

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021

**QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED UNDER THE PROVISIONS
OF STANDING ORDER 10.1**

TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. MRS HAZEL WATSON (DORKING HILLS) TO ASK:

At the County Councils Network Council Meeting on 27 January 2021, the agenda papers stated: "It has subsequently [after October 2020 when the Secretary of State asks for proposals from North Yorkshire, Cumbria, and Somerset] emerged that government have also written, what have been commonly referred to as, "Letters of Encouragement" to five other areas who had written to the Secretary of State asking for a formal invitation for unitary proposals. These letters asked the County Councils to continue to engage MHCLG on their proposals to help "deliver their ambitions", and that Government would consider their proposals if Councils wished to pursue reform following May's local elections."

I was informed informally that one of the five councils that received a "Letter of Encouragement" was Surrey County Council and therefore request confirmation whether or not this is true and if it is, why all members of this Council were not informed at the time it was received and request that it is sent to all members of this Council?

RESPONSE:

As I have said previously and consistently, what is most important to me, beyond any structural change or governance, is our residents, their priorities and giving them more influence over their own communities.

Further to the Minister's announcement in his speech to the LGA Annual Conference on 3 July 2020, that there was to be a Devolution and Recovery White Paper in the Autumn, I wrote to the Government to set out our ambition for Surrey and our wish to engage with Government on the reforms needed to ensure its achievement. I want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community, and no one is left behind.

Following the Secretary of State's formal invitations to councils in Cumbria, Somerset and North Yorkshire to submit proposals for unitary local government, I made it clear in a statement to all Members on 12 October, that Surrey had not received a formal invitation and had been advised the pandemic had necessitated resources across Whitehall and in local government being re-allocated to tackle Covid-19 and economic recovery.

In that statement, I further advised Members that the Minister had confirmed that the 'door is still open' and that we would continue in our dialogue with the Government in the firm belief that such reforms would enable us to better serve local people and businesses, to address the challenges of today including on housing, climate change, and those arising from the pandemic.

As a consequence of not being invited to submit a business case for change and the urgent priority of tackling the pandemic in Surrey, all work on submitting a business case was stopped. However, I am aware that the Leaders of the District and Boroughs in Surrey commissioned a report from KPMG which recognised that the current system of local government was not sustainable. It not only identified a number of areas where those authorities could deliver savings by greater collaboration but also proposed the creation of unitary councils in Surrey. Surrey County Council will continue to drive out efficiencies in service delivery and remains very willing to engage with any proposal from the District and Borough Councils that will deliver better and improved services to our residents and will ultimately reduce their council tax.

I can confirm that we have not received any so-called 'letter of encouragement' in the terms suggested in the question.

DENISE TURNER-STEWART, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY PROTECTION

2. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:

In July 2018, a year after the Grenfell Tower tragedy, members of Surrey County Council were assured that there were 'no tower blocks or other buildings in Surrey' which were built with the same dangerous cladding.

By December 2019 in response to my question, the cabinet member disclosed that 'a fourth building has been identified with HPL (high pressure laminate)', and that there were 'plans for the building to be made safe through appropriate remedial work.'

In figures used in the house of commons debate on 1 February 2021, it was disclosed that 22 buildings in Surrey have now been identified with unsafe cladding.

Why has Council been provided with inaccurate information? Does the Cabinet Member accept responsibility for providing this flawed and dangerous data?

RESPONSE:

There are no tower blocks or other buildings in Surrey which are built with the specific type of cladding used in Grenfell and this remains the case.

There has been a constant review by the fire service sector and building industry of what cladding is dangerous since the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017. By December 2019 the definition of dangerous cladding was extended. Four buildings in total had been identified in Surrey, clad either with a different type of Aluminium Composite Material to Grenfell or with High Pressure Laminate cladding. One of these buildings required no action and of the remaining three, remedial action has since been either taken by the owner or is planned (the owner of the building is responsible for its fire safety).

In Spring 2020 the use of Expanded Polystyrene Systems 'EPS', was also identified nationally as a potential risk. Surrey Fire and Rescue Service immediately commenced an inspection programme called the 'Building Risk Review'. In line with the expectations of the National Fire Chiefs Council, this review is due to be completed by October/November 2021. The Service has identified 22 premises in Surrey with EPS. These have all now been visited as part of the inspection programme and of these four are due to be remediated this year.

The Council has been provided with accurate information by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service. The recent Covid-19 inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services also stated that the Service has successfully continued to engage with those responsible for fire safety in high-risk premises with cladding similar to Grenfell during the pandemic.

Surrey Fire and Rescue will continue to identify premises that may present a risk as new information emerges and will work with their owners in order to keep residents safe. The continued research and understanding will inevitably mean that new risks emerge and some of these may be of relevance to premises in Surrey. This will increase the figure of 'at risk' buildings in Surrey that the Service works with and be reflected in a refreshed Community Risk Profile, so that the Service can respond appropriately. This increase in risk is mitigated by the control measures put in place through the inspection programme, and enforcing legislation where residents are at greater risk. Enforcing action will see improved levels of fire safety control measures being put in place, as well as fire crews being aware of and understanding the risks they are presented with. Control measures stays in place until such time as any remedial works are carried out and the Service is satisfied that the risk has been addressed.

MATT FURNISS, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS

3. MR NICK DARBY (THE DITTONS) TO ASK:

Residents in the Dittons are concerned to note press reports of possible charging for vehicles entering Greater London, bearing in mind their proximity to both Surbiton and Kingston. In the light of the inevitable economic impact if such a proposal became reality, the likely effect on local air quality, and on parking on the London Borough of Kingston borders, will the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm that he is prepared to act quickly and robustly in the event of this proposal being brought forward?

RESPONSE:

I too have seen those very same reports in the media around the idea of charging vehicles entering Greater London. This is linked to the financial support package provided to the Capital by Government during the current pandemic.

Aside from the impacts on many London boroughs, businesses and residents currently outside of the existing congestion charge zone, such a proposition would impact many district and county councils, along with a good number of parliamentary constituencies around the capital. Of course if any such proposal were to come forward it would be subject to wide ranging debate and formal consultation, even at the gestation stage.

I have written to the Mayor on this issue. I have asked the Mayor to explain what he is actually considering, to share any technical information produced thus far and to explain how he plans to actively engage with councils such as Surrey on this issue, if indeed this is something he is planning to pursue. I have stressed to the Mayor that London cannot be treated as an island and that taxation without representation is not a supportable proposition.

I am of course happy to share the response once received.

BECKY RUSH, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES & CORPORATE SUPPORT

4. MR WYATT RAMSDALE (FARNHAM SOUTH) TO ASK:

Successful transformation of Surrey County Council and effective management over the last three years has secured around £250m of year-on-year efficiencies. This has put the organisation in a strong financial position, giving more security and certainty to Surrey's residents. Could the Cabinet Member confirm how this huge achievement, along with a further £75m of savings over the next few years, will continue to benefit residents, improve services and ensure that no one is left behind in Surrey?

RESPONSE:

Transformation of the Council over the last three years has put us in a strong financial position, enabling us to provide financial security and certainty in guiding Surrey through the COVID pandemic since last March.

A few years ago, a major unforeseen issue such as COVID may well have pushed Surrey to the brink, but thanks to the transformation undertaken in this organisation to date, we can continue to provide services and a better and brighter future for our residents.

Linked to our commitment that no-one is left behind, transformation of our services to children and in adult social care are already having a profound impact on people's lives with our focus on preventative services and strength-based practice. We will continue to drive these multi-year programmes to deliver even more impact while aiding us to cope within our ever-restricted financial envelope and ongoing demand increase.

The transformation change portfolio in 2021/22 is constructed of 31 programmes that address a range of financial and service improvement areas. Many of these programmes are interdependent and collectively they will continue to improve efficiency, drive enhanced service delivery and improve access to services by rationalising multiple entry points into the organisation.

With a greater emphasis on the four priority areas set out in the refreshed Organisational Strategy 21-26, transformation has specific programmes that are focused on Reducing Health Inequalities, Empowering Communities, Economic Growth and Climate Change, all of these will contribute to the overarching theme that no-one is left behind.

In addition, as set out in the 2030 vision and Organisation Strategy we want to create great and sustainable places for all our residents to grow up in, work in, enjoy, and age well in. To do this we plan to develop stronger place-based approaches to planning and delivery with partners that:

- deepen our engagement and understanding of the many different opportunities, challenges and ambitions in each of the county's unique villages, towns and areas – hearing from and involving all parts of our communities.
- create a more joined-up approach to services, land and buildings, and other assets in local communities.

This will help to maximise the impact of combined resources and investments into local areas and increase opportunities for people and communities to shape their own lives and the future of the county.

SINEAD MOONEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND DOMESTIC ABUSE / TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

5. MRS CLARE CURRAN (BOOKHAM AND FETCHAM WEST) TO ASK:

Increasing our day-to-day spending to £1bn, reflects the Council's determination to help our most vulnerable residents, boost their quality of life and reduce inequality. Can the Cabinet Member and Leader therefore please confirm how this added investment for Surrey residents will continue to help guide them through this challenging time and aid long-term recovery?

RESPONSE:

Increasing our budget to over £1bn is good news for residents. Our work over the past 3 years to stabilise and strengthen our finances and the radical service improvements we have achieved through our transformation programme have enabled us to do this. In these difficult times, it has never been more important to focus the money we spend on supporting the most vulnerable people across the county to ensure no-one is left behind.

Demands on our services for vulnerable adults and children were increasing before the pandemic and we will continue prioritising spending on those services. We also know the pandemic will have had a more disproportionate impact on their health, wellbeing and livelihoods for some residents, including young people and residents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. Some of them may have to use our services for the first time.

In Adult Social Care (ASC) we are have an ambitious programme to deliver a significant number of affordable extra care and supported living units across the County and this programme is well underway. This is a modern and ambitious plan that that will transform services for some of our most vulnerable residents. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable, helping them to lead an independent lives as possible whilst ensuring they have the specialist support they need.

This budget is designed to support our county's recovery from Covid-19. This includes:

- £300,000 to develop a plan for economic growth to attract new businesses, develop a skills offer that residents and employers need and support strategic infrastructure development;
- £500,000 has been awarded to the Community Foundation for Surrey to further support residents and communities to recover from Covid-19, as well as start-up costs for community projects through Your Fund Surrey;
- £2.4m more for Public Health to enhance services that support residents' health and wellbeing, such as mental health and suicide prevention, health visiting and substance and alcohol misuse services;
- Over £3m additional investment in Children and Young People's emotional wellbeing and mental health services and £3.4m net increase for Children's Social Care.
- A £5m net increase in Adult Social Care; to promote people's independence and wellbeing, through personalised care and support that focuses upon their strengths, the outcomes they want to achieve and enables choice and control.

BECKY RUSH, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES & CORPORATE SUPPORT

6. MS BARBARA THOMSON (EARLSWOOD AND REIGATE SOUTH) TO ASK:

I recognise Surrey County Council's commitment to protecting its residents throughout this difficult and challenging time, through minimising the Council Tax increase, which is half of the amount permitted by government and considerably less than that planned by other authorities. Could the Cabinet Member explain how the Council will use this money effectively, so that we can continue to protect our most vulnerable residents, while ensuring our services remain robust?

RESPONSE:

The last three years have seen transformational improvements to Surrey County Council's financial stability and the extent to which it uses its money effectively to deliver services. Our track record in setting and delivering balanced budgets without the use of reserves is demonstrated by the outturn position for 2019/20; a small surplus of £0.2m with £2.8m added to the General Fund Reserve. The forecast projections for 2020/21 are also on an improving trend despite the impact of Covid-19 and we expect to conclude the year with a balanced position.

Our External Auditors, Grant Thornton conduct an annual audit of our arrangements for delivering value for money. In the most recent review, the auditors recognised the extent to which we have improved since 2018; concluding that the "success of the Finance Improvement Plan appears to have greatly improved the Council's ability to achieve Economy, Efficiency, and Effectiveness in use of its resources." Grant Thornton also acknowledge a culture of self-improvement, self-review and transparency and concluded that "the Council has made significant progress in ensuring that its financial position is resilient and that adequate arrangements are in place."

The budget for 2021/22 has been developed through an integrated approach across the organisation, based on a realistic set of assumptions about the environment in which we deliver services. The proposals set out in this budget report are based on significant engagement with residents, partners and businesses over the last two years with the insight from this engagement informing a robust evidence base underpinning the Organisation Strategy and Medium-Term Financial strategy.

This robust, integrated and collaborative approach ensures that revenue budgets, capital investment and transformation plans are at the heart of delivering improved services to residents and the corporate priorities of the organisation.

The Council employs a rigorous approach to ensuring that the money we raise through Council Tax, Business Rates and from Government grants is used efficiently and effectively throughout the year; this takes the form of continual monitoring of the budget and the Directorate performance reporting through Cabinet and rigorously scrutinised by Select Committees for each Directorate.

JULIE ILES OBE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL-AGE LEARNING

7. MR KEN GULATI (BANSTEAD, WOODMANSTERNE & CHIPSTEAD) TO ASK:

I am delighted that Surrey County Council is investing over £100m in schools and £80m in Special Educational Needs provision to secure the best possible start for Surrey's children. Could the Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning clarify how the additional £11.5m to provide 400 more Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) will benefit our children and help tackle educational inequality?

RESPONSE:

I would like to thank the County Councillor for Banstead, Woodmansterne and Chipstead for his question today as it draws attention to the vital investment the Council has made into improving the educational outcomes and life chances for our children and young people with SEND in Surrey.

Our analysis indicates that there are too many children with SEND being educated out of county and in independent settings. The capacity in our mainstream specialist schools and units has simply not expanded sufficiently to meet the growing demand of Surrey children to be educated locally. For this reason, in three stages, Cabinet has now agreed capital investment of £79m to create up to 1600 additional specialist school places in Surrey over the next four years. This includes Cabinet agreement in January 2021 of £11.5m to provide 400 additional specialist places.

Our aims for this significant investment in local, mainstream specialist provision are closely aligned with Surrey's Community Vision 2030, which seeks to realise the Council's ambition that everyone benefits from education, skills and employment opportunities that help them to succeed in life. We know there are better long-term outcomes for children and young people educated closer to home, with the right support so that children and young people who have SEND can live, learn and grow up locally to achieve their potential. Our children with SEND tell us this and their parents too.

Providing high quality educational provision for young people with SEND closer to home also provides better opportunities to promote their independence through, for instance, developing independent travel training and local apprenticeships, which are critical foundations for preparing our young people for adulthood. The additional benefits of local provision are reduced home to school travel times, meaning shorter journeys for children to school and less traffic congestion on our roads.

We have very high ambitions for our children with SEND in Surrey. In addition to investment into expanding the physical infrastructure of specialist schools and units, we are also investing significantly in social infrastructure to meet their needs. This includes the Council's Early Help Offer, the Graduated Response and the Learners' Single Point of Access which provide direct support for schools to meet the needs of all children with additional educational needs earlier and more effectively. We have significantly expanded our programmes to support young people with SEND onto vocational pathways through apprenticeships and supported internships to move them into independent and fulfilling adulthood.

TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

8. MRS FIONA WHITE (GUILDFORD WEST) TO ASK:

Please would you supply the following information:

- a. The number of FTE equivalent personnel employed by Surrey County Council for each of the last five years up to and including April 2020;
- b. The number of officers employed by the council at director level (including executive, strategic, assistant and director) each year for the same five year period;
- c. The number of officers appointed by the council at director level (including executive, strategic, assistant and director) in the current financial year?

RESPONSE:

The table below provides responses to the three questions above.

Question		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020/21
a. The number of FTE equivalent personnel employed by Surrey County Council for each of the last five years up to and including April 2020; b. The number of officers employed by the council at director level (including executive, strategic, assistant and director) each year for the same five year period; c. The number of officers appointed by the council at director level (including executive, strategic, assistant and director) in the current financial year?		7312	7231	7018	6633	6783	N/A
	SCC Directors	34	33	28	23	22	N/A
	Orbis Directors	-	7	6	6	6	N/A
	SCC Directors						10
	Orbis Directors						0

Notes:

- Figures provided in a) and b) are a snapshot of data as at 31 March each year.
- Director level relates to Chief/Deputy Chief Officer roles, i.e. Chief Executive to Tier 3 leadership roles.
- Orbis roles are displayed separately as the costs in relation to these are apportioned between Surrey County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council.
- The majority of officers appointed during the current financial year have been recruited on a permanent basis to replace high cost interim cover, which has now reduced to zero at this level.

BECKY RUSH, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES & CORPORATE SUPPORT

9. MR JONATHAN ESSEX (REDHILL EAST) TO ASK:

In the past years Surrey County Council has increased its council tax (including Adult Social Care precept) by the maximum allowed by government, increasing it by 14% or £94 million more than inflation (see table below) as the funding provided by central government has been cut.

Please confirm whether the council will continue to levy the maximum allowed council tax (and ASC precept) increase alongside service reductions over the next five years in order to address the predicted £174m budget shortfall needed by 2026 as stated in this year's budget papers?

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total council tax increase (including adult social care levy)	3.99	4.99	5.99	2.99	3.99
Maximum allowed increase by government	4	5	6	3	4
Inflation (CPI) - for January each year	0.3	1.8	3	1.8	1.8
Cumulative increase above inflation	3.7%	7.0%	10.2%	11.5%	14.0%

RESPONSE:

As context, Government typically assume that councils will increase Council Tax by the maximum allowable. This assumption influences their distribution of other funding available through the grants system, thereby reducing the amount of grant available for councils who are deemed able to generate increased funding through Council Tax.

Pressure on services, particularly in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, continues to grow year-on-year. Transformation of these services will play a critical part in securing long-term sustainability, but with further expected reductions in funding from Government combined with the significant cumulative effect of inflationary pressures, some increase in Council Tax is inevitable.

The Council takes decisions on the level of Council Tax increases in context of the wider budget position and other funding publicised in the Local Government Finance Settlement. In recent years, the settlement has been for one-year only; despite repeated commitments from Government to a multi-year settlement.

This means that there is a significant level of uncertainty in funding for 2022/23 and beyond. Although next year's budget process has already begun, a clear picture will not emerge until publication of the provisional settlement, likely to be in December. Until that clarity emerges it is inadvisable to prejudge the level of Council Tax required.

Setting a 0.5% increase in the Adult Social Care precept for 2021/22 is necessary to meet the growth in Adult Social Care costs whilst minimising increases for residents. Importantly, the flexibility to increase by the remaining 2.5% is carried forward and can be applied in 2022/23 if necessary, though again at that point, as was the case this year, a decision on the Council Tax precept level and use of the flexible carried forward Adult Social Care precept, will be carefully determined taking Surrey County Council's financial position, future identified pressures, and burden on residents into account.

TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**10. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK:
(2nd Question)**

In May 2014 Council passed an original motion in my name, in which we agreed amongst other measures and wherever possible:

'To promote awareness of fair trade issues and the opportunities for supporting fair trade across the County.

To work with Surrey Fairtrade and those towns who already have Fairtrade Status to widely publicise the worldwide impact of unfair trade and the opportunities that fair trade provides to sustainable development.

To concentrate on making Council employees, the Surrey public and local businesses aware of the Council's resolution on fair trade.'

In the debate and in subsequent follow up, on 5 December 2017, the Cabinet Member(s) responsible agreed to report back regularly on progress towards this goal. To the best of my knowledge this has not happened.

Will the leadership now take the opportunity to update Council on our fair trade policy and progress in this field?

RESPONSE:

Annual Statement on Fair trade: January 2021

Background:

On 5 December 2017 the Cabinet Member for Property and Business Services agreed to provide an update to the Council on an annual basis regarding the authority's progress to becoming a Fairtrade Council.

Surrey achieved Fairtrade County status in September 2015 following:

- Campaigning by local residents in a number of Fairtrade towns across the County (Addlestone, Cranleigh, Godalming, Guildford, Haslemere, Leatherhead, Lingfield & Dormansland, Tatsfield, Woking);
- Efforts of a Surrey Fairtrade Steering Group; and
- A resolution in support of Fairtrade which was passed by Surrey County Council.

Surrey Fairtrade Steering Group, which was made up of volunteers has since disbanded due to a lack of support and resources. Surrey no longer has official recognition as being a Fairtrade county. In some of the above-mentioned towns individuals are working in local communities in order to maintain their Fairtrade town status.

In 2016 a proposal outlining the activities and costs involved in maintaining the Fairtrade County status was provided. The decision made was to promote Fair trade as part of business as usual without the required investment for Surrey County Council to maintain its Fairtrade county status.

Fair Trade & Surrey County Council Procurement

The Council's commitment to ethical sourcing forms part of the Social Value Procurement Strategy developed in response to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. For tenders over £189k in value, Procurement, in agreement with budget holders, incorporate fair trade criteria into the procurement process whilst ensuring compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

To encourage and drive this culture of fair trade with suppliers and through the supply chain, the Councils Procurement Department have:

- Developed and published an Ethical Procurement Statement and Supplier Code of Conduct which can be viewed on the Councils website. In addition, guidance on Modern Slavery is also provided to suppliers to raise awareness and promote equality in relation to labour standards.
- Re-designed tender documents so they expressly state the Councils commitment to sustainability and social value and where relevant appropriate weighting is given to sustainable products in the tender process.
- Awarded contracts based on the most economically advantageous tender which includes due consideration of both price and quality (includes social value).

Where it represents value for money to Surrey taxpayers the Council continues to procure Fairtrade bananas and sugar as part of the ongoing commitment to supporting the motion to facilitate Fairtrade wherever possible. Furthermore, Starbucks are the coffee bean and the tea provider at Woodhatch Park and they are a Fairtrade partner with all their coffee and tea being Fairtrade certified.

Selecta, who provide the Express Vending HUB at Woodhatch, state that through Express Vending they are committed to ethical sourcing and giving back to the plantation communities through partnership with the Point Foundation charity.

Additionally, as part of an ongoing procurement activity within Twelve15, a supplier brief was developed for the catering supplier engagement days which incorporated the five key themes below:

The five themes are:

1. Flexibility of Supply Chain
2. Carbon Footprint
3. Innovation in the Market
4. Sourcing
5. Engagement

These themes have been included in the current tender documents through the use of specific questions designed to find out the extent of supplier adoption in each area and how that could be brought to the contract. This is a complete departure to the last tender and shows the changes to Twelve15's way of working for the future. The tender closes imminently so

unfortunately, we will not have any specific outcomes to report on just yet, but it demonstrates we are building in more requirements to support local, agile and greener local economy.

BECKY RUSH, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES & CORPORATE SUPPORT

11. MR WYATT RAMSDALE (FARNHAM SOUTH) TO ASK: (2nd Question)

Dedicating almost £2bn over the next five years to tackle climate change, provide jobs, boost active travel, and improve infrastructure is very welcome news. Does the Cabinet Member agree that it is only a Conservative-run Council that will best use this investment to grow a sustainable local economy so that everyone can benefit?

RESPONSE:

In February 2020 we announced a total capital spend in our Medium-Term Financial Strategy of almost £1.5bn which has increased to almost £2bn set out in this budget report. This ambitious capital programme is about looking to the future; investing now to protect and improve Surrey's future, making a real and lasting difference to people's lives and life chances.

This 5-year investment plan has become even more important in ensuring our county and communities can thrive over the coming years of recovery from the impact of Covid-19. The investment is set out in section 6 of the budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy and includes:

- The £100m Your Fund Surrey which has launched and will strengthen communities and give residents more power and influence.
- £33m investment planned into Surrey Fire & Rescue Service infrastructure
- £116m earmarked for infrastructure aimed at boosting economic growth across the county
- £286m outlined for large scale infrastructure projects like in Farnham town centre and the A320 scheme
- A further £264m for highways incorporating £13m for Local Committees to accelerate their programmes
- An ambitious commitment to deliver a greener and more sustainable future for Surrey residents, including:
 - o £253m investment and leadership on flood alleviation which will protect tens of thousands of homes and businesses from further disaster and give future security and peace of mind.
 - o £105m set aside for projects including renewable energy, active travel and the move towards zero carbon; including £48m investment in low emission buses to help tackle climate change and improve sustainable transport
 - o Our £268m investment in schools and £74m in provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, which will ensure our children can overcome this year's disruption and get the best possible start in life.
 - o £264m investment in highways to boost active travel and make getting around the county smoother; and
 - o £170m investment in accommodation for Looked After Children, Extra Care and independent living, to ensure our those most in need can be given better life chances and live safely and independently.

In order to deliver a capital programme of this magnitude a stable and resilient financial position is required. Thanks to strong leadership from the Conservative administration and Finance team the financial position of Surrey County Council has strengthened considerably since 2018 with finance embedded in the heart of decision making across all directorates, driving out £250m efficiency savings and building a resilient reserves position.

Transformation of the Council over the last three years has put us in a strong financial position to effectively coordinate the Surrey-wide response to COVID, to provide £10m grants to care providers and deliver over 12 million items of PPE. Unlike many District and Boroughs under Independent, Resident or Liberal Democrat Coalition control, Surrey County Council's stable financial position has enabled us to weather the COVID storm

Our strong financial position, combined with the COVID grants from Central government, enabled us to support our residents, mobilising quickly, and leaves us in a good position to drive forward the economic growth agenda as we recover.

The improvement in the Council's financial position gives us all the confidence in our ability to deliver these Capital commitments with improved project management capacity to drive forward the investment. Our Capital and Revenue budget is robust, realistic and designed to deliver on our commitments to our residents and grow a sustainable local economy which will benefit us all.

JULIE ILES OBE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL-AGE LEARNING

12. MR ROBERT EVANS (STANWELL AND STANWELL MOOR) TO ASK: (3rd Question)

In view of increasing rate of unemployment in Surrey and the prospect of the County's school leavers facing a depressed job market, what planning is being carried out to offer practical assistance for training and education within the County's Adult Education Service?

This is especially important for boroughs like Spelthorne and Surrey Heath without a Further Education (FE) college.

RESPONSE:

I would like to thank the Councillor for Stanwell and Stanwell Moor for his question today as it draws attention to the vital contribution our Adult Learning Service is making to delivering the ambitions of Surrey's economic strategy to support the revival of Surrey's economy. Cabinet agreed 'Surrey's Future Economy: Our 2030 Strategy Statement' on 15 December 2021 with the intention to develop Surrey's potential for greater social wellbeing and economic prosperity for all.

We know that good quality and sustained employment has a direct correlation with quality of life. Our Adult Learning Service is enabling Surrey residents who experience greater social and economic exclusion to be at the forefront of our drive to delivering a balanced and inclusive economy.

A key aim of 'Surrey's Future Economy' is enhancing our Surrey Skills System, using existing asset and resources, such as schools, colleges, adult learning and universities, to prepare the future Surrey workforce with the skills required to meet the demand of future jobs. The SAL (Surrey Adult Learning) offer is central to this agenda and the service is actively engaged in the planning and delivery of training and education to meet these requirements.

The SAL online Skills for Work programme (which currently covers all areas including Spelthorne and Surrey Heath) includes English and maths and the new Essential Digital Skills qualifications, as well as employability courses (Get that Job). Face to face courses will return to SAL's adult learning centres, including Spelthorne and Surrey Heath, post pandemic. SAL is continuing to work towards offering further learning qualifications to support all adult residents eligible to be funded by the Adult Education Budget grant received from the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency). This will be further informed through the work aligned with 'Surrey's Future Economy'. Finally, SAL continues to support the Council with its Apprenticeship programme to provide young adults with a stepping stone towards sustainable employment.