

County Council Meeting - 17 July 2012

LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Chairman, Members

Members in the Chamber today will know that I am **really passionate** about growing the economy of this great county so that the talents of our residents can be released and opportunities for employment and prosperity can be extended to all who wish to grasp them.

Uncertainty in the economy means that very few people have the foresight to see the opportunities to succeedthat is understandable.

Since the economic downturn began, 16-24 year olds have suffered from a lack of employment or training opportunities the world over. Youth unemployment in Greece and Spain is currently running close to 50%. That is a shocking figure. Because not only will it have an impact on those unemployed now – but it will also have a devastating long-term impact on us all.

I refuse to allow this hopelessness to infect our county.
We simply cannot have a generation devastated by unemployment.

We in Surrey stand firm in our commitment to get the economy growing and making sure our young people can succeed.

We will help them take advantage of training and look to better themselves with our support:

- We won't simply stand back and let opportunities for our young people slip away.
- We will take positive action to ensure the best outcomes for Surrey and our residents.
- And we will do all that is possible to help those who want to better themselves.

We know that the Government is committed to improving levels of training and apprenticeships, particularly through their Apprenticeship Grant for Business scheme

And we have already spearheaded a campaign which saw 200 apprenticeship places created in the county over the last year. At the same time, in March we stated our intention of getting 100 apprentices working for the County Council, aiming for 20 of those to be Looked After Children.

Both of those commitments were not only achieved but exceeded. Congratulations to all of you. This is something that we should be proud of.

And I assure you, we have many more ideas to ensure a legacy we will all be tremendously proud of.

And we shall leave that legacy for generations to come! Winston Churchill said, “the true measure of leadership is 10 years after we have gone”

But - **we want to do more.**

We are continuing to investigate other cutting edge training opportunities to ensure that all who are committed to improving themselves and our community through learning, will have that option available to them.

Not every young person wants to go to University. And that is as it should be. I didn't go to University and – though some of you may disagree – **I didn't turn out too badly!**

Some young people need a different path to their future. Recognising this, means that we can help young people get the skills they need in an increasingly competitive workforce environment.

Preparing them for jobs now and future challenges is a key responsibility. We can and will succeed through this new generation.

Not only is this about assisting our young people. Increasing the skills, confidence and knowledge of the Surrey workforce also helps our local businesses. This can help further a business's ambitions, aiding expansion and securing a sustainable future.

Many local business leaders have told me and the Deputy Leader that a lack of apprentices is a big concern. I know that Members will have heard this from businesses in their own divisions. But in my world, concern means opportunity!

And, for those reasons, today I am **absolutely delighted** to announce the creation of 200 apprenticeships for young people in Surrey, with our businesses.

This stimulus will help deliver not just a boost to these 200 young people but also offers REAL SOLUTIONS to **Surrey Businesses.**

As I mentioned, the Government's Apprenticeship Grant for Business has been a welcome boost for small and medium sized businesses.

But we want to take that further with the Surrey Offer.

We want to extend the reach of the programme to encourage more Surrey businesses to get involved. And we want to add additional programmes and opportunities to engage and encourage our youth beyond their current skill set. We want to set new boundaries and horizons for our youth to aspire to attain. Under our new proposals all companies, of any size and with any past history with apprentices, will qualify for the Surrey grant.

Our grant will be **£1500**, which matches the value of the government's grant.

That would make a total **of £3000**, which will go a long way to enabling businesses to take on apprentices, as well as making sure that they can get the right skills for the job.

I believe that through this total investment of £300k, we are demonstrating **we are 100% behind** helping our young people and Surrey businesses

And we are not stopping there!

We are determined that all of our young people will have every option available to them. Because we know the world has become more competitive. Which is why we are saying to young people in Surrey:

“We are creating the opportunities for you to succeed ...so grab this opportunity for your future”

And why we are also saying to parents **“we understand it can be difficult for those leaving school, so we want to help in every way we can”**.

And as corporate parents we are saying to our Looked After Children **“you will be given every opportunity to succeed”**.

Madam Chairman – as Leader of the Council, It is my **duty** to do all I can to serve and support the residents of Surrey.

The Cabinet and I are committed to supporting Surrey businesses in every way we can.

The **One Team** principle is about getting everyone working together to do the best for the County.

And this initiative will go a **long way** to making sure this happens.

I have asked Kay Hammond - who does an outstanding amount of work in this area- and a team of officers to oversee the delivery of this initiative.

And I am confident that over the coming months, young people and businesses in the county, can take advantage and succeed through this investment.

Thank you

David Hodge
Leader of the Council