

## Leader's Statement – Annual County Council, 25 May 2021

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Thank you Chair.

On behalf of all Members may I congratulate you on your appointment as Chair. As we have just heard you have been a committed Member of this Council for many years and it is entirely befitting that your dedication to improving the lives and opportunities for the residents of Surrey is recognised with this appointment. I very much look forward to working with you during your period of office.

As the febrile atmosphere of the elections dies down, can I welcome all Members of the Council whether newly elected or returning. It is great to be meeting in person albeit rather constrained with the continuing social distancing measures. Can I thank our Chief Executive and her team for the way in which they organised and successfully ran the elections across the county. It was a major logistical challenge but one that passed without hitch entirely due to the detailed planning and execution. So thank you Joanna.

Today is not the day for long speeches, but I thank the Council for electing me to serve a further term as Leader. It is a great privilege for all of us to be elected to serve our communities and even more so to lead this Council. It is a role that I take very seriously and one in which I hope I can continue to help build on the real progress we have made in transforming this Council.

Chair I wonder if I might be permitted to repeat my closing comments at the last Council meeting. I apologise to returning Members who I am sure will have my words at the very forefront of their minds but in the context of the work of this Council, I said that no one can pretend that this is an easy challenge but equally no one can or should pretend that we aren't meeting that challenge. I said it will be for the new Council to set the tone for the next 4 years but for my own part I hoped it stayed true to the principles that have been guiding us; to have a county of equal opportunity, of equal access to healthcare systems, where we address the issues that affect life expectancy but above all that we genuinely mean it when we say that we must ensure no one in this county is left behind.

Chair I am delighted that the residents of Surrey have given us the mandate to continue with that work and I am sure all Members will want to join us on that journey as we push forward with making this great county the place of choice to live, to work, to visit, to run a business, to enjoy our fantastic countryside, and a county for us all to take pride in.

There is still much to do but I am confident that the members of this Council will want to help in whatever they can over the next 4 years to realise those ambitions. That is why we are here and that is what we must do.

Thank you.