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## For Publication

To the Editor,

Your recent editorial 'Police need to avoid visits to Westminster' contained a number of inaccuracies that I feel I should address.

We did not "decide to raise our share of council tax this year by 7%" as you allege. For our 2009/10 budget, the Government told us that we must limit our net budget increase to a figure below 5% on the basis of a notional budget figure that they set for us in 2008. This we duly did, with our budget increase coming to 4.82% based on that notional budget. Nine other Authorities have set higher increases in their *actual* budgets this year, eight of whom have not been capped. Our council tax precept increase, under the terms set out for us by the Government last summer, was 4.89%, lower than that of 39 other authorities, 38 of whom have not been capped.

In January, three working days before this year's budget (which had been under development for 7 months) was due to be formally approved by the Authority, the Government wrote to us to impose a new constraint for capping – that we must also limit what we increase the Council Tax precept by against a notional figure that they would decide upon. What the acceptable limit for this would be was not revealed to us until March 26<sup>th</sup>, long after bills had been issued. When the notional figure was revealed, it put our notional precept increase at 7.07%, which the Government felt was grounds for capping action against Surrey. I might add that Greater Manchester Police Authority requested an *actual* increase in their precept of 7.49%, and have not been capped.

We set the budget in good faith and fully in accordance with guidelines provided to us by the Government at the end of last year's capping process. Unfortunately, when the Government decided at the 59<sup>th</sup> minute of the 11<sup>th</sup> hour to change these guidelines - with clear negative implications for frontline policing in Surrey - we had no choice but to appeal in the strongest terms.

In response to your point about taxation, I must highlight that Surrey Police has been doing more with less every year for over a decade, and as a result spends less per Band D property than any other force in the country whilst maintaining excellent performance. I would also point out that Surrey, as the country's biggest net contributor of tax to the Exchequer, can be seen to be funding police forces and keeping the streets safe in many other counties. We believe that it is entirely right that Surrey should receive more money from the Government for its policing so we are not forced to rely upon the local taxpayer each year to ensure that we can make ends meet and maintain the standards of policing that the public expect.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Williams  
**Chairman, Surrey Police Authority**

**PS – Please note that this letter will be published on our website**  
[www.surreypa.gov.uk](http://www.surreypa.gov.uk)