

SURREY HEARTLANDS EXPO 1st February 2023

TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF SCC, KINDLY INVITED ME TO GIVE YOU A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTY FROM MY YEAR OF OFFICE:

MY PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTY AND MAYBE THE CHALLENGES FACING IT

Nearly 15 years ago I recall being shocked by the Hidden Surrey report, launched at GCC by Helen Bowcock and the CFS. The pockets of deprivation, the low literacy rates in some areas, the poverty and unemployment. It didn't square with the portrayal of an affluent, highly prosperous County, and the public perception of it.

Then came Surrey Uncovered in 2013. More surprising, and concerning, facts.

Lived in Walton on Thames 1980-85 and Guildford since 1985.

As someone who sat in the county as a full or part-time Judge from the late 80s for 30 years, I learnt about where there were pockets of crime, the prevalence of certain offences - usually in the more deprived areas.

As High Sheriff able to meet many people in all parts of the county...what have I learnt these past 10 months? A great deal.

POCKETS OF DEPRIVATION REMAIN: others with greater knowledge can state whether it's worse than ever.

I CAN SAY:

Need for Foodbanks and City fridges has increased.

I recall the first one I saw, in Ewell, several years ago. Not many then. 34 now?

3 years ago MidSurrey Community Fridges received the QAVS for its outstanding work during lockdown across Mole Valley.

All these outlets provide an invaluable service to their communities.

The WARM HUBS....not too bad a Winter so far. But heating and lighting costs have increased considerably.

Camberley - The Hope Hub:

Redhill - The Renewed Hope Centre.

How necessary they are. Churches being used.

The FAMILY CENTRES, eg Stanwell. Vital to their local communities. A lifeline.

Advice on so many matters, health, well-being, legal problems.

COMMUNITY CENTRES, eg Westway in Caterham on the Hill

A County of large contrasts....very wealthy or very expensive property areas adjacent to impoverished ones. It's an observation often made.

MENTAL HEALTHMOST SERIOUS CONCERNS RAISED ALL AROUND SURREY

Heard a lot about the effect of lockdowns upon mental health of children and adults of all ages.

Catalyst, Matrix, Surrey Youth Focus, Oakleaf: work of the Surrey Well-being Partnership, and Transform to name but a few.

Importance of working together, pooling resources, liaising, networking.

The young, the effect of lockdowns

Behaviour in school can be very challenging for teachers.

Returning to school has been difficult for many children.

The very young who started at 5 rather than 4. Difficulty adjusting to sitting still.

I hear about matters such as this from one of my daughters who is a Special Needs Teacher in the county.

Middle aged men...increase in the number of suicides in this group. Excess Alcohol.

THE NEED FOR YOUTH CLUBS.....SCYP. Need activities.....remove temptations of joining a gang, or becoming involved in county lines.

Qv Stanwell, near Feltham, County lines. Need more public support for the Police, more special Constables, more neighbourhood watch groups.

HEALTH SERVICE

Police may have to spend hours with a person who may have to be sectioned.....Need more trained mental health workers.

Police have other calls upon their time. Need for hospitals, medically trained personnel to be doing this work, not PCs.

Great work by Emerge Advocacy at hospitals...young persons with suicidal thoughts or attempts at suicide.

VIOLENCE

Demands on hospital staff: paramedics subjected to violence on occasions...can you believe it?

Dean Coady, Surrey Young Carers. Talk to 11-16 year olds about not carry8ng knives and avoiding County Lines and drug couriers.

Knife Angel at the Cath3dral. 1st March Peace, kindness, awareness of dangers.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

The increase during lockdowns.

Violence against women and men - 20-25% of the cases.

Refuges.....YourSanctuary, ESDAS, Oasis in Cobham. Amazing help being given to women, and men.

Need more refuges, more volunteers.

Areas perhaps needing the most help?

Stanwell

Caterham on the Hill

Park Barn, Guildford

Sheerwater Estate

Horley

North Leatherhead

Knaphill

Ewell

My huge admiration for those leading the charitable work across the county, the 1,000s of volunteers.

Humbling.....uplifting.

NEED MORE VOLUNTEERS - a drive for volunteers. WHO COULD LEAD SUCH AN APPEAL?

So many retired people who could give time, with plenty of experience, healthy, fit and living longer.

So many in the county with skills, with time, with money to give. Qv U3A Popularity.

Qv during the lockdown, drivers picking up and delivering food parcels to villagers, the lonely, the isolated.

THE EFFECTS OF DEPRIVATION

Mental health issues. Feelings of worthlessness. Suicidal thoughts.

Turn to alcohol, to drugs.

Stresses in relationships....DA

Offending

POSITIVE ASPECTS

People I've met.

Work they are doing.

Over 3,000 charities.... Funds they raise, trustees and good governance.

Eg The Prostate Project.....golf days, a few dedicated people raise £1000s each year.

Achieving a great deal....but the demands never stop.

Effects of Covid, furlough, lockdowns.

Support from SCC and boroughs...

Support from CFS

Philanthropists.....

THE NEED IS GREAT.....IN THIS, A COUNTY WITH AFFLUENCE.

I FERVENTLY HOPE THAT THE MANY WITH MORE THAN ENOUGH FOR A VERY COMFORTABLE LIFESTYLE WILL GIVE, AND GIVE GENEROUSLY.

SADLY, DESPITE ALL THAT I HAVE COME TO SEE AND HEAR ABOUT, WHICH HAS BEEN A JOY, AS A COUNTY IT IS APPARENTLY THE CASE THAT IT DOES NOT RANK HIGHLY IN TERMS OF GIVING. Not sure how that can be known, but...

CFS seen it grow from its beginning....remarkable. It needs more and more wealthy people to donate to it, for it makes such a difference.

SO, THERE IS MUCH THAT IS HUGELY POSITIVE, UPLIFTING.

A BEAUTIFUL COUNTY.

MANY REMARKABLE PEOPLE, HARD WORKING AND DEDICATED.

HOPE FOR MORE INDIVIDUALS LIKE THEM., FOR THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE DEMAND.

THANK YOU.