

Appendix A**Leader's Speech to County Council – Tuesday 12 July 2016**

Madam Chairman

On 23rd June we saw one of the biggest democratic exercises in the country's history with over 33 million people having their say on the UK's membership of the European Union. Over 670,000 people voted in Surrey – with a turnout of nearly 80%. The people have spoken and the United Kingdom has resolved to leave the European Union.

It is important to say that for Surrey County Council, it is business as usual – we will continue to provide vital services to our residents as we always have. I know each and every member present today is absolutely committed to serving the people of Surrey - improving their wellbeing, supporting continuing economic prosperity and ensuring they have a positive experience of our services. However, we are all aware of the huge challenges this council is facing; rising demand for essential services whilst government funding is falling. We are being squeezed from both ends - and this is set to continue.

We have worked hard over the past few years to manage funding reductions whilst protecting front-line services. With further reductions on the horizon - on top of ever-increasing demand for services – setting a sustainable budget next year and in the years to come will be our number one challenge. Despite our plans to save more than eighty million pounds from our budget this year – the increasing demand and cost pressures on our services will wipe this out. Pressures on our social care services accounts for the vast majority of this – and it isn't going to get any easier. By 2020 there will be an additional 6,500 people living in Surrey over the age of eighty – many of them needing our support.

Madam Chairman

Social care is just one of the services our residents rely upon from us. The county council is also expected to provide the school places needed for a growing population, improve the road network and dispose of Surrey's waste – to name just three of our essential services. But the nation also relies upon Surrey – to drive the economy forward. How strange then, that despite being a significant net contributor to the national exchequer we then receive one of the lowest financial settlements from government in return. And that despite our economy being one of the largest and most vibrant outside of London, its future is at risk from creaking infrastructure struggling to cope with increasing demand. These are the issues raised on doorsteps time and time again.

It's clear to me that the government isn't going to start handing down more money to run council services and - after years of making savings - there is a limit to how much more can be found to bridge the increasing funding gap. It's an increasingly tough challenge but we are working towards solutions. Yes, of course it means making sure our services are run as efficiently as possible and making sure every single penny of taxpayers money is spent wisely. It also means really transforming our services so they deliver what matters most to our residents.

Madam Chairman

Much of the solution will be found - and is being found - in working better with other organisations – boroughs and districts, the Police, the health service, businesses and charities. With health and care services we have pooled over seventy million pounds with our partners in the NHS to support joint health and social care plans and we expect to accelerate this work over the coming years. The outcomes are clear- better value for money for taxpayers and improved front-line services for our residents. But, while we must improve these vital services for those who rely upon them - and make them sustainable for the future

- we are also committed to doing the things that make a difference to the day to day lives of every resident.

Take our plans to revive local shopping parades. The people of Surrey love where they live and they want to support their local town centres. We know how important thriving town centres are to residents, both traders and shoppers - they are the lifeblood of our communities. That's why we are throwing our support behind local communities to help revitalise their shopping areas.

In the same vein, we have also launched an initiative to rebuild two hundred miles of the county's pavements so residents have improved access to key community services such as doctor's surgeries, train stations and shops. We know these simple but effective initiatives can make a lasting difference to residents' lives.

But – Madam Chairman - it's not just about what the county council can do. It's also about what we ALL can do. So I'd like to mention the contribution of our residents. They haven't hesitated to get involved to improve our local communities. Take Surrey's time banks for example, where local people can come together to exchange their skills and time **to help each other**. With the charity Timebanking UK, this council has supported the charity to open seven locations across the county. Volunteers can be found in all walks of life throughout Surrey. From the volunteers in our libraries, to the befrienders preventing loneliness in our communities, we have some fantastic people doing brilliant things. They are an example to all of us. It's the ONE TEAM spirit in action.

Madam Chairman

What all of this shows is that by working together we can find more of the solutions needed to protect the services our residents value, revitalise our communities and offer each other the support that is needed. These solutions are to be found locally – with those who experience them, provide them and pay for them. And that is why much of the solution to our funding pressures will have to be found here – in Surrey.

As I speak, the country is embarking on a period of change. The new Prime Minister will begin the work to take the country out of the European Union. The more local government can do with its partners to solve its own problems and manage its own affairs the better it will be for everyone. I believe our residents recognise the pressures we face, they understand the importance of the public services we provide and I am confident that if local government were given the real freedom to manage its own affairs the people of Surrey would work with us to find more solutions. That's why I will be urging Theresa May – **who has been a local councillor at Merton for eight years herself** – to recognise that local government is one of the most efficient parts of government and that by using local government models, she can help tackle inequality and provide better services to everyone.

Madam Chairman

If she is bold. If she has confidence in our institutions and our communities. If she trusts local government to be a catalyst for change. Then the future will be bright for all of us. **The future will be bright for Surrey.**