

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP
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Dear Prime Minister

Re: Leaked text messages

Whilst watching Prime Minister's Questions today (8/2/2017) I was interested to hear about leaked text messages between the Conservative Leader of Surrey County Council, Cllr. David Hodge and a person called 'Nick' who apparently works for your government ministers in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The leaked text messages in question appeared to make reference to a 'Memorandum of Understanding' being offered to Surrey County Council. Another text from the Leader of Surrey County Council to Nick stated: "Nick, I have received clarification from my CE who confirms Matthew Styles and Sheila Little have just spoken and the numbers you indicated are the numbers that I understand are acceptable for me to accept and call off the R.....:" The text continues "If it is possible for that info to be sent to Sheila Little or myself, I can then revert back soonest, really want to kill this off. David Hodge".

It has been a matter of public record for some time that Surrey County Council was proposing a referendum to increase Council Tax by 15% to deal with the crisis in social care created by a lack of funding from the government. I presume the 'R' referred to in Cllr. Hodge's text message to one of your government's officials was referring to the referendum.

Given that councils right across the UK are faced with tackling the problems associated with a lack of government funding for social care, I know you'll want to ensure that all councils receive equal support from your ministers and government.

Therefore can you answer the following questions as soon as possible:

- 1) What role does 'Nick' hold in the Department for Communities and Local Government?
- 2) On which government minister's instructions was he acting?
- 3) What role does Matthew Styles hold in government? On whose instructions did he call Surrey County Council to discuss the matter alluded to in the text messages?

- 4) Will you now immediately publish the 'Memorandum of Understanding' referred to in the text messages from the Leader of Surrey County Council to 'Nick' (your government official)?
- 5) Has any additional funding been offered to Surrey County Council in order for them to be able to call off their proposed Council Tax referendum? If so, how much?
- 6) Will all councils with responsibility for adult social care now be given the opportunity to meet with Nick and be offered additional support to close the significant gap in funding for social care?

I look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency on this matter.

Given the concerns about lack of transparency on this matter and the significant public interest in dealing with the social care crisis this country now faces, I am sharing this letter with the media.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Payne', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Michael Payne
Deputy Leader of the Council and Nottinghamshire County Councillor