

## Annual report 2022/2023



March 2023

**Looking back**, locally in Dorking Rural Division, the end of lockdown, brought many people back out to the countryside, enjoying the lovely walks, bridlepaths and cycleways. I was pleased to continue supporting the replacement of old and worn styles with 'kissing gates' from my members grant funding to improve accessibility for many, although, providing better access for people with disabilities has been more difficult, I am continuing to work to find solutions for this.

The development of new cycle ways, including the Hookwood to Gatwick cycle path has begun to see regular use by both cyclists and pedestrians. I continue to work with Surrey highways on a new proposed bridleway/cycle path in Trigg Street, Newdigate, improvements to road safety on the A 24 South of Dorking, works to the footpath on the A 25 from the villages towards Reigate, disabled access improvements in Capel, speed and road safety improvements with vehicle activated signs across all the villages, Pebble Hill road safety improvements, Ockley village road safety improvements. Residents tell me time and time again they want to see slower traffic and less noise and pollution. I will be using my local highways funds to achieve some of these important projects.

### **Road Repairs and Potholes and Surrey Highways**

- Last summer became one of the hottest on record, followed by one of the longest and coldest winters. The effect on our road network system has been immense and Surrey County Council has reacted to the breakout of potholes, subsidence and cracks in our roads and pavements In the 2023/2024 budget, at least £188m has been committed over the next five years to improve Surrey's roads and pavements.
- Capital investment originally planned for future years has been brought forward to directly tackle road deterioration due to the severe weather conditions this winter.
- Each County Councillor has £100k capital budget per annum to spend on local highway issues. This initiative ensures greater control over highways related matters sits with local elected representatives. The highways budget will continue to be increased/maintained.

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**Your Fund Surrey** – continues to support great projects across the county, so far funding a new village shop in Normandy, Surrey, Camberley's Men's Shed, Oxshott Community Hub and many more. I sit on the approval panel of Your Fund Surrey and am impressed by the huge amount of work and quality that goes into each application.

Recognising that not all projects will need funding from £10,000 to £1,000,000. We decided to introduce a Your Fund Surrey Small Community Projects Fund which is available for projects worth between £1k and £50k to support capital community projects. Each Surrey County Councillor has been given £50k Small Community Project funding to allocate in their local areas and they can decide which projects that £50k is spent on.

Examples of the types of projects it can be used for include:

- New kitchen items for a community hall
- New flooring or pathways for a community asset
- New chairs or tables for a village hall, or green space
- Solar panels
- General refurbishment of an existing building
- PA equipment for a school
- Cricket nets or sports equipment for a local club
- Replacement windows in a village hall or sports club
- Purchase of a new building or shed
- Planting new trees or creating a community orchard

This 50k is in addition to the £5k County Councillor Community Allocation – contact me for further details

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**As my role of Chair** of Surrey County Council ends this May, I am taking the opportunity to look back over the last year both in that role, a local divisional county member and as a serving district councillor at Mole Valley District Council for Okewood Hill Ward.

I have been so impressed by the people I have met over the last two years who serve the county of Surrey as leaders and volunteers in all manner of roles and responsibilities to help to ensure that those most in need and those most vulnerable in our society are given the support and assistance they need. I have visited many organisations and helped to signpost funding where needed.

I will stand down as Chair of the County Council, with a sure regard for those people who give much of their free time to others, without whom our County would be a much poorer place to live and work.

I will also pass on the Chair of the Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board to my successor. During my time as Chair of the SCMPB, we have increased the number of veteran hubs in the county, trained more

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civilian, councillors and their staff to understand the Duty of Due Regard that is our responsibility under the Armed Forces Act 2021, held annual conferences and published annual reports on the work done across the county and the South East collectively. Continued to support the Forces Connect app which now includes many local authorities nationally. We have held and attended remembrance and memorial events, including Royal British Legion, Armed Forces Family Month and Ukraine war anniversary. We have also seen a rise in recruitment of reservists and an increase in young people wishing to become cadets.

### **Death of the monarch – Royal Coronation**

After a wonderful Platinum Jubilee celebrating 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II service as our Monarch, with celebrations across the County of Surrey, we were all still shocked by Her death in September. A momentous occasion as so many of us have never know another monarch. This year we will witness the coronation of King Charles III, with more parties, celebrations, and thanksgiving. Your County Councillors have funding to apply for if you need assistance in celebrating and there is a small grant available from Mole Valley District Council as well as Gatwick Airport Community Trust (GACT) grant which is open until 31<sup>st</sup> March for applications.



I will look back at my term of office, I am sure, and be amazed that these three things all happened within my term as Chair.

**Surrey County Council, County Hall, Woodhatch** – the move from Kingston to Reigate continues to be warmly received by staff, members, and public alike. During the last year I have hosted many organisations holding meetings at the new site. It has been a delight to show people around our lovely sustainable buildings and grounds. My Chairs office is a wonderful space for welcoming volunteers and the memorial gardens have seen moving ceremonies including flag raising and memorial tree planting over the last year.

### **SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET AND TRANSFORMATION**

No organisation stays the same for long, not least following the changes to our lives out of the pandemic. Surrey County Council has continued to transform the way it delivers services, using online reporting forms, requests for services and reporting faults and problems. These changes will see an improvement to delivery

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of services as well as financial benefits. Surrey County Council's annual budget is over £1,200,000,000 - collected from residents paying council tax or direct grants from Government. The County Council members are responsible to residents to ensure thorough accountability and much time is spent on Scrutiny and service committees to ensure these monies are spent well. Especially those services such as social care for the elderly and vulnerable adults, looked after children, children with special needs, cultural services like libraries, registration, arts and adult learning, environmental services including highways and countryside and addressing climate change in our County. This years budget set an annual precept increase of .99% as well as 2% increase on the Adult Social Care precept. This is the lowest annual increase for several years and reflects the work achieved to bring the county council's spending to a sustainable level.

### **A difficult beginning for Surrey Residents in January 2023**

Surrey County Council will express its solidarity with the people of the Ukraine at the next council meeting in March. The horrors of war, mindless destruction and terrible injury and loss of life become apparent with every news broadcast and social media post.

The war has contributed to increases in costs for food and energy, but I believe that we must remain strong with the people of Ukraine and protect the freedoms and democracies that we so much enjoy in Surrey for future generations.

I continue to represent residents at Gatwick Airport, as Vice Chair of GATCOM, the airports regulatory body and as Vice Chair of the airport's noise management board (NMB). I will continue to make sure your voice is heard.

I enjoy working together with our dedicated parish councillors and district councillors, there are district council elections this year which is becoming a normal annual event, but also this year, there are Parish Council elections, I would like to thank all of the parish councillors who have served their residents so well over the past four years and wish them well, whether they are standing for another term or taking well-earned retirement.

During the now twenty-two years of service to my residents to Dorking Rural and working with the staff and officers of the County Council, I have been fortunate to meet many whose hard work and dedication make this County a wonderful place to live and work. I thank them for the services and look forward to continuing to work for residents in the Dorking Rural division.

Helyn Clack