

No one can deny that we are in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty on a national level in this country.

However, here in Surrey, after some years of huge challenge, upheaval and difficult decisions, we are looking to the future with renewed optimism and energy.

We have set ourselves an ambitious programme of transformational change within this County Council that both reflects the challenges and opportunities of the modern age, and that will allow us to make better choices and to invest for the future generations of this great County.

### **MCTR**

We are on course to fulfil our ambition of moving closer to residents in the coming year, and I expect to be in a position to announce the new location of County Hall later this month; this will enable us to operate as a true civic heart within the County of Surrey.

This will enable us to drive our modernisation agenda, for all us within the organisation to be more efficient, effective and tech-savvy for the benefit of our residents and set us on course to be one of the leading councils in the country.

### **RAISING THE BAR**

We have moved quickly and effectively to address the historic poor performance of this organisation.

We are now raising the bar.

Our transformation programme is ambitious. At Cabinet later this month we will report back on what has been achieved to

date as well as setting out what we will doing in the next phase. Whilst there is more to do, key services have already had plans effectively agreed and delivered and they are making a real difference to people's lives.

Children's Services has shown some genuine improvements and although we are by no means there yet, we are hopeful that 'inadequate' ratings will be a thing of the past when we re-inspected by OFSTED next year.

Just last month Cabinet agreed plans to modernise the Surrey Fire & Rescue service to make it fit for the future, including investing more money and recruiting more firefighters, upscaling prevention work and delivering a more mobile and dynamic response.

Her Majesty's inspectorate, who identified much of the service as inadequate nearly a year ago, have been impressed with our plans and I'm confident the next inspection will be altogether more positive.

## **GREENER FUTURE**

We are now starting to put detail around our vision for a Greener Future.

Committing to leading by example in reducing our carbon emissions, protecting and enhancing our countryside, improving air quality and working in partnership to face the climate emergency head on will be a positive contribution from this County to what is a global issue.

Let's address and implement things that we can do locally but let's all take on the challenge together; the future of the planet is everybody's collective responsibility and we must all do more.

Part of this Greener Future work is of course recycling and I was pleased to confirm at Cabinet last month that all of our CRCs will remain open and accessible for residents.

Although we are the third best performing council of our kind in the whole country that is still not good enough. We must do even more.

Small changes can make the biggest difference.

As an organisation we must make it as easy as possible for residents to recycle more of their waste, and residents must step up and take every opportunity to make a difference.

## **BUDGET**

Mr Chairman, over the coming weeks we will be finalising detailed proposals around our budget for 2020-21 and I will be presenting a budget statement at the November council meeting.

We have had to take some difficult decisions over the past couple of years to address the budget deficit but with a clear focus on efficiency, innovative thinking and dedication of our staff, I believe we can now consider ourselves a stable and sustainable council, ready for the future.

This will enable us to make better choices; to invest in our residents as well as the next generation.

Even with constrained funding we have still been able to carry out more than 50,000 road repairs a year, create hundreds of apprenticeships, reduce the amount of council tax paid by care leavers, secure hundreds of millions of pounds in funding from government and other stakeholders for infrastructure and housing across the county, as well as continuing to deliver the services that residents depend on day in, day out.

Looking forward, as our services modernise and reach more and more people in different ways, we are determined to invest in the county's future. That is why:

- We will be committing hundreds of millions of pounds to protecting homes from flooding as we start the Surrey Flood alleviation scheme next year
- We will be investing even more in our 3000 thousand miles of roads and pavements to ensure people can get around smoothly and safely
- We will be announcing a series of initiatives to tackle the climate emergency and to protect our environment for future generations as the work of the Environment Commission we established starts to mature.

Alongside all of this, we must remember that the majority of council tax goes on protecting and supporting the most vulnerable residents of Surrey, through Adult Social Care, Looked After Children and those with Special educational needs and disabilities.

Surrey County Council spends over £1 million every single day looking after our adult residents that need our support and half a million each day on our children.

The government's proposed 2% precept on council tax for Adult Social Care will go some way to helping meet those ever increasing costs, however it is a tiny fraction of the costs involved.

We should never forget that it is our legal and more particularly our moral duty, to care for the most vulnerable in society and I will not let down those residents who need us most.

As a transparent and responsible authority we must share with our residents what we are doing on their behalf and with their money.

So going forward we will set out a series of commitments - a guarantee to do things that are relevant to residents and by which they can judge our performance.

We will build up these commitments over time - and indeed I would welcome any **realistic** suggestions from any member - but these will include:-

- planting at least one tree for every one of our 1.2 million residents and I was very pleased to plant the first Oak with the Chairman last Saturday
- boosting our local economy by setting up a £50m community grant fund to improve our High Streets

- providing surplus space in Surrey County Council buildings for free use by voluntary and charitable organisations
- considering conversion of any surplus council owned land to public allotments to produce food for foodbanks
- and, as mentioned earlier, delivering the budget savings we need to enable this council to remain on a sound financial footing so that we can meet the challenges of the future

The full list will be set out in the Cabinet paper later this month.

Finally Mr Chairman, I completely recognise that there is still much to do to improve the way in which we support our residents.

However, we are creating a solid foundation on which to build a prosperous and exciting future.

Stabilising our finances.

Driving out inefficiencies.

Creating a more agile workforce.

Improving our partnership with key organisations across the County.

Being more transparent with our residents.

Supporting communities to overcome challenges and grasp opportunities.

I believe, and I am sure all members will agree, we are making swift and effective progress, that enables us to deliver great quality services, to support those who need our help the most, whilst delivering value for money for Surrey residents now and well into the future.

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