

County Council Meeting – 8 May 2012

LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Chairman,

Today marks the beginning of a new Council year, and as Leader, I want to set out a positive direction this morning that will demonstrate the determination of this Conservative Administration to champion the needs of the vulnerable in our society.

We want **all** of our residents to prosper, and to live their lives to the full in a safe environment. Short-term thinking makes this impossible. That is why we have a long-term strategy in place, targeted at early prevention. By working as One Team and by setting aside boundaries that cross the public sector, we will achieve the best outcomes for the residents of Surrey. To make our communities safer, we need to work closely with District and Borough Councils, the Police, our Fire and Rescue Service, the NHS and the Voluntary, Community & Faith sectors.

I am proud to say that there are many excellent examples amongst the work we are undertaking that make our communities great places to live.

I was delighted to welcome the Public Health team to the County Council recently. Although Public Health responsibilities do not officially pass to local authorities until next year, I am pleased to see that Surrey is well ahead of the game, made possible through excellent partnership work with the NHS Surrey.

I have been speaking to staff in the Public Health team and it is clear to me that they are excited by the new challenges and possibilities that lie ahead. I look forward to seeing some fantastic work from the team in the years ahead.

With closer partnership working with the NHS, and having Public Health embedded in the County Council, there are substantial opportunities to improve the lives of our residents. I am proud to say that there are many really outstanding examples of preventative work across our directorates that help, to make our communities great places to live and work.

The County Council's Trading Standards team continue their successful fight to protect Surrey children and residents from rogue traders.

Their Rapid Access Team, working closely with Surrey Police, are on hand to provide a fast response to anyone who suspects doorstep callers are tricking them. In the last financial year alone, the Team has prevented potential victims from handing over £120k to con men. And our latest figures show that since the formation of the Team in 2003, they have saved consumers over £1.25m- which I'm sure you'll all agree is an incredible achievement.

Our residents trust our Trading Standards team to champion their rights as consumers, and to stop these dodgy dealers from getting away with ripping off residents.

Our Fire and Rescue Service is central to the wellbeing of Surrey's residents and businesses, through fire prevention and fire safety, as well as working with partners on road safety. They continue to deliver innovative ideas and campaigns in this area, primarily aimed at prevention and education.

Community safety remains one of our top priorities.

The recent joint project to co-locate the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service with our fire control centre brings benefits to both communities. We have invested, and we will continue to invest in our Fire and Rescue Service.

This is an example of where investing for the future brings substantial benefits to residents.

There are also some really strong simple but effective programmes that Surrey's Fire Service are rolling out, raising awareness and supporting residents in prevention and protection.

One such example encourages residents to test smoke alarms at the same time they put their clocks back or forward, with the intention that testing of smoke alarms becomes part of household routine - very simple but potentially life-saving.

In keeping our communities safe, it is essential that the County Council and Surrey Police work in partnership; this is exemplified by the Drive SMART campaign working together with both the Fire and Rescue Service and the Police to make our roads safer.

Surrey Police are also vital in helping the County Council tackle domestic abuse in the County.

Research in Surrey shows that the vast majority of those affected by domestic abuse are women, often the most vulnerable in our communities— whether they be pregnant women, those with existing physical or mental health problems, or those with young children.

When I became Leader of the County Council, I made a clear commitment to deal with domestic abuse in our communities.

By working with the Police, outreach services, and our District and Borough colleagues, we are continuing to tackle this distressing crime. And make no mistake, domestic abuse, in all its forms, is a crime.

Sadly, during my time serving in the Army, I had to work with victims of domestic abuse, where I witnessed first hand the devastating effect it had on wives and children.

Dealing with domestic abuse is a vital part of the County Council's wider pledge to safeguard the most vulnerable adults and children in Surrey.

For the majority of people in Surrey, looking after their family and loved ones will be their number one priority, and quite rightly so.

However, in too many cases, the responsibility of safeguarding children falls to local authorities. It is often the case that those in the care of County Council, have to rely solely on the care and guidance provided through the Council.

I believe strongly that we must fulfill our responsibilities as 'corporate parents' of our Looked After Children, and do all in our power to ensure that they live successful and fulfilling lives.

That is the thinking behind our junior ISA investment for children in our care, helping to give those who grow up in our care a sound financial footing as they enter adulthood. This will enable them to develop personal financial skills, ultimately increasing their independence, as well as encouraging their sense of personal responsibility. I believe passionately that people deserve to be given the opportunities and tools required to succeed in life, regardless of the background in which they grew up. Just as elderly people and vulnerable adults require the best possible forms of care available, our Looked After Children, also need to be given the proper resources at the appropriate times in their lives.

At this point I would also like to thank Members for their continued commitment to this cause and particularly for allocating funds to support our Looked After Children from their Member allocations.

With an ageing population in the County, we are only too aware of the pressures placed on our Adult Social Care services. These pressures will continue to increase over the next 20 years.

We are working to ensure that we are in a position to care for more people in their own homes, supported by families and carers. However, we want to invest more in preventative services, which will give people real choice and control over their own lives.

Last month I was pleased to announce an investment in telecare demonstrator sites in the dementia wellbeing centres. But there is more to be done to deliver the local and personal preventative approach that people need to preserve their independence and dignity.

With this preventative agenda in mind I am delighted to announce a significant additional investment from our "Invest to save" approach of **£2m per year, every year** until 2017. This funding will support joint work with our District and Borough Councils, the Alzheimer's Society and our Volunteer

organisations, to support people with dementia, physical & learning disabilities and those with mental health issues.

Some of the ideas that our One Team philosophy could develop are:

- To invest in suitable changing facilities in Local Leisure Centres for severely disabled people
- To develop volunteering and befriending schemes to prevent the elderly from becoming isolated and lonely
- To put 24/7 telecare response systems in place to support families in need of care
- To open 8 more award-winning citizens' hubs - one for each District and Borough - that will enable people to gain direct access to advice and support.
- To combine services to provide local, integrated day care, and support that keeps people in their own community
- To co-locate staff so that social workers, police and housing staff work closely together to keep people safe.
- To build local services to provide support for the many who will suffer from mental ill health.
- To work with local businesses to support people with mental health problems into work.

This substantial investment will provide real benefits to our most vulnerable residents, and will enable many more people to live with greater independence and with dignity.

I touched before on the pressures on our Adult Social Care services.

A large part of this pressure comes from the rising cost of dementia care. Our research shows that the number of people with dementia will rise by 75% over the next twenty years.

We simply cannot continue to deliver services in the same way. We have to think more innovatively, and to work in real partnership, not only with the NHS, but also with all of our local partners.

But this is not only about dementia services. One in four of us will suffer from mental health illness of some sort at some time in our lives. That is a huge number of people in the County who currently, or will in the future, need help, care and compassion.

The Public Value Review on mental health is already showing that having adequate housing, employment and community support, helps reduce the impact of that ill health on both the individual and our economy. And Members will be aware of the PVR for people with learning disabilities that identified the need for local leisure and day care facilities.

All of this shows just how vital this new investment in Preventative activity is. And as we know, it is important that spending decisions are responsive to local requirements. That is why the new money will be used differently across the County, based on local need. Discussions have already started in some areas to implement this preventative agenda.

It is my opinion that we should judge society by the way it treats those who cannot protect themselves. That's why the lion's share of the Council's budget focuses on services that help those most in need. I am proud that so many of our innovative plans continue to focus on this area, and that those plans are already beginning to bear fruit.

So Madam Chairman I am delighted to have had this opportunity to stand before you at this Annual Council as its Leader, and to deliver a significant message focused on a confident One Team approach designed to help all our residents to live, work and prosper in their local communities.

We will continue to do all we can to help safeguard the vulnerable in our communities. I believe that the investment I have announced today underlines this commitment. By having a clear preventative strategy, and strengthening work with our partners, we can give all of our residents the best opportunities to live, work and prosper in this fantastic County.

Despite the fiscal crisis visited upon us and despite the toughest of financial times for the County, Madam Chairman, while I am Leader **we** will never be judged to be complacent.

Thank you.

David Hodge
Leader of the Council
8 May 2012