

Appendix A**Item 10****County Council AGM – 23 May 2017****Leader of the Council's statement**

Mr Chairman, I know all our thoughts will be with those who have been affected by the terrible events in Manchester last night. It is at times like this that communities must come together and I wish that great city and all its people the very best for the future.

I would now like to welcome you and our new Deputy Chairman to your roles?

I would also like to thank the Council for electing me as Leader and I recognise it is now my responsibility to set out our direction for the years ahead. I can assure Members that I will be diligent, hard-working, and, above all, put the interest of Surrey residents first.

Following the recent County Council elections, it is my duty as Leader to select the Cabinet. I am delighted to welcome Mary Lewis, Denise Turner-Stewart, Colin Kemp and Tim Oliver to the Cabinet, as well as all those who are returning to serve on it. In particular, the new Deputy Leader John Furey.

I would also like to welcome ALL members following their successful election – especially those who are new to the council. While there may be occasions when our political views differ, what unites us is a shared sense of civic duty. We were all elected to represent and serve the residents of Surrey as best we can.

As Leader, I am very conscious of the responsibility that comes with that duty. Indeed, it is a responsibility that falls upon every Member on this Council. I know we all appreciate the trust that the people of Surrey have placed in us and accept the responsibility that comes with that trust.

I want to take some time now setting out the challenges we're all going to have to face over the next few years. Funding and demand pressures mean we have to save more than £100m over this financial year alone, just to balance the budget.

The pressures we face are very real but they don't remove our duty to the most vulnerable:

- our looked after children
- our older residents
- those with learning disabilities

All these residents are looking to us, ALL of us, for support.

If we are to continue to provide that support we will have to radically rethink how we provide public services. We will have to continue to work more closely with other organisations. We will have to change the way we do things and we will have to constantly test that we are providing residents with value for money.

We all know we are facing a number of very tough decisions. We have to make the right decisions in the circumstances we face. But it is our duty, ALL of our duty, to take those decisions so residents who rely upon us get the right support they need. If we are to achieve this we have to build on the savings we have already made.

Since 2010, we have saved more than £500m from our annual budget, and by the end of the decade we aim to take this to £700m. If we fail to do this, we will not be able to provide residents with the essential support they need.

As Leader I have always stood up for the people of Surrey and I am pleased that we have been successful in getting additional funding for adult social care but with increasing cost and demand pressures, the County Council is having to find millions more every year to provide this vital support to our elderly and vulnerable residents. And while our elderly population is set to increase by about 20,000 over the next three years, the situation is similar at the other end of the age spectrum.

Our growing school-age population means we have to provide 11,000 more places over the next few years. In addition, increasing demand for our Special Educational Needs and Disability services means we are facing a funding gap of £24m by 2021, so the focus for all of us has to be on finding the money to provide our communities with the support they need and deserve.

I make a personal commitment to give everything I have got to tackling these challenges. It won't be easy but I recognise, and accept that I have a duty to do it. Indeed, this is a task that we all have a duty to deliver, as the elected representatives of Surrey.

I am determined that we will not fail the people of Surrey.

David Hodge
Leader of the Council
23 May 2017