

Paying for local government

I joined in the Parliamentary debate on Council funding on Wednesday. I urged the Secretary of State to complete his review of how much each Council receives, and do more to help Councils like Wokingham and West Berkshire that are at the bottom of the tables for grant assistance.

The government has pledged to come forward with proposals to reduce the extremes between the highest paid and lowest paid Councils in the country. Some say that Councils with substantial deprivation deserve more money than Councils in more affluent areas. Of course if there is more need of public service this should be reflected in grant levels. But we also have to take into account the higher costs of provision in an area like Wokingham. It is also the case that Wokingham and West Berkshire have growing populations of elderly people with excellent longevity, in need of considerably more social care.

Labour criticised the government for treating Wokingham too well compared to areas with higher grants. I pointed out that Wokingham still gets poor treatment in terms of grant per head compared to many parts of the country.