

ANNUAL WORPLESDON PARISH MEETING 2020
Report for 2019 from
County Councillor Keith Witham

I have continued to communicate with residents regularly during the year, through the Parish Council, the three local Residents Associations, issued regularly quarterly email newsletters and posted on my Facebook page, via the Worplesdon Matters website and its Facebook page.

Good News! In 2019 I was able to successfully sponsor Surrey Council grants for more local groups and projects.

The amounts involved are usually a few hundred pounds, but they really help out our local voluntary groups with their fantastic work. Below is the list for our local villages for 2019. Do please get in touch with me if you are a member of a local group or organisation to see if you can apply for 2020 - the guidelines are up to £250 for a group that HAS been supported before and usually up to £500 for a group that has NOT had an SCC grant before; one off projects or equipment only (not usually routine running costs). Email me at keithwitham1@hotmail.co.uk The new financial year starts in April.

Local 2019 Grants:

JACOBS WELL

- River of Life Group - wireless microphone for sound system
- Jacobs Well Village Hall - Digital keypad lock for Village Hall

FAIRLANDS

- Doctors Practice - Patient Participation Group - Diabetes type 2 awareness raising event (held in Normandy)
- Worplesdon Primary School - support for new planters, Envis Way, gardening project
- Fairlands Community Association - contribution to a Welcome sign at the entrance to Fairlands
- Planting of Rowan trees, Louis Fields, to help deter verge parking

WOOD STREET VILLAGE

- Wood Street Village Association - summer event gazebos

WORPLESDON / PERRY HILL

- 1st Rydes Hill (St Mary's) Scouts - camping equipment for cubs & scouts
- Worplesdon Cricket Club - mower
- St Mary's Church - removal of old oil tank
- Safety posts, Goose Rye Road

NON-GEOGRAPHIC

- replacement of wooden rights of way posts at 16 locations

SCC FINANCIAL POSITION 2019-20

SCC has again balanced its income and expenditure during 2019 without having to use any of its (still low level) of reserves. During the year savings of £85 million were made, mainly in reducing the number of properties and “co-locating” services with Borough Councils. It has been possible to AVOID any reductions to subsidies for rural bus services; community recycling centres; and libraries.

OTHER LOCAL MATTERS

JACOBS WELL

-Having had the major routes of Woking Road and Clay Lane resurfaced, more local roads have been resurfaced - Salt Box Road and Stringers Avenue.

-The huge reduction in collisions in Clay Lane continued following the new anti-skid surface that was installed along Clay Lane, Jacobs Well the previous year.

- Charges for Salt Box Road car parks. These were not implemented, and parking remains free of charge. A voluntary contribution scheme is being considered for those who wish to contribute to the maintenance of the commons.

FAIRLANDS

- Aldershot Road, Fairlands. The proposed Pedestrian Island near Hunts Farm proved not to be possible because of underground cables at the location. It is intended to install surface rumble strips, with acknowledgement and thanks to WPC for its continued support at this location.

- A stretch of approx. 30 yards of new footpath has been stalled on Aldershot Road to link the existing footpath from Wood Street Village direction to Fairlands, so that pedestrians don't have to step into the road to get to the wide verge.

-The speed limit on Aldershot Road from just after the Holly Lane roundabout, to Normandy, has been reduced from 50mph to 40mph.

-Improved signage before the Holly Lane roundabout (Wood Street direction) is due to be installed to help reduce traffic speeds at the location.

-St Michaels Avenue has been resurfaced and I have asked for other local roads to be assessed for resurfacing.

-A new Special Educational Needs Communication facility for SEND pupils at the Worplesdon Primary School is being built, as a cost of over £1million, due to open in September

-Planting of new Rowan Trees to deter verge parking

WOOD STREET VILLAGE

-New footpaths were installed in Broad Street

WORPLESDON

-The Keens Lane housing development received approval and is in progress. This has involved considerable local traffic disruption and SCC has sought to minimise the effect on nearby residents.

WINTER ACTION FOR SURREY'S ROADS

This year there has not been so much need for the County Council's fleet of gritting lorries, but because of severe high winds and rain there have been extensive operations by highways to keep roads in the county open and safe.

Potholes. Winter weather always brings more potholes, no surprise there! Last year Surrey Highways fixed more than 40,000 potholes. So, my usual annual reminder please, that SCC relies on public reporting and if you see a pothole - REPORT IT! Please don't leave it to others, as they will have left it to you! The best way is via the website www.surreycc.gov.uk where there is a "Report It" section. You can bring up a map of the road and mark the potholes exact location on the road. How quickly it will be repaired depends on the size of the pothole and location in the road, i.e. how dangerous it is. Email: contactcentre@surreycc.gov.uk or Telephone: 0300 200 1003

ELECTRIC PARK AND RIDE BUSES

New electric buses for Guildford's Park and Ride - a first for Surrey - and it is believed for the U.K. Nine new fully electric, zero emission buses introduced on the Guildford park and ride service.

SCHOOL PLACES

87% of parents had got their 1st choice of Primary school, up from 86% last year. And 97% of parents got one of their choices for Secondary School. This doesn't happen by chance - as SCC has created 19,000 new school places in 10 years to ensure that there are enough school places available.

SURREY LEADING THE WAY IN RECYCLING

SCC has opened Reuse shops at some CRCs - nearest one to us is at Woking CRC 7 days a week. Called "revive" for furniture, bikes, crockery, tools, garden furniture, CDs, DVDS, records. 10% of profits to charity, voted for by customers.

SCC are also encouraging residents to recycle clothes and textiles, either or be worn again or turned into felt or insulation. For more info see www.recycleforsurrey.org.uk

SCC's commitment to recycling took another step forward with an innovative trial for recycled plastic being used in pavements. Recycled waste plastic from bottles, bags and packaging has been used in the reconstruction of pavements for the first time in Surrey. The trial has seen materials used in asphalt to resurface pavements after roadworks, cutting carbon emissions and potentially costs. The bitumen is replaced by plastic collected from household waste such as bottles, bags and packaging, to make asphalt. It's creators say it can cope better with contraction and expansion caused by changes in the weather, reducing cracks and potholes, while benefiting the environment. The trial was carried out with U.K. Power Networks and if prove successful, this could pave the way for wider use by other utilities.

PLANTING OF 1.2 MILLION NEW TREES

SCC has put in place plans to plant 1.2 million new trees over the next ten years - equivalent to one per resident of Surrey. The programme started in October and will involve Highways for verges and the Borough Council

DOORSTEP TRADERS AND FLYTIPPING

SCC Trading standards are asking residents to say "No" to doorstep traders offering gardening, rubbish cleared, roofing, driveways etc for cash. This is very pertinent re fly tipping. Legitimate companies are registered as waste carriers (registered with GBC) and it's mainly rogue traders responsible for commercial fly tipping. But any resulting fly tipping is still the responsibility of the originating residents and two have recently been fined £300 and £800 respectively.

SURREY FIRE AND RESCUE UPDATE

The background is that over 10 years, the number of fires in Surrey are down 50% but Road Traffic Accidents are up 50%, and that more people die by drowning in Surrey rivers than in fires. So Surrey Fire and Rescue are reconfiguring their services and staffing to respond to those demands, with proposals for much more emphasis on daytime preventative visits to residents and businesses (aim is to increase those from 2,500 a year to 10,000 a year initially, and then to 20,000 pa. But that will need changes to crew rotas. The plans have been examined, and are supported, by HM Inspector of Fire services, the National Fire Chiefs Council and staff seconded from the London Fire Brigade. This is not about money (Fire and Rescue were exempted from any financial savings in 2019) but how money and resources are deployed most effectively?

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) IN WORPLESDON

As also mentioned in the Fairlands section, SCC agreed to invest over £1million for a new "SEND" unit at Worplesdon Primary School, Fairlands through the creation of a new Special Educational Needs & Disabilities specialist centre. The centre, within Worplesdon Primary School, will provide places for 21 pupils with high

communication and interaction needs. This will help children in need of SEND Communication services throughout Worplesdon.

Regarding any effect on local traffic as regarding transport the school will have staggered start and finish times, thus reducing traffic at peak times, and allocating space on the school site for the vehicles attached to the centre (i.e. taxis and staff cars) It is currently being built and is due to open in September 2020.

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF DEATHS IN SURREY IN ROAD

2018 figures showed a welcome reduction in the number of fatalities on Surrey's Roads. While it's positive that the number of people killed on Surrey's roads dropped from 36 in 2017 to 27 in 2018 there is always more to do. I know from the regular feedback I get from residents that local Road safety, speeding, and anti-social driving remain prime concerns of residents. SCC follows a road safety policy referring to the "three E's" - Engineering, Education and Enforcement.

*** ENGINEERING**

- Surrey County Council invests money at collision hotspots and addresses safety issues in road traffic safety schemes

*** EDUCATION**

– Road safety education services are offered to all Surrey's Schools. For example, the "Bikeability" cycle training to nearly 19,000 young people across Surrey in the last school year; (and are looking to do the same for pedestrian training). And the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service provide the "Safe Drive Stay Alive" performance to 12,000 young college and sixth form students - as new young drivers are a high-risk group. See: <https://safedrivesurrey.org/>

*** ENFORCEMENT**

– SCC has developed a speed management plan for each borough in conjunction with Surrey Police. These identify the worst locations for speeding and casualties, so the police can target enforcement. The Council has also invested in average speed cameras at major locations.

ROADWORKS

I am regularly asked about roadworks by residents, and will point out that only a minority of Highways works are run by Surrey County Council Highways; most are carried out by the utilities, Gas, Electricity, Water, Telecommunications, who have the legal right to access their facilities.

Some years ago SCC adopted a permit system where access is needed for routine maintenance, the utility will apply in advance to SCC for a time limited permit for work on a specific stretch of road. But if it's an emergency situation the utility has the right to just get on with what they need to do. A very useful reference for all such works is: www.roadworks.org

PARKING FOR DISABLED RESIDENTS

A new Blue Badge legislation came into force in August 2019. This extended the eligibility criteria for the scheme to include 'non-visible' (hidden) disabilities, before it was only physical disabilities.

POLICING IN SURREY

A small part of this year's Council Tax increase was to fund 100 extra police officers and police operational staff. That comprised reversing the cut of 25 police officers, planned by the Police and Crime Commissioner, and then recruiting to an increased establishment of 75. In fact, 4 more than that could be afforded with the extra funds, bringing the number up to 79 - plus the 25 saved - means that we now have 104 more police than if no action had been taken - recruited, trained and deployed by the end of March 2020.

And that was BEFORE the Government plan to recruit an extra 20,000 police officers nationally. So, it's good to report what that means for Surrey will be an extra 78 Police Officers - new and in addition to those currently in post and the 104 extra.

SCHOOLS FUNDING

Surrey County Council welcomed extra Government funding for schools in Surrey which will rise by 4.62% per pupil from April 2020 (new financial year) ensuring that per-pupil funding for all schools can rise at least in line with inflation. every secondary school will receive a minimum of £5,000 per pupil next year while every primary school will get a minimum of £4,000 per pupil from 2021-22

NEW OLDER PEOPLE CARE UNITS

Over 700 new care units for older people have been agreed by Surrey County Council to provide independent living with care support. The 1st phase will include 65 at Ponds Meadow, Guildford in the next two years.

FLOODING ALLEVIATION

Surrey County Council has agreed £270 million of funding for long term flood risk schemes across Surrey towards a total of £640 million, the largest investment in flood risk in the UK to date.

This is mainly for the River Thames Scheme, to protect the 15,000 properties and tens of thousands of people living and working near the Thames (following the floods of 2014) but the funding also includes £33 million to spend over 10 years on other local flood alleviation projects across Surrey.

COUNTY HALL - SCC HQ - TO MOVE FROM KINGSTON

Surrey County Council announced in November that it will be moving its headquarters from Kingston back into the heart of the county to offices in Woking

during 2020. Historical background... Why is Surrey County Council (SCC) not in Surrey? SCC is currently based in the magnificent County Hall built between 1891 and 1893 in Kingston-upon-Thames, which isn't within Surrey at all. The borders of Surrey were altered in 1965 creating Greater London but SCC remained at County Hall. It's a historic building, but not suited to modern offices.

This will be a momentous move, which will accelerate changes in the way SCC works. Aside from the fact that the new Civic Heart will now actually be inside the county of Surrey, which has been a long-held ambition, the real driver has been the desire to place services right at the heart of the population the Council is here to serve.

What happens to County Hall? Preparations to sell County Hall are under way, which will go towards funding the new building in Woking for 1500 staff. Maintenance costs for the Victorian building are very high and moving to the new HQ represents a fraction of the cost of bringing County Hall up to modern standards.

This is all part of a big transformation process. There are also plans to look at how staff can be better equipped to work from home, in non-office locations and other council offices across the county.

Keith Witham
County Councillor, Worplesdon
March 2020