

County Council Meeting – 12 June 2012

LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Chairman, Members

The Chief Executive's 6-monthly progress report which Council will consider later in the agenda, underlines the breadth of our achievements over the last 3 years and the strong foundations which have been laid to ensure that Surrey County Council is in a **really strong position** to face future challenges. But we also recognise that the County Council is on a journey – one which I believe will see Surrey become the most effective Council in the country by 2017.

Many of the pressures which we face are outwith our control: the financial impact of the economic meltdown in Europe and the effect this inevitably has on the UK economy; the Government's commitment to cutting the deficit – which is 100% necessary to stabilise the country's economy – but which means that local government has had to face up to substantial reductions in budget; and the rise of new economic powers on the global stage meaning that the world economy is more competitive than ever and it can be difficult for UK businesses to keep pace. But my Cabinet and I are focused on the things which we can **actually** deliver and the things which we can **actually** change through innovative thinking and partnership working we can deliver dual benefits to our residents, and through new ways of working we can provide better services, while also delivering increased value for money.

And the reason we can **and we will** deliver these things is because we have embedded the One Team principal across all of our work: working in **real partnership** with our District and Borough colleagues and all of our colleagues across the Surrey public sector, making sure that all Members are involved in decision making wherever possible, using the expertise that our **fantastic Surrey County Council staff** have and **listening to our residents** to make sure we are getting things right.

The Chief Executive and I had some really constructive discussions with those Members who were in attendance during the recent Members Seminar on the progress report. Obviously one of the big concerns expressed by Members was the financial pressures we face and the difficulty in continuing to deliver vital services to our residents – particularly our most vulnerable residents. Given the demographic pressures and the knock-on effect which this has on our finances, there is no doubt in my mind that there are tough times ahead.

And let me make it clear - those tough times are closer than many think!

During my last speech to County Council, Members will recall that I touched on the huge pressures facing our care services and those pressures which are particular unique to Surrey:

- the substantial number of our residents requiring dementia care,
- the huge historical caseload of our residents with Physical Learning Disabilities, and

- the large amount of residents who fund their own care, which leads to the County Council providing considerable contributions in those residents later lives.

With the uncertainty around the way in which Government will fund Adult Social Care in the future, I believe it is absolutely crucial to do all in our power to maintain a stable financial base to protect the most vulnerable in our society. I believe that the recommendations proposed by the Dilnot commission should be implemented sooner rather than later. As individuals grow older they and their families need clarification over their future financial responsibilities and by adopting the principles of Dilnot, everyone – including local authorities - can face the future with greater clarity and certainty.

My Cabinet and our CLT have some **really exciting and innovative plans** for the future which we are exploring and which we hope to continue to develop with knowledgeable Members to create policies which will put Surrey County Council at the forefront of local government in this country.

All Members will know that we receive the lowest funding of any County Council in the country, while providing the biggest net contribution to the Exchequer of anywhere outwith the City of London. But we won't be sitting back and simply complaining about how unfair this situation is. We are determined to take **decisive action** and do all in our power to address the big issues facing our great county.

We want to play a key role in **driving economic growth** both in the county and in the UK as a whole. We want to make sure Surrey's businesses are thriving and that is why we have committed to give 60% of all of the County Council's contracts to Surrey businesses, as well as making it easier for small businesses to bid for a share of our major contracts. We want to make sure we are getting maximum value for money from all of our services, while ensuring we look at generating income at every reasonable opportunity.

And the underlying principal behind all of this is that of **One Team**. Working together and placing trust in everyone involved in the work of the County Council and all of our wider partners, to deliver innovative ways of working to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and value for money for our taxpayers.

Madam Chairman, the Chief Executive and I have had the privilege to visit many of our staff over the last 8 months and everywhere we go, we see **excellence, team spirit, commitment to public service** and ONE TEAM working, recognising that times are difficult but the professionalism of the staff throughout this county to deliver quality services for the residents of Surrey is, I believe, outstanding.

Likewise when the Chief Executive and I meet volunteers on our visits around Surrey, we are always impressed. We are blessed in this county to have such a wealth of committed volunteers who make significant contributions to the quality of life of so many.

Madam Chairman – the future remains uncertain, but while I am the Leader of this Council, my Cabinet and I will do **all we can** to get the best for our residents and to realise our ambition to be the most effective council in the country by 2017.

David Hodge
Leader of the Council
12 June 2012