



Spring 2026

[County Councillor Helyn Clack, Dorking Rural Division, Surrey County Council](#) [Annual report 2025/2026](#)

In my 25th year of service to residents across the villages of Dorking Rural, this last year has continued to see productive working with our dedicated parish councillors, the parish clerks, residents and volunteers across my division of Dorking Rural.

By the time this report is circulated it is expected that the Government's Statutory Instrument changing the face of Surrey Local Government from 12 County and District authorities to 2 unitary authorities will have been passed by the House of Commons.

There are now confirmed elections for the newly established East Surrey Unitary Authority on May 7th, 2026, I have been nominated by the Conservative Party to serve as a candidate for the new council. I will be joined by my colleague, Marc Hanson, a recently retired professional with prior experience as a London Borough councillor. Between us I believe we offer the residents of Dorking Rural knowledge and experience to guide residents through to the new authority. Rightly, the voters will decide as always.

Once May's elections are over the county and district councils will continue with their business and services until 31st March 2027, when they will complete the handover to the new authorities. East Surrey council will act as 'shadow' authority until this date setting up governance and regulatory controls for itself, the new administration will be setting policies within the local government framework and preparing to deliver statutory services.

It will be my role and responsibility to ensure that residents continue to be served by the county council and in my role as Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Life Long Learning to continue to oversee the improvement plan and transformation of the service as well as ensure a smooth transition of these vital services to the new Surrey authorities. Should I also be elected to the new unitary authority, I will use my experience to affect a smooth transition overall whilst also working for the opportunities the new authority may wish to take.

The county council Leader C. Cllr. Tim Oliver invited me to leave the back benches and join the county council cabinet last autumn in a Deputy Cabinet Member role and in February 2026 I stepped up to the full Cabinet role for Children, Families and Lifelong Services. This is a challenging service, and I am grateful to be supported by two experienced Deputies as we move through this final year of the council. I remain the county council nominated member and Vice Chair of GATCOM (Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee), a member of the Gatwick NMB (noise management board) and member of the Gatwick Greenspace Board.



BUDGET FOR 2026/2027

The County Council administration set the proposed budget for the year ahead (2026 to 2027), and this was approved by Full Council on Tuesday 3 February.

- support residents who need us most
- protect essential services across Surrey
- enhance our communities and improve daily life
- prepare for the transition to two new unitary councils in April 2027

The national government made an overall reduction of over £50 million in government funding to Surrey County Council next year – this is the largest reduction faced by any council under the national Fair Funding Review – combined with rising costs and increased demand for essential services, this has meant difficult decisions were required.

To close the financial gap, the approved budget includes a 4.99% Council Tax increase (including the 2% Adult Social Care Precept), a programme of efficiencies, a continued focus on prevention to reduce future demand, and rephasing of some capital investment to lower borrowing costs. For a Band D household, this increase is equivalent to £1.77 per week.

We know many households are under financial pressure, and we do not take decisions to increase Council Tax lightly. During our consultation, residents told us they were concerned about the impact on household budgets but also recognised the importance of protecting vital frontline services.

The County Council will spend more than a billion pounds on essential services in 2026 to 2027. Over 67% of this will support adults' and children's services – including care for older residents, support for those with disabilities or complex needs, and services for children and families.

Essential day-to-day services such as road maintenance, libraries, countryside management, recycling centres, and protection services like Surrey Fire and Rescue all continue to play a vital role in keeping people safe and supporting daily life.

The budget also includes a £297 million capital investment programme for 2026 to 2027. This will fund:

- new special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) units in mainstream schools and expanded school places
- improved and modernised care accommodation
- a new short breaks centre for adults with additional needs
- ongoing library refurbishments
- upgrades to buildings and fire stations
- an enhanced programme of highways maintenance and flood alleviation
- and much more

This is the final budget before Surrey moves to two new unitary councils in April 2027.



LOCAL ISSUES AND SURREY HIGHWAYS

The council leadership repeated the budget for councillors in 2024/2025 and for 2025/2026 with a highway's allocation to £120,000 each year over and above the central highways and environment budget, giving local county councillors more opportunities to deliver on highways issues most important to local people.

I have continued to focus on road safety and maintenance and there have been some key works delivered locally include the A25 Dorking to Reigate road safety project which has seen average speed cameras (ASC) installed. Residents living along the A25 in my division tell me that there is a marked improvement and change in driving behaviour both day and night time. The A24 scheme from Dorking to Beare Green has also been installed and has met similar favourable comments from local residents. The county council is now preparing to install further speed reduction measures with average speed cameras from Capel Village, Clark's Green roundabout to the border with West Sussex. Residents again tell me that this is a much-welcomed scheme.

Residents in Betchworth had the opportunity to comment on a speed reduction scheme for Pebble Hill, and the results of the consultation which went out to residents and the public at large have shown strong support. I have confirmed with Surrey Highways that following this positive support, works have already started to improve pedestrian access for residents to cross the road at Betchworth roundabout and I expect the rest of the scheme to proceed as soon as possible subject to road licences etc.

Dorking Rural is made up of very distinct parish and communities and so my priorities are varied across my division. Speeding and road safety continues to be a big issue in the villages but so does road maintenance and pedestrian access. I have been working with the County Council's spring maintenance team to line up pavements across the area which need tidying up, cutting back overgrowth and clearing debris. I have also been supporting drainage projects – this winter has been particularly wet and road side gullies get blocked up with debris and litter. It is important to report these quickly so they can be cleared to keep the water off the roads as much as possible. Several 'wets-spots' have surfaced for attention this year and these are being investigated by the highways drainage teams.

Residents can report faults and damage through the Surrey link to Fix My Street, [Roadworks - Surrey County Council](#)



A severely wet and cold winter has seen a marked deterioration in our busy road surfaces, Surrey County Council is responsible for all local and rural roads and most A roads in the county apart from the A3. This comes under the national highways authorities as does the M roads, the motorways. Naturally, people ask me what the County Council is doing - there are now 50 crews active including repairs at night, 1500 fixes a week. As of the beginning of March, the backlog was around 3,000 so if that rate continues, it should be resolved in the next couple of weeks if the weather stays mild. But of course, the best solution is prevention and the County Council has resurfaced 454 miles of road in the last year.

I have been busy requesting roads and pavements to be added to the Project Horizon if the parish councils have suggestions – which I am sure you do have – please let me know!



GRANTS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Your Fund Surrey and its two local community Funds – Local County Councillors were allocated £50,000 capital spend over the last year and £5,000 annual revenue spend. I am pleased to say that my allocation is mostly spent, this has been a very successful local grant programme, and I am hoping this will be continued in the new East Surrey Unitary Authority.

Here's a list of some of the great projects put together by local communities and volunteers I have been able to fund over the last year with my allocations.

Brockham Village Hall – Air Conditioning	£6000
Charlwood Village Primary School – School Trim Trail	£7500
Mynthurst Cricket Club – Cricket Community Seating area	£6212
Leigh Apple Group – John Motion Community Orchard Shelter	£17980
Newdigate Cricket Club – Energy Sufficiency	£1800
Surrey Outdoor Learning – Off Road Wheelchair	£4460
Community Shop at Strood Green – New refrigeration	£2000
Buckland Parish Council – New Defibrillator	£500
Mogeral Tani Judo Club – Leigh – Finding your Feet	£500
4Bs Bio Diversity Initiative	£750
Sensory Services from Sight for Surrey	£946
Surrey Ethnic Minority Forum – Community Meals for the district	£1000

GATWICK

The hard work of local authorities including Surrey County Council, parish councils, local activists such as GACC and residents saw the completion of the hearing by Government Inspectors for plans for a second runway at Gatwick Airport. The Inspectors' report, initially published privately for the Government, recommended refusing Gatwick's expansion unless the owners agree to specific noise and transport controls. However, the Government ordered the plans to proceed with certain caveats. This has resulted in a legal challenge in the High Court and the outcome of this is expected soon.



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