



Council plunges Surrey in to darkness

The Full Story 2011 to 2017

After committing £120m of public money on a 25 year contract to replace and maintain every street lamp across Surrey (89000 lights) and not content with the £500k already saved in electricity Surrey County Council has now switched off half of them for 5 hours each night.

Following a consultation with Surrey Police it was decided that several lights should be left on in areas such as busy traffic routes or areas where the risk of crime was considered higher than other areas.

Following this consultation Surrey CC decided to turn off a further 40,000 plus lights in order to save a further £210k per annum. Their actions have caused safety concerns from many Surrey residents. It has been suggested that the savings are far less than a top Conservative Councillors pay and expenses. Many residents have commented that they would rather see these savings made from the £2m paid to Surrey Councillors.

AA Warnings

Surrey CC Councillors have completely ignored warnings from the AA about the dangers of switching of street lights.

AA spokesman Luke Bosdet said "It's absolutely devastating that there are deliberate decisions to turn off street lights, despite constant warnings by the AA. When you turn the lights off you put people in severe danger. They are killer roads if you turn the street lights off. " The AA claims that road and pedestrian deaths have increased in areas where council have chosen to turn lights off.

Surrey residents have quoted that for old and young alike Surrey CC turning out the street lights amounts to a curfew. Large numbers of young adults have commented that they are scared of being attacked and elderly people have said that they are scared of falling over on badly maintained pavements in the darkness.

Public and Councillor Warnings and Concerns

Since the lights went out many thousands of Surrey residents and some opposition councillors have expressed their opinions. Here are just a few:

- ξ A student from Englefield Green has commented " Even one extra sexual assault caused by lack of lighting is too many. Turn our lights back on."
- ξ UKIP Chairman for Spelthorn commented "Turning off street lights is a dangerous way to try to save money. It will have costs and consequences far greater than the small amount of money saved. Surrey needs to manage it's finances better and should easily be able to find the money needed to keep the lights turned on from it's huge budget."
- ξ Terrible it's just not right to be in pitch black at night, I do ladies pamper parties and come home late on some occasions, my road is incredibly hard to park down and end up parking far down my road if I'm back

late. I feel so vulnerable and scared walking in the pitch black to my house after work, it's just not right I shouldn't have to feel that way.

- ξ My neighbour's car was stolen from their driveway in the early hours of this morning. We live on Chadacre, upper end before the school. Police are involved. These streetlights really need to come back on!!!
- ξ Holly McNally My neighbour had his car broken into outside my house at 1am I caught it on cctv but could only see his silhouette because it was so dark. He used his mobile as a torch.
- ξ Karen Matthews We had a car window smashed and our van broken into twice in the same week – one month after the lights were turned off...the ashtray of the car was thrown onto the pavement, obviously looking for money, at least if the streetlight outside was on they would have seen all that was in there was 40 pence...so we certainly want the lights back on...it's costing a fortune replacing windows and door locks...!
- ξ Abigail Casbierd to SURREY CC PUT OUR STREETLIGHTS BACK ON - Thank you for adding me to your group, I am completely in support of this, as I leave to go to work at 3.30am every morning and unfortunately do not have the luxury of parking directly outside my house, so therefore have to walk down a now pitch black road to get to my car. The summer months were bad enough but now the darker mornings are here it is very unsettling. At the moment I am able to just jump in my car but when the frost sets in I will have to stand in the dark for some time to de-icer my car not a thought I relish much. The road I live in also has a house that is a stop gap address for people just realised from prison and it was only a few weeks ago that I was walking to my car when I came face to face with somebody walking towards me that I wasn't even aware was there until we were in front of each other!! So please even if it is 1 light per street please turn them on!!
- ξ The human cost of Surrey CC's actions is unnecessary and unacceptable and for the most part could have been prevented.

The Public Challenge Surrey CC

Warlingham resident John Lazenby was very concerned for the safety of his wife when the lights went out in March 2017. She is a shift worker who leaves home at 03.45 to go to work. Suddenly her journey became much more difficult with the street lights off. She could barely see at all in the darkness. This prompted John to write to Cllr David Hodge the Leader of Surrey CC in April. After a few weeks astounded at the complete lack of response from Cllr Hodge John started up a Facebook group <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1008027575995026> Surrey CC Put Our Street Lights Back On. Before long John was joined by many likeminded Surrey residents and in particular people who had been affected by crime and people who were worried by the general fear of crime.

John began sending weekly emails to Cllr Hodge to provide him with information about other County Councils such as Kent and Essex that were forced to reverse their decisions and turn their street lights back on following what has been described as a steep increase in night time crime. [John's weekly report](#) also provided details of local crimes and general public concerns posted on his Facebook group. Despite John's numerous emails to Cllr Hodge no responses were received. John began lobbying Councillors from Warlingham Parish Council and was informed that the majority of the parish councillors wanted the lights back on. As such John started copying all of the parish councillors in on his emails to Cllr Hodge. After a few months without email support from the parish council on any of his emails John decided not to copy them in on emails any longer.

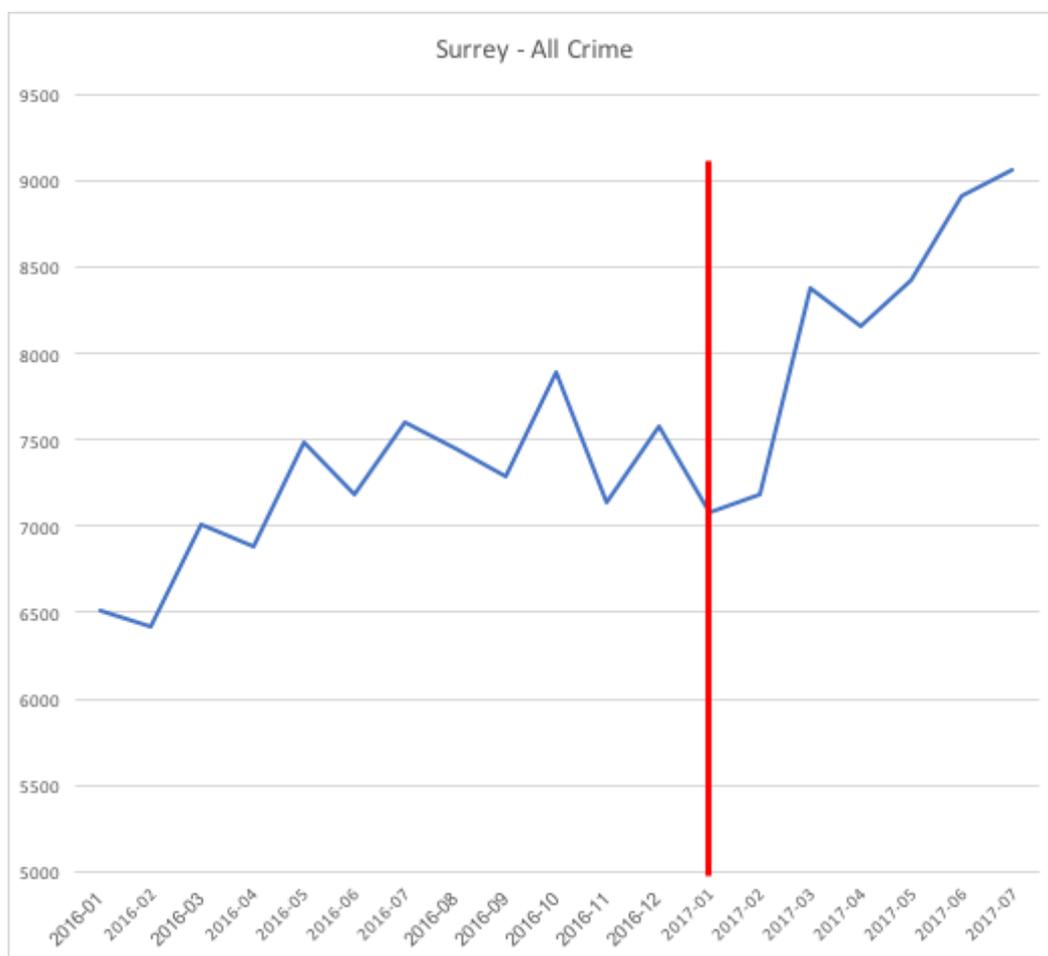
In August John contacted [Surrey Police and put in a freedom of information request for data specific to night crime from March to July 2017 with comparisons with figures for the same period in 2015 and 2016](#). On receiving the report John sent it to Cllr Hodge. The report was broken down per district and clearly showed that across Surrey night time crime had increased by 22%. There were 1800 more crimes committed during this time frame than there were in 2016.

John has since been contacted by several Councillors from all political parties who have offered support and have asked what they can do internally to help the campaign.

On the whole there has been very positive support from everyone with the exception of 5 or 6 people on Facebook who have contested the figures and the campaign. At the time of publishing the Facebook Group has 3799 members and the petition has 5970 signatures and is growing by approximately 150 signatures daily.

Crime figures ALL of Surrey: It is very evident that crime in Surrey as a whole has rocketed since the lights were turned off.

Crime in Surrey has increased substantially since the lights were switched off. Here is a graph to demonstrate. This data is directly from Surrey Police. We would like to draw your attention to the spike post the lights being switched off. Whilst we appreciate that there have been Police cuts throughout Surrey we put it to you that the spike in crime across Surrey as a whole since the lights were turned off is no coincidence. We believe that this is as a direct result of Surrey CC's actions and that most of the crimes committed between the hours of midnight and 5am could have been prevented had the lights been left on. Data is directly downloaded from Police public crime data and most night time occurring categories are more acute.



Again there was no response from Cllr Hodge however his personal assistant did respond saying that Cllr Hodge was busy dealing with other council business and that he would respond in due course. John responded requesting a meeting with Cllr Hodge to discuss the matter. Again there was no response.

John then decided that it was time to up his game. He then started copying local press in on emails and soon after started emailing all 81 elected Surrey councillors and all Tandridge District councillors.

John was advised by someone on his [Facebook group](#) that Epsom and Ewell Cllr Eber Kington was proactively fighting Surrey CC with a view to getting the lights on. John was also contacted by several other Surrey and Tandridge councillors all of whom said that they were opposed to Surrey CC's lights out campaign. This was very encouraging news. Further investigation proved that the final decision to turn off the street lights was taken by Cllr Hodge and his cabinet. Most of the 81 Surrey CC councillors had no input.

Shortly John was joined by a group of likeminded Surrey residents via his [Facebook group](#) and it became apparent to John that they could work as a team.

In addition John made alliances with [Oxted and Limpsfield Residents Group OLRG](#) who have also been fighting from within Tandridge District Council against the local plan and many other issues including Surrey CC's decision to turn off our street lights.

Information started flooding in as to how Surrey CC arrived at their decision. It all started to appear a bit underhand.

The Flawed London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Survey

In 2016 Surrey CC commissioned [The London School of Food, Hygiene and Tropical Medicine](#) to conduct a survey and produce a report stating that there is no correlation between street lights being turned off and crime. The survey was carried out with invitations being sent to 150 councils UK wide asking whether crime had increased as a result of their street lights being turned off. Less than half of the councils responded and out of those only 5 sets of results were quoted in the report. The report ends with the following disclaimer.

“Limitations

Selection bias: this study was able to obtain usable data on street lighting changes from 62 of 174 local authorities. *It is possible that local authorities may have declined to participate because of expected or known increases in collisions or crime in their areas due to lighting changes. If changes in collisions or crime are greater in the non-participating authorities, our study may have underestimated the effects of reduced lighting on collisions and crime.*

We were unable to specifically examine crime occurring at night using the Police.uk data. Our analyses were, however, limited to crimes that the crime survey of England and Wales suggests are more likely to occur in the evening or at night.

Confounding: We did not take into account the potential impact of other road safety or crime prevention initiatives, such as improved road markings, policing interventions, or CCTV. If such measures have been introduced more often in streets where lighting has been changed than elsewhere, it is possible that some of the changes in crime in areas where lighting has been changed may be attributable to these other measures.

The results for crime were highly *heterogeneous (miscellaneous, unrelated)* and limited in power due to the need to aggregate to MSOA level, but the average effects estimated overall do not suggest any increase in crime at an area level with *reduced lighting*. Again, CIs were sufficiently narrow to exclude an increase in crime of such magnitude as may have been expected. *The estimates for switch off, however, are imprecise because of the small number of areas in which switch off was implemented, and so should be treated with caution*

I wish to draw your attention to the following points from the above statement:

- ξ “It is possible that local authorities may have declined to participate because of expected or known increases in collisions or crime in their areas due to lighting changes. If changes in collisions or crime are greater in the

non-participating authorities, our study may have underestimated the effects of reduced lighting on collisions and crime.” This part of the statement devaluates the study completely.

ξ “We were unable to specifically examine crime occurring at night using the Police.uk data. Our analyses were, however, limited to crimes that the crime survey of England and Wales suggests are more likely to occur in the evening or at night.” This part of the statement indicates that no night time crime data was used as part of the study.

ξ “average effects estimated overall do not suggest any increase in crime at an area level with reduced lighting.” This part of the statement indicates that the survey is based on the findings of areas with reduced lighting and not lighting that has been turned off altogether.

ξ “The estimates for switch off, however, are imprecise because of the small number of areas in which switch off was implemented, and so should be treated with caution” This part of the statement advises caution against turning off lights altogether.

So as you can see the survey is flawed and provides very little if any information at all. This report was a key factor in Surrey CC's decision making process to turn the lights out.

Surrey CC Flawed Consultation

In August 2016 Surrey CC conducted a consultation survey. We believe that the consultation process was purposely kept low key, is in contravention of [Central Government Policy](#) and Surrey CC's own Consultation Principles (below) and was designed by SCC to ensure that there could only be one possible result. Not one of almost 4000 people registered on the Facebook Group were aware that this consultation had taken place.

SCC's own policy on Consultation Principles states:

“Consult stakeholders in a way that suits them. Charities may need more time to respond than businesses, for example. When the consultation spans all or part of a holiday period, consider how this may affect consultation and take appropriate mitigating action.”

Note that the survey was conducted from 5th August to 2nd September 2016. This is a 4 week period and not 12 weeks as per the Central Government Policy. Schools were closed for end of term break from 29th July to 4th September 2016. Most people with children would take their holidays during this period.

The consultation did have a purpose and the questions put to the respondents were just 3 questions. Are you in favour of the council switching off street lights for part of the night where deemed safe to do so in order to reduce energy bills and reduce CO2 emissions?

The people of Surrey were provided with 3 options:

- Turn off Many Lights
- Turn off Some Lights
- Turn off No Lights

None of the respondents had an option to answer “Turn off ALL Lights”. So, you could have many, some or none of your streets lights off, but no option or ALL of them. A full analysis of the street light switch offs reveals that of the 9,029 streets SCC decided to affect, 7,633 have ALL their lights switched off, an option not given to be answered and thus not given to be executed. The outcome of the survey was actually:

Many Some None Total

390	253	199	842
46%	30%	24%	100%

Given that Surrey CC sold this to the public as a way of reducing energy bills and reducing CO2 emissions naturally most (643) of the people being environmentally conscious selected to turn off Many or Some of the lights. At no time were the public advised that whole streets and large areas would be completely without lighting.

The 3 questions asked of the public have no correlation to the underlying activity that it is purported to have ultimately lead to. NOBODY was asked whether they wanted ALL their street lights switched off in their streets. The likelihood is that very few people would have said yes to that option. Currently as a result 85% of all affected street lights have ALL lights off. On this single issue the council has executed an option they did not provide the public with during consultation and we demand that the practice desist immediately. 842 people polled in a county that boasts a population of approximately 1.1m. More effort should have been made to obtain a more representative sample. We will come onto this under section G. The survey even noted that some people were concerned about crime yet completely ignored this factor.

In essence this means that Surrey CC took the votes of just 643 people as representation of 1.1m Surrey residents and decided to implement a 4th option which was not included in their survey.

Could the Street Lighting have been funded from Elsewhere within the Council budget?/Is ALL expenditure necessary and should it be put ahead of Public Safety?

SCC manages a total annual budget of in the region of just shy of £1b. [11] We suggest, looking at the breakdown of this budget that the £210,000 (0.02%) figure to fund the lighting could be found from somewhere else rather than turn off the lights across entire streets, plunging members of the public in to darkness and leaving people scared about their personal safety and the safety of their property.

(Example) Watts Gallery

We can see that Surrey CC awarded a grant of £1m to Watts Gallery in 2016 and another £400k in 2017. Watts Gallery is cash rich with £38m sitting in its account. A simple analysis of the ledgers of the county for the past 12 months show an extraordinary reliance on contractors and consultant who always come at a premium. Can Surrey CC not consolidate and have centrally supporting permanent roles?

(Example) Discretionary Funding

The council also has discretionary funds totalling almost £10m. Our councillors at their discretion can issue grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations. We would certainly recommend at this time of austerity that Surrey CC could reallocate £210k from this spend to get Surrey's street lights back on. We put it to you that these discretionary funds are not to be spent on a compulsory basis. The council can decide as to how or if this money is spent.

More than just Crime Statistics

Of course there is much more to this matter than just crime statistics. There is also the human cost. Across the whole of Surrey there is a general fear of crime. The perception of crime is stopping people going out after midnight and is causing worry and even panic for some members of the community. Comments have been made by elderly people that they have lived in Surrey for 30 or 40 years and that they have never been afraid before but now they are petrified. They look out of their windows and cannot see anything at all. The darkness is making people feel insecure. This cannot be accepted.

People are being forced to spend money that they can ill afford on extra security for their homes. Fitting additional locks, external lights, alarms. Money that they would not have considered spending before because they felt safe. Lots of people out on a Friday and Saturday night are now taking taxis home rather than walking on the dark streets because they are now afraid to do so.

Women in particular feel at risk. This shouldn't be happening.

People are saying that crime is now happening in areas where it never happened before. People are saying that Surrey CC has imposed a midnight curfew on all of Surrey.

Members of the emergency services have commented that they find it more difficult to find house numbers in the dark and that they are constantly afraid of attack. This is not acceptable.

People have reported that their insurance premiums have gone up because the crime rate has risen. Insurance companies are raising their premiums because of local vehicle thefts, burglaries etc. This has been forced by the turning off of our lights.

So all over the lives of many have suddenly become more expensive because of Surrey CC's decision to turn off the Street Lights. More people are worried now and fear the perception of crime.

Our Council Tax

There is also the fact that within our council tax we are paying for street lighting yet we are not receiving the service that we are paying for. There has been no reduction in council tax as a result of this action. We are paying for a service that is not being provided. This is wrong. It would not be allowed to happen anywhere else so why is it acceptable in this instance? Why is Surrey CC being allowed to keep our money and not provide a service?

The reality of the Public cost of Street Lighting.

If you break down the £210k saving that Surrey CC have announced between the 1.1m people living in Surrey it amounts to just 19p per person per annum or approximately 50p per household. This has been put to Surrey CC on numerous occasions. As an authority surely it would have been a better solution for them to increase our council tax by 50p per year and to keep the street lights on. Surely the route that they have chosen amounts to gross negligence and pure incompetence.

They have not provided a solution. They have created a huge problem that will not go away until they turn our street lights back on.

Public money has been mismanaged. Communication regarding this matter has been practically non-existent. Surrey CC has failed to act appropriately on behalf of the people of Surrey. I see this as a complete and utter failure by Surrey CC and a huge injustice to the public of Surrey.

No Statistics?

8th November 2017 following Paul Steynberg's conversation with Surrey's new police and crime commissioner David Munro advised that he had statistics which prove that crime has not increased in Surrey however said that the stats need to be approved before he can share them. David Munro has been quoting these statistics for at least a month as has David Hodge yet the statistics do not yet appear to be available to the general public. The only statistics therefore are the ones which we have obtained from Surrey Police.

New Role

17th November 2017 Cllr David Hodge announced that Joanna Killian will be taking on the role of Chief Executive of Surrey CC following the departure of David McNulty.

At the very same time Bristol CC has announced that it is scrapping the very same position in order to save £700,000 on a CE and 6 support role staff. The Bristol role demanded a salary of £160. They are taking this step to save money.

Apparently there was a collective leadership failure last year which caused a massive loss of £29m. Oh dear!

It is believed that David McNulty's annual salary was in the region of £230k. How can Surrey CC justify fulfilling this role whilst at the same time they are telling us that they have no money to fund public services?

It is known that Surrey CC made losses of £15m last year. Was this also due to a collective leadership failure?

Financial Disaster

We are now investigating the following matter. At the following meeting: Revenue and Capital Budget 2017/18 to 2019/20 and Treasury Management Strategy Meeting of Council, Tuesday, 7 February 2017 10.00 am (Item 10/17)

This was minuted: That the Director of Finance had delivered a damning report on the Council's financial situation

Next Steps

We are currently awaiting further precise detail which will be forwarded to Surrey CC and released to the press in due course.

A Small Victory: On November 17th Cllr Kemp announced that all street lights in Surrey will now remain on until 1am. We feel that pressure from this campaign was partly responsible for this decision. We feel that this is a compromise but it is not acceptable as a long term solution.

In conclusion the questions asked by the public are:

- ξ Why is Surrey CC putting savings ahead of public safety?
- ξ Why if Surrey CC is claiming poverty on one hand when they are able to give £1.4m to a cash rich Art Gallery with £38m in their account?
- ξ Why were the residents of Surrey not properly consulted before the decision was made to turn the street lights off?
- ξ Why if Cllr David Hodge has a duty to act in the public interest has he ignored the public completely over this issue?
- ξ Why has Cllr Hodge repeatedly ignored John Lazenby's requests for a meeting to discuss this matter and listen to public opinion?
- ξ Why is Cllr Hodge not listening to Surrey residents re this matter? Is he actually aware of public opinion?
- ξ Why has Cllr Hodge released a public statement saying that he has advised all of his Councillors to respond to each enquiry re street lighting with a standard email and does this show that Surrey CC is fobbing the public off and not taking in any more comments re this matter?
- ξ Why has Surrey CC chosen to stop taking complaints re street lighting as of December 2017?

ξ Does Cllr Hodge actually care about the people of Surrey?

ξ Is Cllr Hodge fully aware of what happened in Kent during the time that their lights were off and is he aware of why they had to turn their lights back on?

We would request that answers are provided to all of the above questions by email to john@johnlazenby.co.uk The answers must be in full detail and must be received no later than November 30th 2017.