

Wokingham Borough finances

I and other Conservative MPs helped make the case for proper funding for social care and education which the government responded to this year. I see the Lib Dem Council wishes to claim an absence of government money to justify their cuts to important services so it is important to remind them of what happened in the 2023-4 local government settlement.

The government announced a 9.4% increase in core English Council spending power to a new high of £60 bn. Every Council was guaranteed at least a 3% increase. Wokingham had made clear to me in previous years that we received too little grant support for social care so I lobbied further for more increases. As a result Wokingham's social care grant rose from £3.1 m last year to £ 5.38m this year, a rise of 73%. Councillors did not send me the supportive figures I needed to make the case but nonetheless other work paid off to achieve a good result.

The Council also receives this year a £1.1 m Funding Guarantee grant to give it extra spending power. It is receiving £334,658 from the government Discharge fund, additional money for social care for some leaving hospital.

Independent research shows that real spending per person by Councils which did decline from 2015 to 2019 has been rising this decade. Unitaries are now above the start level of this period in real spend per head.

Any need to cut services we want in Wokingham is down to wasteful and ill directed spending by the Lib Dem Council. Better budgeting would deliver a much better result for all of us, without the misleading generalisations about government money in support.

Wokingham schools continue to be financed by government grants. I have set out before the increases to our schools under the national funding formula, taking spending to new higher levels in 2023-4. Education is around half the Council total spend, government grant financed. The Lib Dem Councillors usually omit this large grant from their speeches on local finance.