



February 2024

[County Councillor Helyn Clack, Dorking Rural Division, Surrey County Council](#) [Annual report 2023/2024](#)

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LOOKING BACK

It finally begins to feel that we can move on from the pandemic that caused such a shadow over our lives at the beginning of this decade, always remembering those that lost family and friends or suffered mental and health problems. Over the last year I am back to being out and about with enthusiasm to meet residents, attend parish council meetings and other local events in the villages I represent on Surrey County Council.

2023/2024 has been a very busy year for me here in Dorking Rural, with much to do across the villages, I won't apologise for the length of my report to the parishes and residents though except to say that there is a lot more I could have added!

In May 2023, I stood down as Chair of Surrey County Council after four and half years in office as Vice Chair and Chair. A very rewarding experience, supporting the County's amazing voluntary sector, being Armed Forces Champion and representing the County Council in many different fields.

My civic term included the 70th celebration of our Queen, Elizabeth II, her death and funeral and the coronation of our King, Charles III and Queen Camilla. As Chair of the County Council, visited many charities across the county, and spoke to many volunteers, Surrey is an amazing and compassionate county, people can be very generous with their time and money, and as the County Council Armed Forces Champion, I learnt a lot about the services and the roles they play in making sure we are safe.

County Council continues to settle in to its move back into Surrey both here at Woodhatch in Reigate and in other areas of the county such as Weybridge, Guildford, Woking.

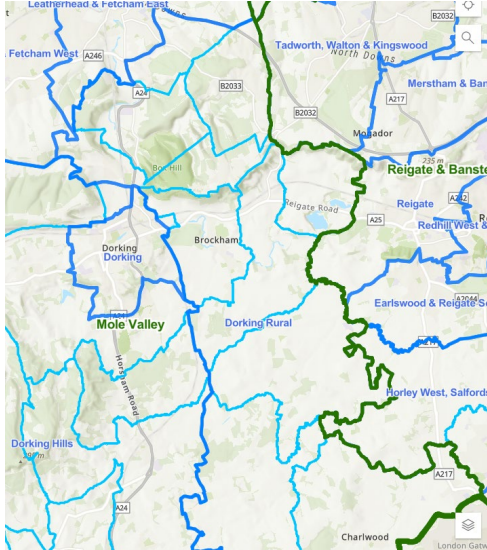
The County Council's Chief Executive Joanna Killian leaves on 6th March to take up the role of Chief Executive at the Local Government Association. This demand for Joanna's expertise exemplifies the high esteem this council has held in within the sector, in my opinion, she has served us well in Surrey in her operation leadership role. Recruitment for a permanent Chief Executive is underway.

COUNTY COUNCIL BOUNDARY CHANGES

There is currently a review of county divisional boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) which should conclude in May. My divisional boundaries of Dorking Rural, are expected to change with some villages currently in the division moving out and others moving in. All these changes have been consulted on. The predicted changes are waiting for confirmation but can be followed here.

<https://lgbce.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=ff513d041a604f2680be277b50b3214>

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BUDGET FOR 2024

SCC budget was ratified at full council by members on 6th February, outlining £1.2bn of revenue spending (an increase of £95m). Costs are rising faster than income, and despite £53.7m of identified efficiencies, we agreed to raise Council Tax by the full 4.99% (including 2% Adult Social Care Precept).

The biggest pressures come from services for children with additional needs and disabilities, including providing Home to School Transport and Education Health & Care Plan assessments. The increasing demand and cost of Adult Social Care services is also adding huge pressure, with future uncertainty of policy and funding arrangements unhelpful.

The County Council continues its widescale transformation within the organisation and with partners to ensure public services can continue to improve in the face of widening budget pressures into the future. Further transformation work will focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce demand on services.

The leadership are in negotiations with DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) about a County Deal for Surrey, seeking further clarifications from government to progress this quickly to bring benefits for Surrey.

LOCAL ISSUES AND SURREY HIGHWAYS

Locally, the council leadership has increased the budget for members highways allocation to £120,000 for the coming year, giving local county councillors more opportunities to deliver on highways issues most important to local people. Working with local people has seen the delivery of schemes such as footpath improvements for access, Gateway signs, traffic calming measures such as 30mph speed limits, bollard requests, vehicle activated signs, some still to be installed! As well as commissioning works for the coming year including projects to resolve wet spots in Buckland and Pebble Hill, pedestrian warning signs in

Ockley, traffic calming, 20mph and Gateways in Hookwood, removal of 25-year-old broken rumble strips in Charlwood, and investing in Project Horizon to advance resurfacing across rural roads in my division. I still have funding available for 2024, so please do let me know of your priority.

Residents experienced localised flooding following Storm Henck in January, which the County's Flood Team is advising landowners on, and improvements to gully maintenance has been an important part of protecting local homes as well as ensuring landowners keep their ditches flowing. This is on top of the county highways budget, road safety and countryside rights of way budgets or any nationally funded project such as the DfT £1.5m A 25 from Dorking to Reigate road safety project which may well see average speed cameras (ASC) installed. I am also asking for ASC to be considered for the A24 south of Holmwood roundabout to Beare Green as well as on parts of the A29 in Ockley. Average speed cameras can be controversial, but the cameras on the A 24 north of Dorking shows they can be effective.

Local road congestion raises concerns with residents. Motorway diversion routes have changed, and overnight repairs see residents sleep disturbed and the M25/A3 junction improvements have most likely added to congestion in our rural roads. Road safety has received investment following an increase in killed or seriously injured incidents and is jointly funded with Surrey Police. Residents both here in Surrey and nationally continue to report road defects and condition. Please do continue to report on line and tell the County Council about [road issues here](#) and sign up for the county councils regular newsletter.



<https://pages.comms.surreycc.info/pages/your-highways-update>

GRANTS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Surrey County Council's Your Fund Surrey continues with applications for grants to help transform our communities. I am a member of the YFS advisory panel and help to advocate on behalf of applicants. Using the local members allocation for small projects (£5,000) and the larger capital Small Your Fund Surrey members allocation (grants from £1000-£50,000) I have been able to support Mole Valley Arts Alive, a new apple press in Leigh, a new sound system for Beare Green village hall, church community improvements in two villages, facilitating an afternoon tea for Brockham residents at Bookham Grange as well celebration funding for the coronation, and voluntary sector funding. In larger projects, helping in delivering new toilets refurbishments at the Reigate Pilgrims Cricket Club, based in Buckland, flooring, tables and chairs in the Hamilton Room in Betchworth, village hall room conversion in Brockham, and with a neighbouring county councillor to see a new classroom built at Amber Foundation in Ockley, new sustainable improvements to village halls, and several projects being looked at for the coming year. I look forward to hearing from more projects who require capital funding in my division.

GATWICK

The National Planning Inspectorate will commence the enquiry into Gatwick Airport's second northern runway application in February 2024, this will take about six months we are advised. Locally residents are concerned about the impact of doubling the number of passengers using the airport – 45 million currently but rising to 90 million per annum in ten years and the consequent traffic and noise this will bring with more flights over local homes and more traffic on our already congested roads. People want to fly and holidays can be vital to health and wellbeing in a stressful world, but there will be a consequence for such growth and I am asking residents to raise their concerns with the Government to ensure mitigation for our village and rural roads is considered, this should not be a council tax burden but part of an agreement with the airport owners and Government to improve public transport and road safety. 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.



DEMOCRACY

Over the last 23 years I have enjoyed working together with our dedicated parish councillors, the parish clerks as well as residents – I hope to continue doing so going forward. We may well see more changes in the coming year about how decision making is made. There is a general election to get through, new boundaries to our constituencies and party-political manifestos to consider on what the next government expects from local government.

The county council continues to be extremely well led by C.Cllr. Tim Oliver, County elections will be held in May 2025. Current political make-up of the County Council is 45 Conservative, 16 Residents' Associations/Independents, 16 Liberal Democrats, 2 Labour and 2 Green. There are 81 county councillors in total.

As always, I am proud to live in this beautiful county division made up of our many rural villages and communities and I look forward to working with the changes the LG BCE will bring. Thank you to all of you that get in touch, report issues and advise on local problems, I do so appreciate the work that everyone does and the role they play as well as listening to your views and of all Dorking Rural residents.

Helyn Clack

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