

### **Leader's Statement**

Madam Chairman and members, as councillors, we must always put our residents first. I said it when I first became a councillor in 1992 and I've stuck by it since I was elected Leader of this Council in 2011. In all those years I have not stopped, I have not wavered, I have not shied away from that challenge. I've put our residents first - every step of the way.

Let's look at the events over the past few months. In October this council agreed - we couldn't and we wouldn't accept a four year financial settlement. We couldn't sign a deal which didn't provide enough funding for services in the next few years. We couldn't say yes when it was clear it wouldn't work for our residents, it wouldn't work for our communities and it wouldn't work for the county of Surrey.

We knew it was the right decision - the only decision we could take. It wasn't the easy choice. But it was the right thing to do. Instead, this Council asked me to go back to Government and negotiate a fairer deal for Surrey. One that puts our residents first. That is what I have been doing.

I've spent months lobbying the government, putting the facts in front of Ministers and writing to Surrey MPs. I provided clear evidence of the issues we faced: the soaring cost of care, the rising number of vulnerable people and unfair reductions in funding which threatened the very services our residents rely upon. I refused to go away, I refused to be fobbed off. But let me be clear I made the case for a fair deal for Surrey – not a special deal.

Let's look at the facts of the situation.

The Chancellor has just announced billions of extra funding for social care only weeks after the local government financial settlement was made final! Would that have been achieved if we hadn't made such a strong case for investment? Or if we hadn't made sure Social Care stayed in the headlines?

We were bold and we secured a fairer deal because government recognised the scale of the problems we presented. They listened to the voices of this Cabinet and the voices of those local MPs who joined our efforts.

Last month, I told this chamber I trusted the government to offer help towards the cost of social care. The Chancellor's announcement proves we made the right decision.

As a last resort, we had proposed raising council tax by 15%. But with assurances from Government, it was simply no longer reasonable to do so. We would never ask residents to pay more unless there was clearly no other choice.

So yes! I'm pleased Surrey gets a share of that money. It means we'll have over 20 million pounds extra for social care services over the next three years. It may not be as much as we need -but it's 20 million pounds more than we had last October!

So...here it is. The moment you've all been waiting for!  
Let me confess.

I'm guilty! Of helping get a better deal for social care in Surrey, of putting our residents first and of standing up for Surrey! Now I admit – I won't go down in history for my texting skills. ...Well I might!

But – beyond the noise, I firmly believe that we, as a Cabinet and as a Conservative Group, have done the right thing for the people of Surrey.

It took courage to stand up for Surrey - but this Conservative Group will always stand up for Surrey's residents!

I will never say sorry for putting our residents first. I always have! And I guarantee you - I always will.

Of course – It's inevitable that others will want to play political games at this meeting. Let them. But this Conservative Group refuses to be distracted. We make the difficult decisions, we get on with the job at hand, we put our residents front and centre and we stand by them, shoulder to shoulder, making sure they're at the heart of every decision and every service. Because that's what Conservatives do! That's what Conservatives will keep doing! And it's what Conservatives pledge to do in the future!

That's why the people of Surrey can have confidence that their Conservative Councillors will always stand up for Surrey and always put our residents first.