

County Council speech – July 2019

Mr Chairman and Members, I have said before in this chamber that there can be no greater priority for any of us than turning around our Children's Services.

I spoke in March about the "green shoots of recovery" following an Ofsted Monitoring visit, and I was tremendously encouraged by the follow up visit last month, which focussed on the Single Point of Access, the Early Help Hub and the Contact Centre team.

The feedback we have received is a testament to the rapid progress the team has made in over the past year and while there is more to do, continuing to improve our Children's Services will remain our highest priority. I am sure we would all want to congratulate our excellent staff in getting us to this point.

Mr Chairman, as you will all be aware, there will be a paper going to next week's Cabinet meeting that trails the second part of our libraries consultation, which kicks off in September and builds upon the initial consultation we did with our residents last Autumn.

Since then extensive officer level conversations have taken place across each of our districts and boroughs, and will continue to do so ahead of the launch.

The way libraries are used has changed dramatically since they were built in the 1950s, and the key aspect of the consultation is how we can modernise the service and provide opportunities for everyone to learn, access information, acquire new skills, and be involved in their communities.

Mr Chairman, one of the commitments in our Surrey 2030 vision is for journeys across the county to be easier and safer.

In support of this we have undertaken an important piece of work, which has seen Surrey's partners and residents work together to discuss our shared ambitions around reducing congestion, improving air quality and promoting independence.

The Rethinking Transport project is now coming to the end of its discovery phase but through these conversations, representatives of a number of partners, including businesses, health organisations and transport providers have shared their views on how Surrey's future transport system can contribute to achieving our 2030 ambitions and health and wellbeing priorities.

A number of innovative solutions have been suggested as part of this first phase:

- Reducing the need to travel through smarter working;
- Embracing emerging technology;
- And encouraging sustainable and active modes of transport.

The next phase will explore how these potential solutions might work in practice and highlights many of the key themes that are important to tackling climate change, which I know is something our residents care deeply about.

On the environment more broadly, I am pleased that colleagues across the chamber have embraced my suggestion of an environment charter.

The select committee has set up a cross-party task group and is planning an ambitious programme of work involving experts from academia and industry as well as key local communities and partners.

This will help us to understand the scale of the issues facing Surrey. We must take action to identify the threats to our natural environment and identify ways we can have the biggest impact to ensure Surrey remains a great place to live, work and enjoy. Indeed we will shortly be passing a motion put by Mike Goodman the Cabinet Member for the Environment declaring a climate emergency. Perhaps just as importantly, the charter will contain positive and practical steps that this Council will take to help avert the seriousness of the situation our society faces.

It requires all of us to think about our actions and behaviours as leaders of this organisation, as community representatives and also as residents going about our daily lives. That's why we'll be working with a number of partners, including the University of Surrey, and I look forward to receiving the select committee's draft call for action later in the year and a debate at Council on how we take this forward.

Alongside the select committee's work, we are developing our commissioning approach to encourage communities to come forward with ideas on how to tackle the issues we face at a local level – be that air quality, waste reduction or congestion. We know a lot of fantastic initiatives are already thriving in our communities and we would like to celebrate and encourage these initiatives.

Working with businesses to try to secure sponsorship, we want to engage local groups to showcase what we can do by working together and acting differently. We will be launching this towards the end of the month and I hope all members will actively support this initiative – wouldn't it be terrific if each of us put forward an idea to pilot in our own community? This is an issue for the whole county and beyond that cuts across many areas including transport and health.

And indirectly linked to that is the launch of Surrey's Health and Wellbeing strategy.

This has been made possible thanks to unprecedented levels of collaboration with the NHS, district and boroughs, the voluntary and community sector and the police, focused on delivering better health and wellbeing outcomes for people in Surrey.

The strategy has three key priorities:

- Helping people in Surrey to lead healthy lives
- Supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of people in Surrey, and
- Supporting people in Surrey to fulfil their potential

Mr Chairman, life expectancy is broadly based as much on actions taken by local government as it is on lifestyle decisions taken by an individual and medical interventions combined. And through this Strategy, we're signalling an important shift to a more preventative approach, addressing root causes of poor health and wellbeing – including things like poor housing and the environment – and not simply focusing on treating the symptoms.

The draft implementation plan will be finished over the coming months, and I very much look forward to signing this off at the Health and Wellbeing Board later this year.

Mr Chairman, there will be no let-up in the pace of activity over the second half of the year:

- This Summer the seventh annual Prudential RideLondon will be whizzing through our streets. Dozens of projects in Surrey have benefited from grants totalling nearly £4m since it begun, whilst the riders themselves have raised a staggering £66m for charity. As many of you are aware I will be taking part in this year's ride in aid of Shooting Star Children's Hospice and the Brain Tumour Charity – both fantastic causes. I will be doing all I can to raise the profile of the amazing work they do.
- We will continue the work to identify a new civic heart for the county council that will mean we are closer to our residents.

- The creation of Local Partnership Boards will gather pace, which I hope will be a key forum for engagement with communities around local issues, and I look forward to the boards being piloted by Reigate & Banstead and Runnymede Borough Councils.
- Equally we take our responsibilities in safeguarding our communities from the impacts of flooding very seriously, and I will be looking to make progress in closing the funding gap on the Surrey Flood Alleviation Scheme,
- Finally Mr Chairman I will also be announcing in the autumn a series of pledges which will be our promises to the residents of Surrey over the coming months and years and will support our commitment to be a leading County authority.

Can I wish all members a peaceful Summer break and suggest you use the opportunity to recharge your batteries in readiness for a very busy September.

Thank you.