road, are well cared-for to the highest standard - good running surface, vegetation cleared to the full-width of the routes and routes properly signed for pedestrians and vehicle-users.
- Electric car charging points in all council and large employer car parks.
- The Council divest from all fossil fuel linked investments, including pension schemes.
- Protect the green belt, whilst building sustainable, quality council homes.
- Criminalise and enforce a ban on sewage dumping into rivers.

ZANE DIED – AUTHORITIES LIED

- To pursue the Truth about the death of Zane Gbangbola.
- In furtherance of the resolution of elected members of Spelthorne unanimously supporting an Independent Panel Inquiry for Zane Gbangbola to restore his human rights to truth and justice for the very high levels of deadly nerve agent Hydrogen Cyanide gas detected in his home multiple times the night he died.
- Independent investigation into the secret landfill next door to Zane's home stated by geotechnical experts as an 'Unacceptable Risk', also as already demanded by elected members.
- A public register and maps of all landfill in flood Zones. Independent investigation of said landfills, and remediation to protect the public from risk and harm as appropriate due diligence.