

NEWS RELEASE



**East Hampshire
Conservatives**

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27 March: immediate release

Labour Government censors breakdown of government spending in Hampshire

Cllr John West and parliamentary candidate Damian Hinds expressed disappointment this week at the Labour Government's decision to water down new laws which would tell people how much taxpayers' money is spent in East Hampshire.

A Conservative-introduced law, the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, could turn politics upside down - by giving local people the power to decide how their cash is spent in their area. For the first time in British political history, the Government will publish a regular breakdown of the amount of public money spent in each community, and explain how much of that spending is controlled by local people and how much by Whitehall.

More and more taxpayers' money is being spent by unelected quangos. The Taxpayers' Alliance has estimated that £64 billion a year is now spent by unelected quangos – equivalent to £2,550 for every East Hants household. So the need for proper transparency in public spending is urgent.

But in a consultation paper recently issued by the Government, the plans for reports on local spending under the new Act have been severely watered down. Only spending information by councils and NHS Primary Care Trusts will be published – and this is already in the public domain.

Conservatives are pledging to put this right and will:

- Use the Sustainable Community Act to publish detailed information on local spending by central and local government bodies, and devolve more funding down to local communities.
- Require councils and Whitehall bodies to publish online detailed figures on how they spend our money, so the press and public can scrutinise waste and inefficiency properly.

John West said:

“The subject of how money gets allocated around the country is a very sensitive one here, given that Hampshire gets the lowest Government grant of all County Councils. It is completely unacceptable that control-obsessed Ministers should try to water down these ground-breaking new openness laws. It speaks volumes that they want to stop local people finding out which areas gets a raw deal from the Government.”

Damian Hinds added:

“The Sustainable Communities Act can give local communities a far greater say on how their money is spent. EHDC and Hampshire County Council have been innovative in finding ways to try to mitigate the ongoing loss of local shops, services and facilities. But more could be done if central government would let go of some of their powers. Only Conservatives will open up the books and give power and funding so local people can adopt local solutions.”

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