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AT A MEETING of the County Council of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held
at The Castle, Winchester on Friday, 17th May, 2019

Chairman:

* Councillor Charles Choudhary

Vice-Chairman:

* Councillor Mel Kendal

- * Councillor John Bennison
- Councillor Fred Birkett
- Councillor Martin Boiles
- * Councillor Ray Bolton
- * Councillor Jackie Branson
- * Councillor Ann Briggs
- * Councillor Zilliah Brooks
- * Councillor Graham Burgess
- * Councillor Adam Carew
- * Councillor Fran Carpenter
- * Councillor Christopher Carter
- * Councillor Roz Chadd
- * Councillor Peter Chegwyn
- * Councillor Daniel Clarke
- * Councillor Adrian Collett
- * Councillor Mark Cooper
- Councillor Rod Cooper
- * Councillor Tonia Craig
- * Councillor Roland Dibbs
- * Councillor Alan Dowden
- * Councillor Peter Edgar MBE
- * Councillor Keith Evans
- * Councillor Liz Fairhurst
- * Councillor Steve Forster
- * Councillor Jane Frankum
- * Councillor Andrew Gibson
- * Councillor Jonathan Glen
- * Councillor Judith Grajewski
- * Councillor David Harrison
- * Councillor Marge Harvey
- * Councillor Pal Hayre
- * Councillor Edward Heron
- * Councillor Dominic Hiscock
- * Councillor Geoffrey Hockley
- * Councillor Keith House
- * Councillor Rob Humby
- * Councillor Gary Hughes
- * Councillor Roger Huxstep
- * Councillor Wayne Irish
- * Councillor Gavin James
- * Councillor Andrew Joy
- * Councillor David Keast
- Councillor Mark Kemp-Gee
- * Councillor Rupert Kyrle
- * Councillor Peter Latham
- * Councillor Keith Mans
- * Councillor Alexis McEvoy
- * Councillor Anna McNair Scott
- * Councillor Derek Mellor
- Councillor Floss Mitchell
- * Councillor Rob Mocatta
- * Councillor Kirsty North
- * Councillor Russell Oppenheimer
- * Councillor Neville Penman
- * Councillor Roy Perry
- * Councillor Stephen Philpott
- * Councillor Jackie Porter
- * Councillor Roger Price
- * Councillor Lance Quantrill
- * Councillor Stephen Reid
- * Councillor David Simpson
- * Councillor Patricia Stallard
- * Councillor Elaine Still
- * Councillor Robert Taylor
- * Councillor Bruce Tennent
- * Councillor Tom Thacker
- * Councillor Michael Thierry
- * Councillor Mike Thornton
- * Councillor Martin Tod
- * Councillor Rhydian Vaughan MBE
- * Councillor Malcolm Wade
- * Councillor Jan Warwick
- * Councillor Michael Westbrook
- * Councillor Michael White
- Councillor Bill Withers Lt Col (Retd)
- * Councillor Seán Woodward

*Present

Honorary Aldermen Patricia Banks, Keith Chapman MBE, Phrynnette Dickens, Tim Knight, Sharyn Wheale and Michael Woodhall were also present.

136. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors Fred Birkett, Martin Boiles, Rod Cooper, Mark Kemp-Gee, Floss Mitchell and Bill Withers.

Apologies were also received from Honorary Aldermen Roger Kimber, Marilyn Tucker and Alex Varden.

137. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any matter considered at the meeting they must declare that interest at the time of the relevant debate and, having regard to the circumstances described in Part 1, Paragraph 1.5 of the County Council's Members' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 1.6 of the Code. Furthermore Members were mindful that where they believed they had a Non-Pecuniary interest in a matter being considered at the meeting they considered whether such interest should be declared, and having regard to Part 5, Paragraph 2 of the Code, considered whether it was appropriate to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with the Code.

Councillor Michael Westbrook declared a personal interest in respect of Item 12 a) on the agenda being that the Motion affects his wife and therefore would not take part in the debate when that item was reached.

138. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The Chief Executive, as the Proper Officer, called for nominations. Councillor Roger Huxstep, seconded by Councillor Roland Dibbs proposed that Charles Choudhary be elected Chairman of the Council until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in 2020.

No other nominations were received therefore the proposition was put to the vote and carried.

ORDERED:

That Councillor Charles Choudhary be elected Chairman of the County Council until the Annual General Meeting in 2020. Councillor Choudhary made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took the chair.

139. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman invited nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Council. Councillor Roy Perry, seconded by Councillor Rob Humby proposed Councillor Mel Kendal be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council until the Annual General Meeting of the Council in 2020.

No other nominations were received therefore the proposition was put to the vote and carried.

ORDERED:

That Councillor Mel Kendal be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the County Council until the Annual General Meeting in 2019. Councillor Choudhary made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

140. **INCOMING CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Incoming Chairman thanked Councillor Still for her outstanding service as Chairman over the past year; gave special thanks to Councillor Roy Perry as retiring Leader of Hampshire County Council and gave a warm welcome to the Incoming Leader of the Council, Councillor Keith Mans and to Councillor Rob Humby as Deputy Leader of the Council.

It was with sadness that the Chairman reported the passing of a long serving officer of the County Council, Edward Mason who passed away on 14 April this year. Ted's local government career spanned 42 years and at the time of his retirement in 1999, he held the position of Assistant County Secretary, responsible for the Recreation Committee. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held on 25 April at Romsey Abbey.

The Chairman confirmed that his theme during his year in office would be health and wellbeing, specifically mental health. The Chairman highlighted the County Council's commitment to providing accessible, timely services which enable people to manage their mental health in a way that offers choice and control through working with key partners, stakeholders and people using mental health and substance misuse services to continuously improve the provision.

The Chairman's full announcements are appended to these Minutes.

141. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2019 were agreed subject to a correction to Minute 129 to record that the date of the Budget Speech of the Executive Member for Economic Development should read 14 February 2019. The Minutes were signed by the Chairman.

142. **OUTGOING LEADER'S REPORT**

The Outgoing Leader, Councillor Roy Perry, congratulated Councillor Choudhary on his election as Chairman of the Council for the next municipal year and thanked Councillor Still for her year of Chairmanship.

Councillor Perry had pleasure in confirming that The Lookout at Lepe Country Park had been one of the shortlisted projects for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Regional Awards for Buildings of Merit. Also of note was that Quebec Park housing development at Whitehill, Bordon was recognised in the residential development category and won that award.

Councillor Perry reported that he had announced to the Council in February that it was his intention to stand down as Leader of the County Council at the Annual General Meeting, at mid-point of the current term which would give his successor two years before the County Council's next Election in 2021 to deal with the many issues including budgetary pressures.

Councillor Perry reported he had first stood for election in 1969 and in 2020 will have cumulatively held office for 50 years – 40 years as a County, Borough and Parish Councillor and 10 years as a Member of the European Parliament. 13 of those years had been as a Council Leader. He confirmed it had been a privilege, an honour and a pleasure to serve.

Councillor Perry reported on the work of the Hampshire Commission 2050 which he had chaired, which aimed to bring a report to Members at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held on Monday 23 September 2019. Councillor Perry commented that looking back 50 years was easy – looking forward 30 years was not and the task is to protect the environment, quality of life and the economy of Hampshire which required a partnership approach.

Councillor Perry reported that he would be continuing as a County Councillor working for the Romsey Rural Division. He would also continue to Chair South East England Councils (SEEC), a grouping of over 70 councils across the south east region to encourage them to work with other south east consortia such as South East Strategic Leaders' (SESL) and the South East 7 Board.

In conclusion, Councillor Perry thanked everyone for the messages and gestures of appreciation he had received for his time as Leader of Hampshire County Council.

143. **LEADER AND CABINET**

In accordance with Part 1 Chapter 11 of the County Council's Constitution, Councillor Roy Perry proposed Councillor Keith Mans as Leader of the Council. Councillor Rob Humby seconded the proposal. There were no other nominations. The proposal was put to the vote and carried.

Councillor Keith Mans was duly elected as Leader of Hampshire County Council until the Annual General Meeting of the County Council following the Elections in 2021.

The Leader congratulated Councillor Choudhary on his election as Chairman of the Council and thanked Members for electing him to the position of Leader of the Council.

The Leader announced his Cabinet as follows:

Councillor Rob Humby – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Councillor Roz Chadd – Executive Member for Education and Skills

Councillor Liz Fairhurst – Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Councillor Judith Grajewski – Executive Member for Public Health (to include Supporting Families)

Councillor Edward Heron – Executive Member for Countryside and Rural Affairs

Councillor Andrew Joy – Executive Member for Communities, Partnerships and External Affairs including Brexit (will also include Emergency Planning and Resilience)

Councillor Stephen Reid – Executive Member for Economic Development, Human Resources and Performance

Councillor Patricia Stallard – Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services

Councillor Seán Woodward – Executive Member for Recreation and Heritage

The Leader paid tribute to Councillor Roy Perry for his leadership and achievements during his time as Leader of the Council during what had been very challenging times.

In terms of his vision for the future, the Leader confirmed that he wants to see Hampshire remain as one County Council. He highlighted the importance of getting a fair funding settlement from central government. In this regard, he would be meeting with Ministers at a forthcoming County Network event to put forward the County Council’s position; to highlight the pressures it faces in meeting its responsibility to provide statutory services against the backdrop of reducing Revenue Support Grant. Being able to evidence robust financial control and continuing to work closely with district and borough partners to deliver services would be important, as was working closely with the County Council’s unitary partners and the two Hampshire Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Leader supported the continuance of the County Council’s sound financial policies and sensible use of reserves to invest in innovative projects for the benefit of communities in Hampshire.

The Leader referred to the Extraordinary Council Meeting on 23 September at which the findings of the Hampshire Commission 2050 would be discussed. A very important area of would be the environment and climate change which would be challenging but also provides an opportunity for the County Council to lead the

way in clean technology. Finding a way to balance between economic development and prosperity and protecting the countryside would be key.

In conclusion Councillor Mans thanked Members for electing him to take on the role of Leader of Hampshire County Council.

144. **DEPUTATIONS**

The Chairman invited deputations.

In accordance with Standing Order 20.6 Councillor House moved to suspend Standing Order 12.2.2 to allow the opportunity for some children from Crestwood School to take part in the deputation at Item 9b) on the Agenda in the interests of encouraging young people to get involved in the Council's processes and promoting participatory democracy. Councillor Irish seconded the Proposal.

During the course of the ensuing debate, attention was drawn to the information circulated to all Councillors by the Chief Executive in this regard which confirmed that the deputation process is a very specific local approach to hearing views from the community. Standing Orders have to be carefully constructed and adhered to, to ensure the process is not subject to confusion or abuse. Furthermore, the Chief Executive highlighted that the question of a child's informed consent is not straightforward.

The Leader confirmed that he would be happy to review the Council's deputation process set out in Standing Orders in regard to engaging with children and young people. He highlighted that the deputation process is not the sole route for children and young people to express their views to the Council and early comments from the recent Ofsted inspection indicates the strength of the Council's approaches to listening to children and young people. The Leader emphasised that any revisions to the current deputation procedure, which would be brought back to the Council, would require careful consideration to ensure it contains appropriate safeguards and continues to maintain good governance.

The Chairman confirmed that written permission that the schoolchildren could speak as part of the deputation and be filmed had not been obtained.

The Proposal was put to the vote and was not carried. In accordance with Standing Order 20.4, Councillor House moved a further Proposal that the meeting be adjourned for a short period to hear from the schoolchildren off-camera. The Chairman did not consider the Proposal to be appropriate.

The deputations were received as listed on the Summons subject to noting that the deputation at 9a) on the agenda was presented by Carolyne Jacobs.

145. **QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 16.1.1**

Executive Members responded to questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.1 as published.

146. **PROPORTIONALITY AND APPOINTMENTS**

The Council considered an updated report of the Chief Executive as presented by the Leader, to review the Council's Proportionality Table and to make any Member appointments or alterations as required to the membership of the County Council's committees and standing panels, to statutory joint committees, to other proportional bodies the County Council is represented on, or to any other bodies which are not subject to proportionality rules.

RESOLVED:

That the County Council:

- a) Approves the Proportionality Table at Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) Approves the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees and panels at Appendix 2 to the report.
- c) Approves the appointment of the County Council's representatives on the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report.
- d) Approves other Member appointments as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

147. **NOTICES OF MOTION**

- a) Notice of Motion

The Council considered the Motion set out at Item 12a), which was submitted in accordance with Standing Order 18.1, as proposed by Councillor Malcolm Wade and seconded by Councillor David Harrison regarding State Pension arrangements for women born in the 1950s.

Councillor Jackie Porter declared a personal interest in this matter.

Councillor Stephen Reid, seconded by Councillor Keith Mans proposed that in the first line of the Motion:

"This Council calls on the Government to make fair transitional State Pension Arrangements....."

the word "make" be replaced with "consider" and in the first line of the final paragraph of the Motion:

"The Council calls upon the Government to provide fair transitional State...."

The word "provide" be replaced with "consider."

The Amendment was put to the vote and carried..

RESOLVED:

"The Council calls upon the Government to **consider** fair transitional State Pension arrangements for all women born in the 1950s, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA) with lack of appropriate notification.

3.8 million women had significant pension changes imposed on them by the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011 with little or no personal notification of the changes. Some women had only two years notice of a six-year increase to their state pension age. Many had no notification at all. Many women born in the 1950's are living in hardship. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences. Many of these women are already out of the labour market, caring for elderly relatives, and/or providing childcare for grandchildren, or suffer discrimination in the workplace and struggle to find employment.

Women born in this decade are suffering financially. These women have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60. It is not the pension age itself that is in dispute - it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time. The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving them with no time to make alternative arrangements.

The Council calls upon the Government to **consider** fair transitional State Pension arrangements for all women affected by the changes. This translates into a 'bridging' pension to provide an income from age 60 until State Pension Age. An income that is not means-tested and also includes recompense for losses incurred, for those women who have already reached their SPA, so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make alternative arrangements."

b) Notice of Motion

The Council considered the Motion set out at Item 12b), which was submitted in accordance with Standing Order 18.1, as proposed by Councillor Wayne Irish and seconded by Councillor Bruce Tennent calling for the provision of additional powers for local Highway Authorities to ensure the timely adoption of, and completion of construction works of roads for new developments.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Motion.

The Executive Member for Environment and Transport reported on the work that had been done over many months which included meeting with over 100 developers in an effort to get agreement for more effective arrangements. This work will be continuing and the Executive Member will keep Members informed of developments.

In the absence of any Amendments, the Motion was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

This Council calls on the Government to provide additional powers for local Highway Authorities to ensure that roads on new developments are brought forward for adoption and construction works are completed to a satisfactory standard in a timely manner, to ensure residents, such as those living on new developments at Lakeside and Sirroco Park in Eastleigh, are not disadvantaged by extended delays in the adoption of estate roads.

c) Notice of Motion

The Council considered the Motion set out at Item 12c), which was submitted in accordance with Standing Order 18.1, as proposed by Councillor Martin Tod and seconded by Councillor Adrian Collett regarding Climate Change.

Councillor Rob Humby proposed that in accordance with Standing Order 18.4 this Motion be referred to Cabinet to allow the Cabinet the opportunity to consider the findings of the Hampshire Commission 2050. In accordance with Standing Order 18.5 Councillor Tod, as the Proposer of the Motion, will have the opportunity to attend the Cabinet meeting at which this matter is considered to explain the Motion.

The Amendment was put to the vote and carried.

148. HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

a) HFRA Questions

No questions had been received in accordance with Standing Order 16.3.

b) HFRA Report

The Council received and noted the report of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority as presented by Councillor Chris Carter in his capacity as Chairman of the Fire Authority.

The Leader Confirmed that Dr. Sallie Bacon, Director of Public Health was retiring and thanked her for the work she had done.

The Meeting closed at 12.50pm.

Chairman,

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OUTGOING CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS 17 MAY 2019

May I welcome on your behalf those Honorary Aldermen who have graced us with their presence today.

Thank you for your support, not just today but throughout the past year.

Before I proceed with my "**thank-you's**", I am sure you would all like to join me in congratulating the Duke and Duchess of Sussex on the arrival of their son, Archie Harrison Mountbatten Windsor.

I would like to thank the Vice-Dean, Canon Roly Reim for saying prayers at our AGM today. I would also like to place on record my thanks to The Reverend Linda Scard and The Revd Karen Kousseff for saying prayers at previous County Council meetings.

Thank you to our Vice Chairman, Cllr Charles Choudhary, who has deputised for me on occasions and has been a great assistance throughout my year.

A big thank you to Natalie Jones, the Chairman's PA. And to Penny Mills, Sue Butler and everyone else in Democratic and Members Services for their help and support.

As you will be aware my Chairman's theme this year was 'All things Healthy and Green, all Creatures Great and Small'. I would like to say a huge thank you to John Tickle, Jo Heath and Amanda Hull in Countryside Service for helping me to achieve my goal. We are so fortunate to have Officers at HCC who go the extra mile.

I must also express my public thanks to my consort, James Still, my son, and all of my family and friends who stepped in to be there for me on other occasions. I could not have done this without your support, thank you.

I have met many amazing people from all walks of life whilst carrying out my duties and this has been a huge eye-opener for me in seeing, at first hand, the great work carried out by volunteers from every sector.

You have all been sent my list of engagements throughout my term of office.

There are some key highlights that I wish to mention:

- Laying a wreath in Queen Eleanor's Garden to commemorate the 100-year anniversary when women finally won the right to vote and Emmeline Pankhurst's 160 year birthday.
- My Wear It Pink Tea Party for Breast Cancer Awareness month where we raised £400 for the charity
- Last year's Staff Act of Remembrance was a particularly special event commemorating the Centenary of the end of the First World War. It was a memorable and moving service with the Winchester Military Wives Choir, the Peter Symonds College Chamber Choir and the Hampshire Music Service Brass Quartet, all of whom performed brilliantly and helped make this such a special occasion.

- It was a pleasure to host a reception at The Great Hall to honour staff that completed their 25 years of dedicated service to the people of Hampshire.
- Volunteers Celebration Event at The Great Hall – a fantastic evening to recognize the amazing work that our army of willing and dedicated Countryside volunteers undertake to ensure our special places are accessible for everyone to enjoy.
- I thoroughly enjoyed a day volunteering at Lepe Country Park, cutting back undergrowth and large thorn bushes. It was hard work but so rewarding. Needless to say I slept well that night!

I have attended many concerts throughout my term of office, some of which include

- The Anvil's 25th Birthday Gala Concert given by the Philharmonia Orchestra with soloist Sheku Kanneh-Mason
- HMS concert at the refurbished chapel at the Netley Military Hospital with music through the ages of WW1 and WW2. This was the vision of Cllr Peter Edgar.
- The Hampshire Music Service Staff concert at The Anvil. A fabulous concert. At my request the staff performed the theme tune from the Game of Thrones - this was such an honour for me.
- The ultimate evening was my Chairman's Concert at Winchester Cathedral on Saturday 27 April. It was truly spectacular and one that I will never forget. Hampshire County Youth Orchestra and Basingstoke Area Youth Orchestra performed a rich and varied programme and I would like to thank Philips Solicitors in Basingstoke for their sponsorship.

Hampshire Music Service is one of the best in the country. It offers so many wonderful opportunities to our young people across the County. 25,000 children learn to sing and play every week and over 65 ensembles, such as those performing at my Chairman's concert.

Please, Members, continue to support the Hampshire Music Service.

This past year has been extraordinary. It has been an enormous privilege for me to represent you at events around the County and it has been an honour to broadcast the Hampshire message.

These are just a few of the events I attended during my year of office and many, if not all, were amazing in various ways but what stood out most of all was the dedication and commitment of all the people involved, many of whom are volunteers.

I will treasure my memories of these events for a long time to come.

COUNTY COUNCIL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 17 MAY 2019

INCOMING CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members, Honorary Aldermen, Ladies and Gentleman, Officers of the Council and colleagues. May I start by thanking you all for setting your alarms to arrive in time for the Annual meeting this morning!

It is with a deep sense of responsibility, humility, honour and, of course, pleasure that I accept your nomination to serve as Chairman of Hampshire County Council.

Thank you for the support you have given me and for the trust you have placed in me.

May I thank Cllr Roger Huxstep and Cllr Roland Dibbs for proposing and seconding my nomination and for their kind words.

I would now like to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank Councillor Still for her outstanding service as Chairman over the past year. Elaine, it was a pleasure to have had the opportunity to support you as Vice-Chairman and to witness first hand your energy and commitment. Thank you for your distinguished contribution to the County and congratulations on the success of your theme of "All things Healthy and Green, All Creatures Great and Small". I trust you are all now, at least, eating your brussel sprouts in support! Elaine, you have much to be proud of as you reflect on the success of your term as Chairman.

Can I also give a special thanks to Roy Perry as retiring Leader of Hampshire County Council. Roy was first elected to Hampshire County Council in 2005 and has been Leader of the County Council since May 2013. He has previously held many eminent positions. From 2010 to 2013 he was Executive Lead Member for Childrens Services in Hampshire and you will know, from 1994 to 2004, he was a Member of the European Parliament, initially for Wight and Hampshire South and then as one of the 11 MEPs for South East England. He was Conservative spokesman on the Parliament Culture and Education Committee and Vice President of the Petitions Committee. We are enormously grateful for the service you have given, your unfailing championing of local democracy and your leadership of our Hampshire County.

A warm welcome and support for our incoming Leader of the Council, Keith Mans and Rob Humby as Deputy.

We must not forget those who are no longer with us. A long serving Officer of the County Council, Edward Mason, who many of you knew as Ted, sadly passed away on the 14th of April this year. Ted's local government career spanned 42 years having started his career in 1957 working for Southampton County Council later joining Hampshire County Council in 1974. At the time of his retirement in 1999, he held the

position of Assistant County Secretary, responsible for the Recreation Committee. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held on 25th April at Romsey Abbey.

I have been a Councillor now for 27 years, with six of those years here at County, supported and encouraged by my lovely wife and caring daughters. My youngest, Zoonia, has asked for a special mention as she believes it's all her doing!

My theme, during my year in office, is one of health and wellbeing, specifically looking after our mental health and the mental health of our wider community, by being aware and understanding early warning signs and symptoms. The World Health Organisation recognises World Mental Health Day on 10th October and it is Mental Health Awareness Week, this week (13-17 May). Unfortunately, unlike other ailments, there is still a stigma surrounding mental health issues.

The mental health of our Hampshire residents is recognised by the Council to be of equal importance to their physical health. With one in four of us across all age ranges experiencing a mental health problem at any time in our lives, we recognise the significance of people needing to have greater access to help and support to cope with difficulties which might be time limited or across lifelong conditions. Whilst recognising the growing prevalence of mental health concerns for younger and older people in our communities, Hampshire County Council is committed to providing services which enable people to manage their mental health in a manner which offers choice and control. It is essential to promote access to services in a timely way in order to prevent circumstances from deteriorating. We aim to develop this agenda with key partners, stakeholders and people using mental health and substance misuse services to continuously improve this provision.”

As a Council we are at the forefront of keeping the fabric of local communities strong and cohesive, and it is right that we remind ourselves about the contribution our councils make. I will continue to uphold our values and make a stronger connection, where needed, with other bodies.

Like many of you, whether elected Councillors or Officers of the Council, we can make a positive difference to people's lives. We have the power and potential of local democracy to strengthen local communities.

I commend the work that we as an authority do. I am conscious that as the Chairman for the County there is a need for a deep sense of engagement in all civic activities and duties. I will continue with our ambition to be seen as an effective and practical authority striving for the good of our fellow citizens.

Finally, thank you once again for attending today. With your support, I am certain that we can all be the catalyst for greater involvement among our fellow citizens; to aspire to support our communities and individuals to be happy, healthy and productive, and, to gain continued appreciation and public trust and support for what we do.