

Mr Chairman and Members,

I would like to thank those who have nominated me and those who have elected me today to lead this county council on behalf of the people of Surrey. It is a great honour, and with it comes a tremendous responsibility to serve this wonderful county and its many communities.

First, can I pay tribute to the fantastic achievements of David Hodge. He has been a passionate advocate for Surrey and its residents throughout his time as a councillor and as Leader. We should all recognise the outstanding contribution he has made to us as members, to the residents of Surrey and to the wider local government sector. David, thank you.

It is now my task to implement the core strategies members agreed in October, and I am determined that we will deliver on these. This Conservative administration has a clear mandate from this council and we are united in wanting to realise our Vision for 2030.

My commitment to the principles that underpin these strategies is unwavering:

- No one should be left behind
- We will take a fresh approach to working in partnership
- We will help people to help themselves and others
- We will involve and engage our residents more fully in the development of services

We are embarking on a journey of change, renewal and innovation, supported by our officer team, led by our excellent Chief Executive Joanna Killian. Joanna has ably started the work of transformation, but it's now time for elected members to play their part.

Our first objective must be to make Surrey financially sustainable once again. We need to reshape our services around the changing needs of our communities making them fit for purpose both now and in the years to come. To do this we will need to be creative and embrace new ideas to meet the aspirations of those we serve.

My commitment to you and to the people of Surrey that I will get the finances of this county in order can be clearly demonstrated from my decision to create a post of Cabinet Member for Finance, ensuring that sustainable budgets are central to our thinking. I am delighted that Mel Few has agreed to take on this new and important role.

Equally, to support me in delivering our plans, I am pleased to announce further changes to the Cabinet. Some of the roles have been revised, others refocused and new dedicated roles for Finance and Property have been introduced.

I have asked Colin Kemp to serve as my Deputy Leader. As shown by the last two holders of this post, it is an essential role and I am delighted Colin has agreed to take it on and work alongside me.

I would like to welcome Julie Iles, Sinead Mooney, Matt Furniss, Natalie Bramhall and Wyatt Ramsdale to the Cabinet. Can I also thank John Furey and Clare Curran both of whom have served this council with distinction for many years and who are stepping down from the Cabinet. Jeff Harris leaves to take on the Chairmanship of the Adult Social Care Select Committee.

Making this council fit for purpose again is not going to be easy. The officers have already been looking at how we can meet the needs and aspirations of our residents and the changes that will be required are an uncomfortable prospect for all of us. But it is now time for us in this chamber to take the responsibility bestowed upon us by our electorate and start to make the hard decisions that must be taken.

I wish there were an easy solution; We know that in an uncertain world Surrey residents look to us for certainty and continuity but budget pressures and changing expectations mean we cannot go on as before. Change is difficult for we walk a tightrope between respecting the past and adapting to the future where resources are even tighter.

Despite the pressures we face we must make our children's services outstanding. My administration will be looking at all measures available to achieve this under the direction of Mary Lewis, supported by our Director for Children's Services Dave Hill and his team, ensuring that we achieve the best possible outcomes for every child and family in Surrey.

We must provide early support to our ageing population to help them have a better quality of life for as long as possible. We must work to become a high performing council once again with the welfare of our residents at the very heart of this organisation.

We are committed to playing our part, but we cannot secure a successful future for our county on our own. We must continue to develop more effective relationships and partnerships that are open, proactive and productive. Perhaps in the past we have been too internally focussed – for all the right reasons- but this might have led

us to missing the outward view, scanning the horizon and anticipating the future on our resident's behalf.

We will be needing all the help our partners in the voluntary, charitable and faith sectors can give us and in turn we will look at how we can be better partners to them.

We need to ensure that alongside every essential decision we have to make, we are all satisfied that we have made every possible efficiency within our services, looked at every opportunity to generate money from our own assets or created new homes and investigated every possible avenue of winning new funding or using new ways of providing services with partners

Our residents as we well know often do not distinguish between Boroughs and Districts or us. We are all "Surrey" to our residents and we must work seamlessly together as we all look to fund our front-line services.

- They don't care who empties the bins as long as someone does.
- They don't care who repairs the roads as long as someone does.
- And they don't care who provides their loved ones with care as long as someone does.

When people need our help, they are often faced with being passed from pillar to post. That must end. We need to have people on our side but as long as such isolation and disjointed service delivery continues, they will not be. It is vital we have our residents' backing because it is them, we are here to serve and upon whom our future success relies.

We will forge a new working relationship with Central Government in which we work together. Whilst we must work to unlock funding and secure policy reforms that help us adapt to changing needs and pressures in our communities, I also want us to offer our support and assistance to them to find solutions to problems felt across society. We will work with them to bring national agencies together with us to help solve the issues we face around Health, Skills, Employment and Infrastructure needs in Surrey that we alone cannot solve, yet if achieved will enable us to do more for ourselves.

We will work closely with all the business across the county, large and small to support them in providing jobs, to make them an integral part of our communities and to make Surrey the place to do business.

We have disenchanted our residents and partners for far too long and understandably many have switched off. Without their involvement, policy decisions risk moving further away from the public's needs and wishes, and I will be dedicated to increasing positive engagement and involvement to prevent this. We need also to empower the public and give them a genuine role in the development of our communities. It is not right that any organisation should assume it is better placed than the public to decide the future shape of individual communities.

Mr Chairman, Surrey County Council needs to return to Surrey. For too long the emotional connection to a community has been taken for granted. For 50 years we have not been close enough to the residents we serve, and we all represent. I have therefore asked the officers to start the detailed planning for the relocation of the people in this building back in to the County of Surrey.

Natalie Bramhall will take the lead role in locating a suitable new home for us. I have asked her to make recommendations to this council within the next few months with an expectation that we will have vacated County Hall by the end of 2020. Our workforce deserves the best possible working environment to undertake their duties and that is simply not possible here at County Hall.

Indeed, it is important to recognise that despite the current challenges we face, SCC staff always distinguish themselves in their dedication to public service. More importantly they are committed to Surrey public service and, but for their dedication, we would face many more challenges today. It would be understandable if the changes they have experienced over recent years had left them demoralised. I want to say that under my leadership we will redouble our efforts to recognise their skills, develop their careers and ensure that they are part of our future success.

We are all rightfully proud of living in Surrey. Surrey is blessed with tremendous natural assets. We have thriving villages and towns. Booming businesses and a strong economy. An abundance of diversity and a rich culture. Glorious countryside with the Surrey Hills, a history of innovation and design from Brooklands in Weybridge to the University of Surrey.

We have so much to be proud of. It is essential that we protect the heritage and character of the County as well as creating more trust in SCC to lead our community. Each one of us is a guardian of this county for as long as our residents allow us to serve them. We have many challenges ahead, but we are not alone. Others are following a similar path and I am confident that we can learn from our peers in local government, draw on their experience and take our rightful place as one of the leading counties.

To the opposition I ask you to work with us as well as to challenge us and to this end we will begin an immediate review of the role of scrutiny as well as democratic governance. You need to be involved at an earlier stage of policy formation as all our residents' views are equally as important. But in return you must fully engage and not sit on the sidelines for you have a key role to play. We need to work together for a Surrey that we, and all our residents, can be proud of.

The bottom line is that we have a difficult task ahead of us, but we know what we have to do. It is now time for us to roll up our sleeves, stick to the job in hand and make sure we see it through. The current challenges are not all for SCC. They are challenges faced by our communities and, as such, the solutions must be designed together, with businesses, residents, staff, Members, other councils, voluntary, community and faith sectors. We are stronger together and we will secure a bright future for Surrey together.

Finally, Mr Chairman, we must have humility, an ability to look backwards and learn from our previous mistakes so we can adapt and ensure the future is brighter, that the future provides our residents with the services they need, and work together to ensure the services we deliver are of the highest possible quality.

We have a steep hill to climb but with a commitment by us, all of us, to shape services for the future, with the commitment of our partners to combine our collective strength and with the commitment of our residents to play their part we can, and will, succeed.

This page is intentionally left blank