

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Shadow Secretary of Health, has today written to the Prime Minister to ask for...

Jonathan Ashworth MP, Shadow Secretary of Health, has today written to the Prime Minister to ask for clarity regarding funding arrangements for social care at Surrey County Council.

The full text of the letter is below.

The Prime Minister

10 Downing Street

London SW1A 2AA

Prime Minister,

I am writing to you in light of today's revelations about text messages sent by the leader of Surrey County Council which suggest that the Government has agreed to funding arrangements for social care that allow the cancellation of a proposed referendum on a council tax increase in this Council.

Given your failure to provide clarity on the issue when asked in the Chamber today, and bearing in mind the great importance of this issue given the crisis faced by social care in our country, I am hereby requesting for the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to make an urgent statement to the House tomorrow.

This news has caused considerable embarrassment to the Government, in particular the Secretary of State for Health and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. To rule out any suggestions of wrongdoing, the Government now needs to confirm that no special deal has been offered or granted to Surrey County Council.

I believe that the British public deserve full transparency on the issue. In the public interest, I therefore ask you to publish immediately and without delay;

1. The memorandum of understanding referenced in the text messages sent by the leader of Surrey County Council;
2. All text message correspondence between Surrey County

Council and Government officials in the Cabinet Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health, and the Treasury regarding social care funding and/or the proposed referendum;

3. All written or electronic correspondence between Surrey County Council and Government officials in the Cabinet Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health, and the Treasury regarding social care funding and/or the proposed referendum;

4. Details and minutes of all meetings held between Surrey County Council and Government officials in the Cabinet Office, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health, and the Treasury regarding social care funding and/or the proposed referendum.

Additionally, as the Prime Minister knows the Ministerial Code requires holders of public office to “act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner” and that “information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so”. I am therefore asking you to confirm that any misconduct by Ministers related to this matter will be investigated and treated as a breach of the Ministerial Code.

Given the questions these news raise about proper conduct and transparency of Government policy-making, I am sending a copy of this letter to the Director General of the Propriety and Ethics Team. I will also be publishing this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Ashworth MP

cc. Sue Gray, Director General, Propriety and Ethics Team
and Head of Private Offices Group

[Commenting on the news that Surrey County Council is not going to hold a referendum on 15 percent council tax rise – Pearce](#)

Teresa Pearce, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, commenting on the news that Surrey

County Council is not going to hold a referendum on 15 percent council tax rise, said:

“The Government should not be trying to deal with the national social care crisis through backroom deals with sympathetic Tory council leaders in an attempt to avoid negative publicity.

“Across the country, people are facing steep rises in their council tax bills, whilst the provision and quality of social care is declining. Council tax rises are nothing more than a short-term sticking plaster for a problem that needs long-term solutions. And they create a postcode lottery in social care, because they raise the least money in areas with the greatest need.

“There is an unprecedented crisis in social care, with care providers handing contracts back to councils, 1.2 million elderly people living without the care they need and delayed discharges causing huge pressure on the NHS. The Government must come forward with a long-term strategic rethink of social care funding, as well as urgent funding to stem the crisis which is hurting elderly and disabled people right now.”

Ends

[This is a significant victory for Parliament, and follows months of concerted pressure from Labour – Starmer](#)

Commenting on the Government’s concession regarding a meaningful vote in Parliament on a final deal to leave the EU, **Keir Starmer, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union** said:

“This is a significant victory for Parliament, and follows months of concerted pressure from Labour.

“Labour has repeatedly said that Parliament must have a meaningful vote on any final

Brexit deal – that means MPs are able to vote on the final deal before it is concluded; that the Commons has a debate and vote before the European Parliament does; and that the vote will cover withdrawal from the EU as well as our future relationship with the EU.

“This eleventh hour concession is therefore welcome, but it needs to be firmed up as the Bill progresses through both Houses.”

[Andrew Gwynne response to new rules new rules from the DFT covering access to taxis for disabled people](#)

Andrew

Gwynne, Labour’s shadow minister without portfolio, commenting on new rules from the DFT covering access to taxis for disabled people, said:

“It is welcoming to see the Government taking a positive step to help to prevent some of the discrimination faced by wheelchair users, finally bringing into force this aspect of the Equality Act of 2010.

“This new rule matches those already in place to prevent discrimination against users of assistance dogs, but still in the last year YouGov research showed that 42% of assistance dog owners reported being turned away by a taxi or minicab

“Labour’s Disability Equality Roadshow is touring the country, listening to disabled people, many of whom have raised discrimination as an issue.

“Unfortunately the Private Members Bill I introduced earlier this year to fix this problem was talked out by the Government, but I trust the Accessibility action plan will take on the recommendations suggested within my Bill.”

[John McDonnell responds to the IFS Green Budget](#)

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, responding to the publication of the IFS Green

Budget today, which reveals that the Tories are going ahead with £34bn in additional austerity at a time when the NHS is in crisis following the slowest growth in health spending since the 1950s, said:

"This report from the IFS is damning of the seven wasted years of Tory economic failure. Rather than learning the lessons of his predecessor, Philip Hammond is pursuing an austerity agenda that will make matters in our NHS and social care system even worse.

"The Chancellor who has been at the heart of government since 2010 must take his share of responsibility, especially as the IFS is now cutting growth forecasts with the national debt at its highest as a fraction of national income since England won the World Cup, and with the tax burden at its highest in thirty years.

"The fact the NHS is seeing its slowest growth in funding since the 1950s proves you cannot trust the Tories with our health service. And the social care crisis is only set to get even worse as the Tories refuse to provide the funding needed, continuing to let elderly people in our communities down.

"Rather than going ahead with £34 billion of austerity while our public services are already stretched, which as the IFS say have under the Tories seen the longest fall in funding on record, it is time for the Chancellor to truly change direction.

"Labour would call for a serious boost to investment, underpinned by our Fiscal Credibility Rule, which would help bring an end to a Tory economy rigged against working people; sort out the public finances; and get the national debt under control."