

‘Engaging with Local Stakeholders: Surrey’s Post-Covid Recovery Report’ – Launch Event

Thursday 12th November 2020

Professor Max Lu – President and Vice Chancellor, *University of Surrey*

Professor Lu began by congratulating those involved with the compiling of the report and speaking of the pride he has of his colleagues who have worked tirelessly around this issue for several months, in addition to voicing how the University of Surrey is proud of its association with both Guildford, and the county of Surrey as a whole.

Professor Lu also made references to other areas such as:

- Engagement within the county in a range of areas
- Recommendations within the report for Surrey’s future
- New possibilities for Surrey in knowledge and connectedness
- Addressing issues and challenges which need to be overcome

Professor Lu concluded on the note of how the University of Surrey hopes to be continually engaged with the county, and how it hopes it can work with local partners to support the county’s agenda, by supporting new research, shaping future knowledge and contributing new opportunities for innovation.

Tim Oliver – Leader, *Surrey County Council*

Mr Oliver began by discussing Surrey County Council’s ‘Community Vision 2030’, and its plans to attempt to tackle inequality in the areas of health, climate and community. He stated that the key element which runs through this vision is a ‘strong and sustainable economy,’ which is a foundation upon which the rest of the vision is to be built.

Mr Oliver also mentioned a range of other areas, including:

- The work of the Surrey Growth Board
- The cooperation and coordination between the University of Surrey, local businesses and partnerships
- Insights into the Surrey economy, and how we can act to maintain it and lead to future growth

Philip Hammond – Chair, *Future Economy Surrey Commission*

Mr Hammond began by discussing the *Future Economy Surrey Commission*, and its main objective of keeping Surrey’s economy moving forward to power other areas involved in ‘Community Vision 2030.’

Other areas covered include:

- The threat of complacency to Surrey’s economy
- The strengths of, and challenges faced by Surrey’s economy
- The main components of the report, and the areas which are of key importance



Related to the challenges faced by Surrey's economy, and the components of the report which aim to address this, it was pointed out that some of the key concerns are the East-West economic divide in Surrey, the growth of Surrey's economy compared to its peer group, and the aging population within the county, which carries significant long-term implications for investors and employers. Mr Hammond concluded on the note of establishing a 'pro-growth culture' in Surrey, and by making reference to the work of the Surrey Growth Board. He made it clear that priorities going forward should be maintaining the quality of life in Surrey, lobbying the central government to ensure needs are met, maintaining Surrey's agile and adaptive work-force, and maintain the image of the county as a whole.

Professor Amelia Hadfield – Director, Centre for Britain and Europe, Head of Department of Politics, *University of Surrey*

Professor Hadfield started by thanking the team for its hard work in compiling and creating the report, and by acknowledging the connective tissue between the Future Surrey Economy Commission, Surrey County Council, and the Surrey Growth Board.

Professor Hadfield also made the points that:

- Several issues in Surrey addressed within the report may have existed before the pandemic – such as the East-West divide, or complacency
- Several strengths and drivers within Surrey also existed beforehand
- COVID-19 has been a 'real wakeup call' in more ways than one

Professor Hadfield concluded by stating that several key areas have seen deep and wide impacts from the pandemic, such as the healthcare, education and business sectors; she mentioned that for some areas, a full recovery may even be impossible, but that the report points out several coping mechanisms for adapting to the challenges currently faced.

Mark Pearson – Head of Knowledge Exchange and Enterprise, *Royal Holloway, University of London*

Mr Pearson discussed the role of the 'Knowledge Economy' in Surrey, and went on to list in detail three things which are considered to be of the utmost importance from the perspective of Royal Holloway:

- The role of universities within the local community and environment
- 'Universe to University' collaboration
- Business connectivity – Mr Pearson stated that if Surrey is to thrive, it must consider the role of higher-level skills and activities.

Mr Pearson ended on the note of the importance of connecting the economy with the local business community, and how this could act as to strengthen Surrey's economic outlook.

Professor Malcolm Parry OBE – CEO, *Surrey Research Park*

Professor Parry began by discussing the links between the University of Surrey, Surrey Research Park and knowledge-based entrepreneurs, and how this can help to build companies and attract investment.



Areas also mentioned by Professor Parry include:

- The importance and growth of the Gaming sector in Surrey
- The embedment of the University of Surrey in CVSSP (Centre for Vision, Speech, and Signal Processing)
- The contribution of Surrey Research Park employees to UK GVA (Gross Value Added)

Professor Parry then went on to discuss the value in nurturing the connection with Research Parks, and their programmes. He concluded by stating that there is no question that entrepreneurship adds to both science and the economy in Surrey.

Sue Taylor – Network Manager, *ALPS Partnership*

Ms Taylor discussed the impact that the pandemic has had on apprenticeships and learning providers in Surrey, in addition to outlining the importance of their role to the economy. She mentioned how well apprenticeship providers, and apprentices themselves have adapted to the situation, and how even new apprentices have actually been taken on during this difficult period.

Ms Taylor also mentioned:

- The launch of a new apprenticeship hub covering Surrey
- The appetite for learning and apprenticeships in schools across Surrey – which remains high
- The challenges faced by apprentices and providers going forward – specifically in the care and hospitality sectors

Ms Taylor ended on the note that although a challenging time resulting in the furloughing of several apprentices, that it is important that employers make sure they present opportunities and vacancies for apprenticeships and learning going forward.

Richard Maybury – Chairman, *Surrey Institute of Directors*

Mr Maybury began by discussing the impacts on the business sector, and the strategic asks that the government at local and national level ensures that decision-making continues ‘to be brave and bold.’ He mentioned interviews of employers and company directors which have been carried out by the IoD.

Mr Maybury also mentioned:

- The need to support entrepreneurs in building the future of Surrey
- The new government Office for Investment, due to the challenges caused by COVID-19 and Brexit
- The lasting impacts of COVID-19 on the use of office space
- The need for alternative use of retail and office space in Surrey

Mr Maybury ended by discussing the noticed local issues and impacts seen from their interviews, and that everyone has had different experiences, with the impacts of test and trace, quarantine, redundancies and the use of office space, depending on the sectors in which the interviewees are based. He also emphasised the importance of remembering the impacts of the pandemic on mental health – not necessarily in the work place, but on a personal level, and how this can affect people both at work and at home. He concluded by



stating that he felt ‘really encouraged’ when speaking with members and owners, and with their ‘pragmatically positive approach’, and their attitude of ‘getting through.’

Jonathan Sharrock – Chief Executive, *Coast to Capital*

Mr Sharrock discussed the role of, and impacts faced by LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships) within the Surrey economy as a result of the pandemic. He agreed with the earlier points made about ‘pro-growth culture’, and how this is needed if the county is to be impactful at a national level.

Mr Sharrock also covered points such as:

- The huge variety within the Surrey economy, which is successful but has the potential to go further
- The importance of clusters
- The role of apprenticeships in making the economy viable and successful
- The need to focus on housing in Surrey, to remain appealing to people of all ages and to avoid losses to other parts of the country
- The reliance on the aviation sector for jobs, competitiveness and links to other markets around the world

Mr Sharrock concluded by touching upon key points such as the agility of business space, the opportunities needed to allow business to grow and apprentices to thrive, and the potential change in the relationship of Surrey with London, and how this could affect future competitiveness.

Kathy Slack OBE – Chief Executive, *EM3*

Ms Slack continued along the theme of LEPs in Surrey’s economy and discussed what she found striking in terms of the real challenges faced. She voiced her concerns for the entirety of the service sector and emphasised its interconnected nature to the rest of the economy, in addition to concerns about London’s economy and any knock-on effects which may be seen by Surrey.

Ms Slack also went on to cover other points such as:

- The importance of economic eco-systems and working together
- Local Investment Strategy, trade and growth hubs
- The expansion of businesses and clusters in Surrey – especially in growing industries such as the gaming industry

Ms Slack concluded by emphasising the importance that the county work with existing business in Surrey and expand into these areas; she also gestured toward the question as to whether this approach could help address the existing East-West economic divide in Surrey.

Alison Addy - Head of External Engagement and Policy, *Gatwick Airport*

Ms Addy discussed the impacts of the pandemic on the aviation sector – with a specific focus on Gatwick; she stated that ‘2020 will go down as a huge crisis for aviation,’ with a more than 80% drop in passenger demand across the country, huge financial losses and losses of jobs.

Ms Addy also mentioned other areas such as:



- The importance of airports to the local communities in which they sit
- The impact of the pausing of the capital investments programme, and the knock-on effects which will be seen by the wider supply chain across the region
- The resilience of the aviation sector overall, and its bounce backs from previous challenges presented
- The need for a testing system in place across Europe
- The useful first step of the Global Travel Taskforce

Ms Addy also went on to note the importance of investment in and encouragement of supporting the use of sustainable aviation fuels, and also the need to increase passenger confidence for the sector to begin recovering. Ms Addy concluded by stating that the main goal is to ensure that Gatwick is in a good place to capitalise on regrowth, and that it hopes to work with partners across Surrey to ensure the country can recover.

John Holland-Kaye - Chief Executive Offer, *Heathrow Airport*

Also regarding the aviation sector, Mr Holland Kaye continued to discuss the role of the sector in Surrey's recovery, and the importance of competitiveness in doing so. He went on to describe the potential ways in which Heathrow can help Surrey overall:

- Social Mobility and LEPs
- SMEs in Surrey and how they can showcase themselves by becoming part of the Heathrow team
- Competitiveness – the role of London, and of global competitiveness.
- How connecting with Heathrow can be a great start to connecting with the rest of the world

Mr Holland Kaye ended on the note that as a county we need to work together to use our assets as best we can, and to collaborate to make sure Surrey thrives as a growth engine, for not just the county, but the UK as a whole.

Megan Isherwood - Research Team, *University of Surrey*

Ms Isherwood discussed the challenges faced by the health sector as a result of the pandemic – something of the utmost importance and significance. She stated that this has been the biggest crisis we have seen so far, but that Surrey's healthcare infrastructure performed outstandingly, in its provision of services, all while facing serious risks and emergencies regarding PPE and its availability.

The following was also mentioned:

- The strength of community support networks in Surrey
- How health inequalities in Surrey have been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic
- How the increase in cases more recently highlights an emergency, and the need for strengthening of healthcare infrastructure.

Professor Melaine Coward – Head of Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, *University of Surrey*

Professor Coward followed on from Ms Isherwood's discussion of Surrey's healthcare sector regarding the pandemic, and discussed how the University of Surrey's Faculty of Health and



Medical Sciences has been enormously involved with work in the pandemic since March, in research, education and experiences.

Professor Coward also covered several other key areas relating to Surrey's healthcare infrastructure within the pandemic:

- The difficulty faced by students and staff in maintaining their education, working within the healthcare sector, all while trying to maintain their safety and well-being.
- The deployment of final year nursing and midwifery students to placements while also working to finish their degrees.
- The impact that this has had on student's degrees and education; for some, by stepping up to work in medical services, they have had to change the structure of their overall degree programmes to accommodate this.
- The major disruption this has caused to teaching, and to the use of facilities within the FHMS at the University of Surrey – all of which have remained active throughout the pandemic.

Professor Coward went on to state that the fundamental nature of how as a county we invest in the health and social care workforce going forward, and how important it is that we recognise the workforce, the research and educators which underpin the effort, by emotionally and professionally recognising and supporting them.

Angela Richardson MP – Member of Parliament for Guildford

Ms Richardson began by commending the report for being a 'hugely helpful resource for decision making across all levels of government'. She also spoke of 'levelling-up government,' and how we need to look across the country for this agenda.

Ms Richardson also touched upon other key areas, such as:

- The East/West economic divide in Surrey, which must be taken into account by local governments
- The role of communities in Surrey throughout the pandemic, their bottom-up approach and the role of social infrastructure, such as charities
- The question of how to address health inequalities in Surrey, and the gap in life expectancy for Surrey residents between those North and South of the A3

Ms Richardson concluded by emphasising the importance of national recovery from the effects of the pandemic, and how investments in transferable skills and a focus on job creation are key. She went on to say how quickly both the public and private sectors have adapted, but that now is the time to identify potential areas for future growth and opportunity, through looking in-depth at policy recommendations as to how we can ensure Surrey can continue to thrive.

Tim Wates, Director, *Wates Group*; Chair, *Coast to Capital 2014-20*

Mr Wates started by discussing how we now need to put the report to work, and by commending the data which it includes, upon which we can base action. He mentioned the importance of academics, policy-makers and businesses working together, and emphasised the importance of networks and cooperation.



Mr Wates also mentioned several other areas, including:

- The East-West economic divide in Surrey
- Building on enthusiasm and dynamism
- The importance of the Knowledge Economy, and how this is built on real life examples
- The authentic voice found within the business sector
- The importance of LEPS working together

Mr Wates conclude by discussing the overall themes of the report and tonight's discussion, and how we need to aim to address challenges in the business, aviation, and healthcare sectors as a county going forward. He ended by stating this increased enthusiasm surrounding the future of Surrey after the session, and his positivity around the Surrey Growth Board.

Tim Oliver – Leader, *Surrey County Council*

Reflections

Mr Oliver then provided us with a list of some of his reflections from the report. HE started by stating that as a result, we now know some of the challenges facing Surrey which cannot be afforded to ignore.

He went on to reiterate some of the earlier mentioned points and their importance:

- The importance of eco-systems
- The opportunities for what Surrey can do outside of London
- The need to take bold and positive action

Mr Oliver ended on discussing how the country can approach this on a practical level, by using the Surrey Growth Board, establishing local community networks and increasing coordination with surrounding counties, to have more of a regional voice.

Professor Amelia Hadfield – Director, Centre for Britain and Europe, Head of Department of Politics, *University of Surrey*

Closing points

Professor Hadfield concluded the session by summarising some of the report's recommendations and conclusions, such as:

- Tackling intra-country disparities
- Improving digital structures across the country
- Implementing additional governance, such as local growth programmes
- Innovating the high street
- Focusing on 'Surrey specialisms'
- Embracing the COVID modern workplace
- Focusing on creating a healthy and inclusive Surrey
- Being upfront about demographic challenges

