

**From:** Peter Walker  
**Sent:** 26 October 2016 10:45  
**To:** complaints  
**Cc:** Ged Curran; Chief Executive; Paul Evans  
**Subject:** Complaint about Councillor Stephen Alambritis

The Complaints Team,  
Merton Civic Centre,  
London Road,  
Morden, SM4 5DX

**Complaint about Councillor Stephen Alambritis  
Leaflet signed by him makes it clear he will  
ignore expensive public consultation exercise**

Dear Complaints team

At the beginning of September this year, Merton Council Leader, Stephen Alambritis promised he would be

***“fully consulting residents on next year’s budget and if they tell me they want to pay more, in the light of demographic changes, then I will follow their lead”.***

The consultation exercise started on 9 September and was finish on 4 November. The Council website which is hosting the consultation (see link <https://consult.merton.gov.uk/KMS/elab.aspx?noip=1&CampaignId=588>) exercise states:

***“We want to know what you think. Would you be willing to pay extra council tax in 2017/18 and 2018/19? If so, how much extra? Would you prefer any additional council tax to help reduce the cuts to just one council service (adult social care), or all areas?”***

However Councillor Alambritis has now issued his own letter to local residents where he makes it clear that he has made his mind up and the result of the consultation will be ignored if it is not the result he wants.

In his letter to local residents issued earlier this month (**attached**), and before the consultation exercise has finished, he states: **“We are therefore strongly minded not to increase council tax for the next two years, especially whilst Brexit is being negotiated”**

This extraordinary intervention in a consultation exercise paid for by the Council brings into question the whole validity of the exercise. It appears that Councillor Alambritis is making it clear that he and Merton Council will ignore any result which does not agree with their views.

Accordingly I wish to make a formal complaint about the action taken by Councillor Alambritis in saying he wishes to hear the views of residents and then making it clear he has made up his mind before the consultation ends.

Yours sincerely

Peter Walker

Cc Ged Curran and Paul Evans

**Your St. Helier  
Labour Councillors**

**Cllr Imran Uddin**  
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**Cllr Jerome Neil**  
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October 2016

Dear Resident,

**Urgent: Consultation on Council Tax increases – please read now!**

This is a very important letter about how much council tax you will pay in the future. Please make every effort to read it and let us know what you think. Whilst we are your local councillors in your local area, and the Leader of Merton Council, we are also your neighbours and care passionately about this community. It's where we live and raise our families.

When Labour was elected here in Merton in 2010 we made a promise to freeze your council tax. We have kept our promise and your council tax has been exactly the same now as it was 6 years ago, which is £1,102 per year on a Band 'D' property (most of us live in Band 'D' properties).

Council tax is perhaps the only big item you have to pay that has stayed the same over the last 6 years, when all other prices have increased including rents, property prices, energy costs, fares, food and so on. We are proud of keeping council tax affordable for you through difficult times, especially when the Conservative Government have hit us so hard. Between 2010 and 2015, they slashed the funding Merton gets from central Government, forcing us to make cuts of £75 million. This really matters because most money spent locally – for rubbish collection, street sweeping, schools, looking after the elderly, child protection, roads and libraries – comes from central Government, with only a fraction coming from the Council Tax.

We've managed to keep freezing Council Tax every year by being business-like in the way we operate, something we promised in 2010. We have burnt the midnight oil and looked at every penny we spend and worked out how we could save money. But, things are getting much worse. The new Conservative Government, elected in 2015 and now led by Prime Minister Theresa May, has told us we will have to make a further £35 million cuts by 2020. That will mean £110m in cuts since 2010 – or £1,375 for each home. It's a big problem.

A further £35 million of cuts will have a big impact on local services but we are also worried if we raise council tax it will become unaffordable for many. Different groups are urging us to increase the council tax from between 1.99% to 3.99% per year.

Some say the easy option is to raise council tax to fend off cuts to services, but even if it was increased by 2% it would only earn us another £1.5 million a year. And remember, the council has faced cuts of £110 million since 2010. Whatever happens, it is a fantasy to believe the council can eliminate all cuts by raising the council tax.

