

# Chief Executive's Six Month Progress Report

July – December 2014



# Introduction

1. When I joined the council in 2009 Members asked for better sight of the key issues we faced and the steps being taken to deal with them. We agreed it would be helpful for me to **bring my views together in a report to the Council every six months**. This is my eleventh report.
2. The format of the report has evolved over time in response to feedback from Members and staff. The **overview section** (p3-9) gives readers a summary of my thoughts in response to two key questions:
  - How have we performed over the last six months?
  - How will we tackle our key challenges over the next six months?
3. I have kept my answers to these questions brief. Once again I will be using them to **prompt a wider discussion** with Members, staff, and partners over the coming weeks and months through my visits to teams and locations across the county. I will continue to share the different perspectives and key points from these discussions on my **s-net chat zone blog**. And I encourage others to discuss and share their views with colleagues, be it in one-to-ones, team meetings or via chat zone.
4. The **case study section** of the report (Annex A) again includes inspiring examples of the positive difference being made to people's lives. They will be added to our online [Improvement Toolkit](#) which has now attracted over 20,000 views. Sharing our experiences and learning from each other makes us a stronger organisation. I encourage staff and Members to share further examples.
5. Also attached to the report is a list of the latest **awards and recognition** the council has received (Annex B). I'm proud that the hard work of Members and staff – and the people we support - continues to be **widely recognised**.
6. Readers who want **more detail** will find this in a number of other recent reports:
  - [Annual report 2014](#)
  - [Budget](#) and [performance](#) updates for Q2 2014/15
  - [Council priorities web pages](#)
  - [Collaborate 2014 web pages](#)
7. I have not sought to repeat all of this information in this report, but instead to **summarise my conclusions** on the council's recent progress and the next set of challenges.

# How have we performed over the last six months?

8. Over the last six months **the Council has continued to perform strongly**. I'm again proud of the work done by colleagues right across the Council and in partner organisations – it has made a **positive difference to people's lives** day in, day out. And as well as fulfilling critical daily responsibilities, progress has been made on **re-designing services** so they are more responsive to people's needs and achieve better value.
9. I will now expand on these conclusions by re-visiting the four challenges that I set out in my previous report. I believe we **successfully met each challenge** and I've included key examples that illustrate this. There is of course much more to do, but we can take confidence from what we have already achieved.

## **We continued to fulfil our key responsibilities**

10. Our ongoing work to deliver the **biggest school expansion programme in Surrey's history** helped ensure that when schools re-opened after the summer break they could accommodate more than 4,100 extra pupils. We also ensured that in line with the Government's new policy we were ready and able to **provide hot meals for every primary school pupil** from the start of the new term (also see Annex A p9: Jane Lomax's story).
11. In my previous report I highlighted our work with partners to respond to the **persistent flooding** over the winter period. This remained a key focus through the summer months as we continued to help residents and businesses access grants for repairs, **repaired flood damaged roads and bridges**, and developed and submitted a bid for £27million from Government to improve local flood defences.
12. At the time of writing we have not yet experienced severe winter conditions, but it will only be a matter of time. We have learnt from our previous responses to crisis with partners and communities and **strengthened our preparedness for winter**. The Environment and Transport Select Committee and the Flooding Task Group have made an important contribution to this work. Preparations for this winter include route-specific forecasts, more accurate salt spreaders, and arming residents in advance with better [advice and information](#).
13. Over the last six months we continued to **make progress on the quality of safeguarding work with adults and children**, focussing on the areas where we need to improve. There is further detail on safeguarding in the recent reports from the [Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board](#) and [Surrey Safeguarding Children's Board](#).
14. **National Adoption Week** in November helped draw attention to the crucial work that colleagues do throughout the year for Surrey children. In 2013/14 we placed 57 children for adoption. All adoptions are complex, some more so than others, and the week helps to raise awareness of our service and find the right adopters for Surrey children waiting to be adopted.
15. At the time of writing we have a large number of Ofsted inspectors in Surrey **assessing our overall work with partners to support children**. It's a very intensive process and I appreciate the work colleagues have done to make sure the

inspectors understand the improvements we've made and continue to make. We volunteered to test the new inspection process because it is **important to get external challenge** on the quality of these critical services. Knowing which areas we are strong in and where we need to do better will help us improve faster and we will be taking on board all the feedback.

## **We continued to meet the changing needs and expectation of residents**

16. The needs and expectations of Surrey's residents change over time and vary between different groups and individuals. It is therefore critical that we involve users in work to improve or change what we do. This means **strengthening our understanding of residents' experiences** and our capability to co-design and co-deliver new solutions with them.
17. This is not a one-off task. It is an ongoing challenge and it **requires us to strengthen our approach**. There are some good examples below of how we have done this in recent months (also see Annex A p1: Dexter James' story; p2: Jane Bremner's story; p5: Mike Dawson's story).
18. The Chief Executive of Citizens Advice, Gillian Guy, recently showcased our work with partners to **support people with changes to the benefits system**, praising our strong understanding of local needs. The Welfare Reform Task Group's work to understand the issues on the ground has helped make Surrey's Local Assistance Scheme effective.
19. In July the Cabinet approved plans for a new £10m **university technical college** (UTC) in Guildford. As well as helping to address the need for an increase in secondary school places the curriculum design of the UTC has been informed by employers and evidence from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership to address local skills gaps and support future economic growth.
20. In October a **new home for young people with autism** was officially opened in Sunbury-on-Thames. The new building, delivered in partnership with London Care Partnership, was created with families and staff and will help people with autism stay among their friends and relatives in familiar surroundings.
21. We were also able to announce a groundbreaking scheme with National Autistic Society (NAS) and Cullum Family Trust which will see four high-achieving mainstream schools get the county's first-ever centres focused on educating secondary-age children with the condition. The four centres will **provide specialist support for 80 pupils with autism**, allowing them to stay in mainstream Surrey schools nearer home.
22. One of the most significant developments in recent years is the growth of digital and mobile technologies. We have to respond to **people's changing expectations about accessing services and information**, and technology presents fantastic opportunities to improve what we do. Our **re-designed website** was recently judged as the best in UK local government by The Society of Information Technology Management (also see Annex A p3: Mona Saad's story).

## **We have pushed ahead with our partners on whole system transformation and innovation**

23. In my previous report I described the need to **deepen our work with partners** so we can consistently design what we do around the concepts of “one place, one budget” and “one person, one budget”. This systems change is complex and takes time but I believe we have successfully moved up a gear over the last six months.
24. The [Collaborate event](#) on 19 November confirmed the progress we have made. It was fantastic to see and hear from so many colleagues from across partner organisations from the public, private, and voluntary, community and faith sectors. I was struck by **the very tangible sense of everyone working as one team for Surrey**. The momentum for collaborative work has without doubt grown. It is imperative given the pressures we all face. And as public servants it is our duty.
25. One of the most urgent areas of collaboration is our work with health colleagues to develop plans to **join up services for older people**. In September, following intensive work with CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups) and other health partners, we submitted a revised version of **Surrey’s Better Care Fund** plan to the Government.
26. The landmark plan sets out how we will continue to redesign services locally around the needs of residents rather than the needs of organisations. The plan aligns with our wider friends, family and communities agenda – helping to **support people to live and age well independently** in their homes and communities (also see Annex A p3: Jo Lang and Sophie Harris’ story; p7: Bronwen Chinien’s story; p8 Jim Pinchen’s story).
27. In August our successful implementation of the **Surrey Family Support Programme** was recognised when the Government invited us to be an “early adopter” for the next phase of their Troubled Families initiative. This is based on being one of the very best performers on stage one. It’s a lot of work but it means we will be able to support another 3,000 families in Surrey.
28. Meanwhile we continued to make **good progress on a range of innovative projects and new models of delivery**. For example, our emergency services collaboration, sharing support services with East Sussex County Council, launching a new trading company called Surrey Choices, and merging trading standards services with Buckinghamshire County Council (also see Annex A p6: Steve Ruddy’s story).
29. We also progressed important work with our District and Borough partners to prepare the way for the various **local growth schemes** signed off within the Local Enterprise Partnership growth deals last summer.

## **We continued to help release the full energy and potential of staff**

30. Once again over the last six months I have had the privilege of visiting lots of teams across the county, often alongside the Leader. I’ve also held a number “Ask me anything” sessions with colleagues. **I’ve been very impressed by the teams and individuals I’ve met and have learned a lot**. The conversations reinforced my view that while we have made important investments and improvements in people’s support and working environments there is **Page 27** more to be done.

31. The **Better Place to Work** team have held hundreds of conversations with people over recent months and I'm pleased that visiting teams in their various locations has helped identify changes, big and small, that can help colleagues feel good about where they work and be productive. Some issues have already been tackled but I know there are a number of things that are still being followed up. This will remain a key focus over coming months.
32. One critical area I highlighted for improvement in my previous report was appraisals. It is good that **the number of colleagues receiving an appraisal has increased in recent months, but we still have to do better**. Further actions are underway to ensure we meet our target of 100% of eligible staff receiving an appraisal by the end of May 2015. I welcome the close attention the Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee have paid to this very important issue.
33. In addition to identifying and addressing issues with day to day support, we have **strengthened our wider support and development offer** over the last six months. A central part of this has been the implementation of a High Performance Development Programme. The programme is designed to help fully embed our values in to all leadership practice and **ensure colleagues and their teams are resilient** and able to perform strongly in what are often challenging and uncertain circumstances.
34. Another key component of our organisational development is the increased use of **restorative practice techniques** within the workplace. The evidence of its positive impact on youth offending is compelling and the key principles underpinning it can be readily applied to help us manage workplace issues in earlier and more effective ways. Other examples of support include career coaching, health check, and events to enable colleagues to share ideas and learn from each other.
35. I encourage staff to **continue raising any concerns** where there is a problem with the level of support, or where frustrations are getting in the way of what we have to do for residents. The Leader and I remain personally committed to making sure we improve in any areas where concerns are raised.

## How will we tackle our key challenges over the next six months?

36. The **strategic challenges** we currently face are no different to those I described in my previous report. But with the passing of time their scale increases. The growing demands for our services quicken – and are hastened by new legislative responsibilities. The reductions in resources stack up, each one coming on top of those from previous years.
37. **The upcoming General Election brings additional uncertainty** of potential policy changes and different requirements. Although whatever Government is returned in May 2015, we can be certain that local government will continue to be asked to manage with reduced funds.

38. It **paints a challenging picture**. The county's highest ever birth rate means that Surrey's children need 13,000 extra school places (equivalent to 43 primary schools) over the next five years; there will be a £50m annual bill for an extra 2,000 elderly and vulnerable people who'll need our help within three years, and to stop our roads deteriorating we need to spend £132m over the next five years.
39. We know we are going to have to continue thinking and working differently to deal with the magnitude of these challenges. And we are going to have to move quickly to keep pace with the rising pressures. It will be tough, but based on our progress to date I believe **we can successfully navigate the significant challenges we face**.
40. Below I have expanded on **five areas we will need to focus on** through the first half of 2015 in order to be successful. I will be paying careful attention to each of these, and I welcome the important contributions Members will also make in each of these areas.

### **Maintaining our core duties to residents through the challenging winter period**

41. Our critical services for residents are both harder to provide and under more pressure over the winter months. The added pressures apply right across the public service system. I've already described the improved preparations we have made with partners. These will stand us in good stead but there is no doubt that **keeping Surrey moving and continuing to support the most vulnerable residents will require very close attention and extra effort**.
42. As well as dealing with seasonal challenges we will also be making preparations for the **significant new duties incorporated in the Care Act** which will start to take effect from 1 April 2015 (see [website](#) for further details). Again, we are preparing well, but this work will inevitably require lots of attention over the next six months, in parallel with continuing to meet existing responsibilities.

### **Moving even quicker on whole systems transformation and demand management**

43. The Collaborate event with our partners confirmed the great strides we've taken together. It was also a moment of **shared recognition of the urgent task ahead**. The work we need to do together over the coming months and years is difficult and takes significant time and energy - we have to guard against making excuses for ourselves. We will have to make the time, maintain our energy and be straight and honest about what needs to change.
44. Our work with partners on the **Better Care Fund Plan** will enter an important stage in the New Year. Following final sign off from Government the plan and associated pooled budget are scheduled to go live on 1 April 2015. The final preparations and first months of local implementation will be critical.
45. Elsewhere we will be pushing ahead on our **Public Service Transformation** projects, accelerating **re-design work in other areas of big spend** like disabilities, and stepping up work with Districts and Borough Councils on **future growth plans**. In parallel we will be finalising and putting in to action a refreshed IT and Digital Strategy which will support the changes we want to make for residents and help manage growing demands.

46. By definition there can be **no one size fits all answer to redesigning services around the needs of residents**. In many cases forms of integration will make a positive difference. But in other cases services might be best delivered by individual organisations. What is critical is that **we and our partners have a common shared desire to work better together** – with each other, with residents, partners, businesses and other local authorities – to find the best solutions for Surrey.

### **Continuing to make the case for Surrey to Government**

47. While pushing ahead with the significant changes we need to make, we will also continue to present **Surrey's strong case for fairer funding to the Government**. Our county makes a significant contribution to the UK economy. And it is facing some significant changes. We need support to tackle them.
48. This is a particular issue in delivering the additional 13,000 school places that Surrey needs over the next five years. We expect the cost of creating those further school places to be £327m. Presently we only expect to get £112m from Government. **The Leader and the Cabinet Member for Schools have raised this directly with the Secretary of State for Education** and it is encouraging that the Department for Education (DfE) has accepted our evidence of a funding gap. Further discussions will take place over coming weeks and months to explore how they might support us to deal with this.
49. The Scottish referendum triggered a wide ranging **debate on further devolution within England**. And we recently saw Greater Manchester secure increased local powers through the “Devo Manc” deal. I believe the case for greater local powers is as strong in Surrey as it is in Manchester.
50. The Leader has been presenting arguments for greater devolution for Surrey and other counties through his role as Chairman of the County Council's Network (CCN) – you will find further details in the CCN report “[Our Plan for Government](#)”. As the debate continues in the run up to the General Election it will be important that we and our partners are **ready to highlight the issues that matter in Surrey** and identify any opportunities that can benefit our residents.

### **Setting the next budget**

51. We have continued to manage our finances responsibly – we are **on track to deliver £69m savings** in 2014/15 and current forecasts indicate it will be the fifth consecutive year the Council has a small underspend or a balanced budget. Despite these efforts, the pressures already outlined mean that setting the next budget in February 2015 will require difficult choices. And once again we won't have all the information from the Government needed to inform Member decisions until the New Year.
52. Meanwhile officers will continue to analyse possible scenarios and **Select Committees will, as always, play a key role in scrutinising options**. We will also continue to share and discuss the latest position with residents, partners and other stakeholders.



## Strengthening our leadership capability

53. In the first part of this report I set out some of the actions we've taken to help **release the full potential and energy of all staff**. All of this work must continue over the coming months, but there is one element that I believe will require particular attention: our leadership capability.
54. Uncertain times call for skilful leadership; lots of skilful leadership. It therefore can't be the preserve of a few people in particular positions in our hierarchy. In my previous report I described the steps we were taking to instigate **a more widely distributed – and therefore stronger - leadership model**.
55. Over the last six months **we have established four key leadership networks**. They reflect the key things we have to get right. Firstly, we have to make sure we are meeting our statutory and regulatory responsibilities (*Statutory Responsibilities*). Secondly, we have to make sure we are always improving the work we do day to day (*Continual Improvement and Productivity*). Thirdly, we have to make sure we are looking ahead and developing innovative responses to the inexorable growth in demand that key services face over the foreseeable future (*New Models of Delivery*). Fourthly, we have to work with partners across Surrey to ensure every place can be prosperous and sustainable (*Prosperous Places*).
56. The four networks have started to help accelerate the work I've described throughout this report. They are supplementing - not replacing - our formal governance boards and directorate / service arrangements and are **strengthening a one team approach**. Over the next six months the networks will be taking action on key challenges and opportunities and will be engaging Members in this. There is further background information on the networks on the [s-net](#).
57. Finally, I want to put on the record again **my appreciation of the colleagues – staff, Members, partners and residents - I am fortunate to work alongside**. I look forward to discussing this report with you.

## Attached

- Annex A: Case studies  
Annex B: Awards and recognition

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