

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 29TH JUNE 2016**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****EU Referendum**

This was not the result for which I campaigned but I respect the result. The hard work now begins for the new Prime Minister but also and importantly, for us locally. The referendum result has produced instability in Government and the financial markets, but I am determined to pursue successful outcomes for our own campaigns for fair funding and a devolution deal for the combined authority, and to do what is best for the County Council. We owe that to the people of Leicestershire.

Thankfully, I have heard no reports from Leicestershire of racist chanting or damage to property which has been seen elsewhere in recent days. I hope that will remain the case since it is only what I would expect given our enviable record of cohesive communities.

Fair Funding

We continue to work on Fair Funding. The modelling work completed has been shared with other low funded councils and we are forging close links on this important topic. Our case is strong and we will work with Leicestershire MPs in order to influence Government.

We also recognise that business rates retention pilots in Liverpool, Manchester and London are a risk to the fairer distribution of resources in the future. This is a point that we will make to Government as we cannot end up in a position where a more generous allocation of business rates is made to some localities before the review of Local Government finance is completed.

We are not taking a parochial approach to this issue. We are interested in the total resources coming into local areas for a number of public services, not just county council services. The analysis completed shows that a number of authorities outside London, including cities and counties, are disadvantaged by the current methodology. The work we are doing will hopefully be helpful to many councils.

Combined Authority and Devolution Deal

We remain on track to establish the Leicester and Leicestershire Combined Authority although it is now expected that the Parliamentary approval process will start after the summer recess, rather than before. This means the Authority should be established late in November/ early December rather than late October as previously planned. The partnership established across the nine local authorities and the LLEP remains very strong, in sharp contrast to the position in many other areas, and we continue to work closely together to develop a Devolution Deal for discussion and negotiation with Government. The next meeting of the Economic Growth Board, on

4th July, will consider an update on the preparation of the Devolution Deal and a draft Constitution for the Combined Authority.

We also now have an agreed proposal for the governance of tourism support to be overseen by the Combined Authority. This will facilitate stronger partnership working across our area and in the case of tourism, help us build on the opportunities provided by the discovery of Richard III's remains, the success of Leicester City Football Club, and the strong range of tourism attractions, such as Twycross Zoo and Twinlakes, which our area is home to.

Great Central Railway

I am delighted that we have agreed to become a shareholder in the Great Central Railway. GCR is looking to double its visitor numbers and to increase the contribution to the Leicestershire economy to between £30 million and £65 million over five years, with the potential to create between 486 and 966 indirect jobs through additional spend in the local economy.

This will come about through completing the £8 million Bridging the Gap project to reunite two sections of the Great Central Railway which are currently separated by a 500 metre 'gap', and the £18 million project to establish a Heritage Railway Museum at GCR's Leicester North station, which will be a world class visitor attraction.

Melton Mowbray

Together with the Leader of Melton Borough Council, I met with Sir Alan Duncan MP to brief him on our shared proposals for a transport strategy for the town including the proposals to develop an outer relief road. We went through the work to date and outlined our next steps which will involve submitting a bid through the LLEP to the Department for Transport for funding to develop the project to a shovel ready scheme by 2020. Being successful in this would put us in a prime position to secure funding for the construction phase after that.

A50 speed reduction scheme

On 17th June I met Edward Argar MP together with Ozzy O'Shea and a number of Groby and Ratby residents to receive letters of support for our proposals to reduce the speed limits along the A50 from County Hall to Field Head.

The proposals include reducing the current sections of 50 mph to 40 mph to ensure that the limits are consistent along the route.

Flooding

The heavy rainfall earlier this month caused flash flooding in several parts of the County.

The County Council played a key role in the response, which included:-

- 2500 filled sandbags issued to local councils and those threatened by flood waters. Additionally, 2000 unfilled bags were sourced for North West Leicestershire Council;
- Support for primary schools in Ashby and Worthington, as well as support for Thringstone Community Centre and Greenhill Youth Centre.

I am sure members will wish to join with me in thanking officers who worked hard during this period.

Could I use this opportunity to mention flood wardens? In particular, I want to highlight the work of the flood wardens in Breedon and Packington who provided invaluable information about the local risk. I would urge people to consider becoming flood wardens and if anyone out there is interested please call on 0116 305 6101.

Jonny Walton

I am pleased to report that Jonny Walton has been included in the Great Britain rowing team for the Rio Olympics. He will be competing in the men's double event.

Jonny from Kirby Muxloe was supported through the GO GOLD Athlete Fund which is operated by Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport.

GO GOLD financially supports talented young people who are competing at county or regional level with the potential to compete at a higher level. The County Council, along with the City and Rutland Councils and all Districts fund the GO GOLD programme.

Can I wish Jonny every success at the Olympics and let us hope he returns with a gold medal. I look forward to hearing of other GO GOLD recipients who may be named as team members in other sports. Any successes achieved in Rio would add to the already splendid sporting achievements of teams and individuals in the City and County.

Battle of The Somme

Chairman, as my last part of my statement, I would like to add to what you said earlier.

Through our World War One Reference Group we have been instrumental in arranging a number of initiatives to mark the Battle of the Somme. This will include a real time roll of honour being printed in the Leicester Mercury between the 1st July and 31st December, under our Soar to Somme logo, with the names of more than 2,000 Leicestershire men who were killed during the Battle of the Somme, appearing on the one hundredth anniversary of their death.

As the County Council is an employer of Reservist personnel, I have invited those staff to wear their uniforms to work on 1st July. This is part of a wider initiative we have launched with the support of the East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets

Association, which also encourages cadets to wear their uniforms to school or college.

The County Council's Heritage Lottery funded 'Century of Stories' project goes from strength to strength. The team have made new personal connections to the Somme and illustrated these in a new exhibition which will be displayed at the Cathedral on Friday. Examples of this work can be found in the Members Lounge, featuring the work of pupils from Maplewell Special School.