



DATE: 18 May 2022
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ORDER PAPER, QUESTION AND POSITION STATEMENT SUPPLEMENTARY PACK.

- Order Paper, Questions and Membership of Commission,
Committees and Boards. (Pages 3-18)
7. To receive position statements under Standing Order 8.
- i. Position Statement from the Leader of The Council (Pages 19 - 24)



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MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 18 MAY 2022 AT 2.00 P.M.

ORDER PAPER

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 – TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN

MR HARRISON will invite nominations.

MR RUSHTON will move and MR MULLANEY will second: -

“That DR. KEVIN FELTHAM be elected Chairman for the period until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.”

On being elected the Chairman will read out and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which will be witnessed and signed by the Chief Executive.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 – TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN

THE CHAIRMAN will invite nominations.

MR RUSHTON will move and MR MULLANEY will second: -

“That MR DAN HARRISON be appointed Vice-Chairman for the period until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.”

On being appointed, the Vice-Chairman will read out and sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office which will be witnessed and signed by the Chief Executive.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 – CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CHAIRMAN will make his announcements.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 – MINUTES

(Pages 5 – 20)

The CHAIRMAN will move and the VICE-CHAIRMAN will second: -

“That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23rd February 2022, copies of which have been circulated to members, be taken as read, confirmed and signed.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The CHAIRMAN will invite members who wish to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1) (2) & (5)

(A) Question by MR HUNT

- “1. What involvement has the County Council had in this regeneration project involving Bedford Square, Ward’s End and Devonshire Square in Loughborough Town Centre?
2. What financial contribution to the scheme has been made, and what work has been done so far by the County Council?
3. Could you confirm that the County Council has previously adopted these streets and whether that has ceased?
4. When the project is completed, what maintenance responsibilities does the County Council expect to have, and will they be similar to those of Loughborough Market Place (including Cattle Market and Market Street)?
5. Has the County Council agreed the design of the project and specifically the choice of stone and the kerbs which are already spoken of as a hazard to pedestrians and cyclists?
6. Does the commendable 20mph limit conform throughout the town centre (e.g. High Street, Swan Street, Derby Square and within the Inner Relieve Road), if not, could this be considered for safety and uniformity?
7. Why is it that the Borough Council engages such highways projects in Loughborough when the County Council is the Local Transport Authority?
8. Are there any other recent examples of District Councils contracting similar highways projects?”

Reply by MR O’SHEA

- “1. Leicestershire County Council (LCC) is the Highway Authority (HA) for the roads named and as such requires a third party working on the highway to have an appropriate approval to do so. Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) has entered into a section 278 of the Highways Act agreement with LCC in order for them to be able to complete the project.
2. No financial contribution has been made by LCC. The project is being funded exclusively by CBC.

As part of the s278 approval process, LCC officers have appraised the design submitted by CBCs design consultant against the standards contained within

the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide (LHDG) in order to issue technical approval. Legal Services have prepared the s278 agreement.

During construction on the site, officers have inspected the works to monitor the standard of workmanship and compliance with the approved drawings.

3. These streets are adopted public highway and continue to be. However, under the terms of the s278 agreement, CBC are responsible for maintaining their works until such time they have fully complied with the terms of the s278 agreement, and a final certificate is issued.
4. CBC will be responsible for maintenance of the site for a minimum period of 12 months upon substantial completion of the works. Upon issue of the final certificate, the road will then revert to be the maintenance responsibility of LCC.
5. As a standard process with all third party/developer promoted schemes, detailed design drawings are required to be submitted to the Highway Authority for technical approval. In preparing and submitting their proposals, the works promoter is expected to comply with the Authority's standards contained in the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide, or other local & national design standards (as appropriate). In issuing technical approval, LCC is not verifying the buildability of the works promoter's proposals, just that they have demonstrated compliance with relevant design standards. Any technical approval is provided with the caveat that the promoter may be required to change or amend their proposals to address their responsibilities under the terms of the Legal Agreement and in response to any matters raised within road safety audits carried out at various stages of a project and reflecting specifics of the local environment. For this project LCC gave technical approval for the original design submission in February 2021 e.g. compliance with the relevant design standards. As the works have progressed a number of issues have arisen, which CBC through their designer have been working to resolve in accordance with their responsibilities under the S278 agreement. It is the responsibility of the works promoter to ensure approval is in place before construction and that construction is undertaken in accordance with that approved design. Any variations will be inspected and, if necessary, defects will be addressed prior to the issuing of a final certificate.
6. The 20mph limit will only cover Wards End and the Cattle Market from the entrance of the Wards End car park to the junction with Granby Street. This was the extents that the works promoter CBC requested in order to facilitate the Public Realm scheme.

An extension to the 20mph limit could be considered by CBC or LCC, but this would be subject to a viability assessment and further funding, the extent of which could be significant should an assessment determine the need for speed reducing features to make it self-enforcing.

I have asked officers to let you have a plan of the extents of the 20mph limit.

7. As the aims and objectives of the scheme are to improve the public realm and promote regeneration, this is not the role of the Highway Authority and therefore this isn't a highway project, but a Public Realm project delivered by CBC using funding available to them for town centre regeneration. I am aware that the project has had a lot of public criticism on safety grounds, which have come the way of the County Council as the Highway Authority. It does need to be made clear, as above, that it is a CBC project and public criticism, and concerns should be directed to them.
8. As per Q7, this type of scheme is driven by the aim of improving the public realm and regeneration of a particular area. North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) is currently working towards delivering a similar type of project, and other district and parish councils are investigating the possibility of similar such projects."

(B) Question by MR HUNT

- "1. On 20th January 2022 the Director of Environment and Transport published a report stating that there were "*a number of savings which are not yet currently developed enough to be able to quantify and build into the detailed savings schedules*" and added that "*Potential to see whether increasing wildflower populations on verges provides opportunities for reductions in grass cutting in urban areas*. But on 6th May 2022 the Authority published a press release saying "*a partnership with local wildlife charity NatureSpot, aims to improve biodiversity and encourage wildlife, by leaving wildflowers to flourish on urban roadside verges across Leicestershire*". I understand that "leaving wildflowers to flourish" also represents a cut in our grass cutting service. What is the previous and proposed number of cuts in these urban areas?
2. Which streets will this affect in Loughborough?
3. The press release suggests that the policy involves "*volunteers and parishes giving up their time to restore the verges, including the sowing of native wildflower seeds*". When will the sowing begin and how will the locations be chosen?

4. Will restoration of verges include streets on former council estates, like Schofield Road?
5. Will those with a “licence to cultivate” be included in the scheme with a requirement to reduce grass cutting and substitute a wildflower initiative?
6. Given the importance of this policy and the pride that residents consistently show in well maintained grass verges, will the authority produce a suitable communication directly to residents?
7. What is the saving in the current financial year and why wasn't it included in the MTFS in line with good practice?
8. What other “savings are under development” are likely to be included in this financial year that were not included in the MTFS?”

Reply by MR PAIN

- “1. The current number of urban grass cuts is a minimum of six per year. For the sites included within this scheme there would be one cut in the autumn and collection of the grass from the site one week after cutting.
2. There are no Urban Wildlife Verges in the town of Loughborough, but several verges have been taken by individual parish councils in the Charnwood Borough Council area.
3. The purpose is not to ‘plant’ wildflowers but encourage natural regeneration through the reduction of cuts and allowing the natural ingress of wildflowers. Sowing of seeds is not necessary everywhere, only to give a boost to biodiversity in some areas where species content is low. This will also support existing species to thrive in the main summer season and re-seed in the autumn.
4. Verges are selected in places where the district council or parish council can support a contract or volunteers to deliver the later cuts and collection of arisings.
5. Individual residents can deliver the same approach as parishes by obtaining a ‘licence to cultivate’ outside their homes. Those who currently hold a licence to cultivate will not be required to substitute a wildflower verge.
6. Communications about specific verges being considered for the Urban Wildlife Scheme are issued via parish councils. We have a verge agreement that stipulates the need for consultation locally about any verges in the Urban Wildlife Verge scheme. The County Council publicises the benefits of the scheme, the Environment Policy and Strategy Team have been offering workshops for Councillors, parish council staff and district and borough representatives willing to engage in the scheme, to explain the value of the scheme for nature and the process of entering and ways of managing. We

also publish information here www.leicestershire.gov.uk/nature. 54 parish councils are participating in this 2022 season and there are already four additional expressions of interest for the 2023 season.

7. The sites included within this scheme represent less than one percent of the total number of verges that are treated each year therefore there will be no material cost savings in not cutting these sites.
8. At this present time, there are currently no savings 'under development' that are expected to be included in this financial year's MTFs."

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7 – TO RECEIVE POSITION STATEMENTS
FROM MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

(Note: Standing Order 8 provides as follows: -

- (a) A position statement may give rise to an informal discussion by the Council.
- (b) At the conclusion of the discussion a formal motion may be moved to the effect that a particular issue relevant to the statement be referred to the Cabinet, the Commission, a Board or a Committee for consideration. This shall be moved and seconded formally and put without discussion. No other motion or amendment may be moved.
- (c) The discussion of any position statement shall not exceed 20 minutes but the Chairman may permit an extension to this period.)

LEADER

The Leader will make his statement.

**TO CONSIDER REPORTS OF THE CABINET,
SCRUTINY COMMISSION, SCRUTINY COMMITTEES, AND OTHER BODIES**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8
REPORTS OF THE CABINET**

Principal Speakers: -
Mover of motion (as appropriate)
Leader of the Opposition (Mr M Mullaney)

- (A) **LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2026**
(Pages 21 – 80)

MR RUSHTON will move and MRS POSNETT will second: -

“That the Strategic Plan for 2022 to 2026, as set out in the Appendix A to the report, be approved.”

- (B) LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL’S COMMUNITIES STRATEGY – OUR COMMUNITIES APPROACH 2022 – 2026
(Pages 82 – 104)

MRS POSNETT will move and MRS RICHARDSON will second: -

“That the Communities Strategy: Leicestershire County Council – Our Communities Approach 2022-2026, appended to the report, be approved.”

- (C) Dates of Council Meetings 2022/23 and 2023/24

MR SHEPHERD will move and MR RUSHTON will second: -

“That Council meetings in 2022/23 and 2023/24 be held on the following dates: -

- Wednesday 6 July 2022
- Wednesday 28 September 2022
- Wednesday 7 December 2022
- Wednesday 22 February 2023 (to consider the budget)
- Wednesday 17 May 2023 (Annual meeting)
- Wednesday 5 July 2023
- Wednesday 27 September 2023
- Wednesday 6 December 2023
- Wednesday 21 February 2024 (to consider the budget)
- Wednesday 15 May 2024 (Annual meeting)”

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 9 - APPOINTMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH
ITEMS 11 AND 12 OF STANDING ORDER 4**

- A. TO APPOINT THE LEADER (AND TO NOTE THE MEMBERS WHICH THE LEADER PROPOSES TO APPOINT TO THE CABINET)

Motion 1

MRS TAYLOR will move and MR SHEPHERD will second: -

“That Mr N J Rushton be appointed Leader of the Council for the period until the next Annual Meeting of the Council.”

Motion 2

MR RUSHTON will move and MR SHEPHERD will second: -

“That it be noted that the Leader proposes to appoint the members named on List ‘1’ attached to the Order Paper as members of the Cabinet.”

B. TO APPOINT CABINET SUPPORT MEMBERS AS THE COUNCIL CONSIDERS APPROPRIATE

MR RUSHTON will move and MR SHEPHERD will second: -

“That the following members be appointed as Cabinet Support Members until the next Annual Meeting of the County Council, as provided for in Article 7 of the Council’s Constitution: -

Mr R. Ashman CC

Mrs B. Seaton CC

Mr T. Parton CC

Mrs M. Wright CC”

C. TO APPOINT MEMBERS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION, BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Motion 1

MR SHEPHERD will move and MR BRAY will second: -

“That the membership of the Scrutiny Commission, Boards and Committees as set out in List ‘2’ and the Chairmen Elect and Spokespersons named in List ‘3’ attached to the Order Paper be approved.”

Motion 2

MR SHEPHERD will move and MR BRAY will second: -

“That the Chief Executive be authorised to make and terminate appointments to the Commission, committees, boards and other County Council bodies (not including the Cabinet) in accordance with the wishes of the Political Groups to whom the seat in question has been allocated, subject in the case of those bodies set out in List ‘2’ to the Group giving one day’s notice to the Chief Executive of its wishes.”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10 – NOTICES OF MOTION

(a) Cost of Living in Leicestershire – Mr Max Hunt CC

MR HUNT will move and MRS TAYLOR will second: -

“1. That this Council notes: -

- a) That many of the residents of the County:
 - are now finding it very hard to meet their domestic fuel bills;
 - are finding a rise in the price of ordinary commodities from food to household products;
 - are facing escalating fuel costs at the petrol stations with no alternative options;
 - will be receiving lower wages in real terms for the foreseeable future, including many working in the public sector;
 - are struggling with the latest Council Tax and National Insurance tax rises.
- b) That the Bank of England officially forecasts an inflation rate of 10.2% in the fourth quarter of this year; this being based on a rise in fuel cap from £1,971 to £2,800 in October.
- c) That price rises are more likely to adversely affect those on low incomes living in deprived communities who will also be prey to the seductive loans which are often at exorbitant rates of interest.
- d) That the establishment of a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) wide group to be chaired by a representative from the Leicester Cathedral and comprising the County Council, City Council, District Councils, Rutland, voluntary sector, NHS and the DWP to address the impact of the cost of living crisis, be welcomed.

2. That this County Council requests: -

- a) That the LLR wide group referred to in (d) above develop an action plan to:
 - Improve debt advice and access to that advice through Contact Plus and other avenues.
 - Prioritise action to identify and contain illegal money lenders.
 - Widen interventions on child poverty.
 - Develop new initiatives to support struggling families.
- b) That this the County Council work with District Councils and others to explore ways to:
 - Optimise the distribution of the Household Support Fund.
 - Increase take up of Council Tax Support.
 - Identify any mitigation of financial risks to small businesses.”

(b) Ukrainian Refugees – Mr M. T. Mullaney CC

Mr Mullaney, with the consent of the seconder of the motion, sought the approval of the Council to move the following altered motion:

MR MULLANEY will move and MR GALTON will second: -

- “1. That this Council offers its solidarity with the people of Ukraine who are suffering the ongoing trauma of the unprovoked aggression of the Russian invasion.
2. That this Council welcomes the incredibly warm hearted and generous response from many Leicestershire residents who have taken Ukrainian refugees into their homes.
3. That this Council notes that a number of local authorities have already provided free bus passes to Ukrainian refugees living in their areas and calls on the Cabinet to consider a scheme to provide free bus passes to those Ukrainian refugees coming to live in Leicestershire and, if necessary, to authorise the Chief Executive to exercise urgent powers after consultation with the Leader to implement an appropriate scheme or transport offer before the next meeting of the Cabinet.”

LIST '1'**THE LEADER**

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL: Mr N J Rushton CC

THE CABINET

The Leader (elect) has given notice that he proposes to appoint the following members to serve on the Cabinet.

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL: Mrs D Taylor CC (Lead Member for Children and Young People)

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CABINET:-

1. Mr P Bedford CC
2. Mr L Breckon CC
3. Mr O O'Shea CC
4. Mr B L Pain CC
5. Mrs P Posnett CC
6. Mrs C M Radford CC
7. Mrs L Richardson CC
8. Mr R J Shepherd CC

LIST '2'**MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS****SCRUTINY COMMISSION (11)****Conservative (8)**

- 1 Mrs Page CC
- 2 Mr Poland CC
- 3 Mr Richardson CC
- 4 Mrs Fryer CC
- 5 Mr Gillard CC
- 6 Mr Morgan CC
- 7 Mr Pendleton CC
- 8 Mr Barkley CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mrs Hack CC

Liberal Democrat (2)

- 1 Mr Mullaney CC
- 2 Mr Galton CC

Membership to include the

- ♦ Leader of the main Opposition Group as Chairman;
- ♦ 3 Commissioners (2 Administration and 1 minority Opposition); and
- ♦ Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees (5).

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (7)**A. ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES (7)****Conservative (5)**

- 1 Mr Richardson CC
- 2 Mr Chapman CC
- 3 Mr Champion CC
- 4 Mr Hadji-Nikolaou CC
- 5 Mrs A Wright CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mr Miah CC

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mrs Broadley CC

B. CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (7)**Conservative (5)**

- 1 Mrs Fryer CC
- 2 Mr Smith CC
- 3 Mr Hadji-Nikolaou CC
- 4 Mr Hills CC
- 5 Mr Frisby CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mr Hunt CC

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Welsh CC

C. HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT (7)**Conservative (5)**

- 1 Mr Gillard CC
- 2 Mr Merrie CC
- 3 Mr Phillimore CC
- 4 Mr Lovegrove CC
- 5 Mr Allen CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mrs Hack CC

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Bill CC

C. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE (7)**Conservative (5)**

- 1 Mr Pendleton CC
- 2 Mr Frisby CC
- 3 Mr Chapman CC
- 4 Mr Harrison-Rushton CC
- 5 Mrs Page CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mr Hunt CC

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Boulter CC

D. HEALTH (7)**Conservative (5)**

- 1 Mr Morgan CC
- 2 Mr King CC
- 3 Mr Ghattorya CC
- 4 Mr Hills CC
- 5 Mr Harrison CC

Labour (1)

- 1 Mrs Newton CC

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Charlesworth CC

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND REGULATORY BOARD (11)**Conservative (9)**

- 1 Mr Coxon CC
- 2 Mr Phillimore CC
- 3 Mr Bannister CC
- 4 Mr Grimley CC
- 5 Mr Smith CC
- 6 Mr Allen CC
- 7 Mr Harrison CC
- 8 Mr Lovegrove CC
- 9 Mr Merrie CC

Labour (0)**Liberal Democrat (2)**

- 1 Mr Charlesworth CC
- 2 Mr Gamble CC

CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE (7)**Conservative (6)**

- 1 Mr Rushton CC
- 2 Mrs Taylor CC

Labour (0)**Liberal Democrat (1)**

- 1 Mr Mullaney CC

- 3 Mr Shepherd CC
- 4 Mr Breckon CC
- 5 Mr Bedford CC
- 6 Mr Poland

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE (7)

Conservative (6)

Labour (0)

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Breckon CC
- 2 Mr Bedford CC
- 3 Mr Shepherd CC
- 4 Mr Harrison CC
- 5 Mr Harrison-Rushton CC
- 6 Mr Champion CC

- 1 Mrs Broadley CC

LOCAL PENSION COMMITTEE (5)

Conservative (4)

Labour (0)

Liberal Democrat (1)

- 1 Mr Barkley CC
- 2 Mr Grimley CC
- 3 Mr King CC
- 4 Mrs A. Wright CC

- 1 Mr Bill CC

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE (7)

Conservative (5)

Labour (0)

Liberal Democrat (2)

- 1 Mr Barkley CC
- 2 Mr Richardson CC
- 3 Mr Orson CC
- 4 Mr Coxon CC
- 5 Mr Bannister CC

- 1 Mr Boulter CC
- 2 Mr Bill CC

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHAIRMEN AND GROUP SPOKEPERSONS

	Conservative		Liberal Democrat	Labour
Scrutiny Commission Commissioners	Mrs Page CC	Mr Poland CC	Mr Mullaney CC	Mrs Hack CC

Overview and Scrutiny		Conservative		Liberal Democrat	Labour
		Chairman (elect)	Deputy Chairman (elect)	Spokesmen	Spokesperson
A.	Adults and Communities	Mr Richardson CC	Mr Chapman CC	Mrs Broadley CC	Mr Miah CC
B.	Children and Families	Mrs Fryer CC	Mr Smith CC	Mr Welsh CC	Mr Hunt CC
C.	Highways and Transport	Mr Gillard CC	Mr Merrie CC	Mr Bill CC	Mrs Hack CC
D.	Environment & Climate Change	Mr Pendleton CC	Mr Frisby CC	Mr Boulter CC	Mr Hunt CC
E.	Health	Mr Morgan CC	Mr King CC	Mr Charlesworth CC	Ms Newton CC
Development Control and Regulatory Board		Mr Coxon CC	Mr Phillimore CC	Mr Charlesworth CC	-

Other Regulatory Bodies	Conservative Spokesperson	Liberal Democrat Spokesperson	Labour Spokesperson
Constitution Committee	Mr Rushton CC	Mr Mullaney CC	-
Employment Committee	Mr Breckon CC	Mrs Broadley CC	-
Local Pension Committee	Mr Barkley CC	Mr Bill CC	-
Corporate Governance Committee	Mr Barkley CC	Mr Boulter CC	-

Chairmanship

The Council's Constitution makes provision for the leader of the largest opposition party to be ex officio the Chairman of the Scrutiny Commission.

The membership of the Scrutiny Commission includes the Chairmen of the five Scrutiny Committees.

The appointment of Chairman and Deputy Chairman are matters to be determined by the bodies themselves, but the nominations are reported to the Council (shown as "Chairman or Deputy Chairman elect").

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COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 18TH MAY 2022

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

County Deal

I am taking it that members will be reasonably familiar with the Devolution Framework in the Levelling Up White Paper and levels 1,2 and 3. If not, officers can forward copies.

I said in my position statement to the Council in February that we wanted to get a deal as close as possible to level 3. In other words, we wanted a deal in line to some extent with our bid which we were encouraged to make last year but turned out not to meet the Functional Economic Area test when the White Paper was published in November.

I also said in February that we would be looking to work with Leicester and Rutland, which the White Paper suggested would be appropriate in our case.

I am now able to inform the Council that discussions with Government about the scope of a bid have concluded and we are only able to bid for a level 2 deal. That means that the ambitious elements which we were still encouraged to include after the White Paper was published, such as:

- A Better Care Fund for Children and Young People
- Gainshare funding to support road infrastructure
- Funding for buses
- Further funding for Broadband

will have to wait for another day.

That is certainly disappointing but, although it would be wrong to go into detail about our discussions with Government, it is clear that they see going for a level 2 deal as putting us in a good place to achieve further devolution later on.

They are also clear that we should proceed from here for a level 2 bid covering Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland – a non-mayoral combined authority to be made up of upper tier local authorities only, but with the district councils involved. That is the model of authority set out in the White Paper and now to be taken forward in legislation.

Lastly, it is clear that we are not able to join with the bid for the level 3 mayoral deal which Nottinghamshire, Nottingham, Derbyshire and Derby (D2N2) are making.

The next steps, we are advised, will be discussions for the upper tier authorities with Government officials about governance, rather than the content of a level 2 bid, which will follow the Devolution Framework. I will be meeting with the City Mayor, the new Leader of Rutland and the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the District Councils shortly and will keep the Council informed.

UKSPF and Levelling Up fund.

As part of the Government's commitment to delivering on its Levelling Up agenda, the County Council and district councils can bid into two new funding pots this summer. Bidding takes time and resources, but maximising funding coming into Leicestershire is of paramount importance. That is why I have reached out to the district councils as they pull together Levelling Up Fund Bids and UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plans and offered to help strengthen their proposals and support the coordination of bids across the County.

Tackling the cost of living crisis

We recognise the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals and families across Leicestershire. The Council has a strong record of supporting vulnerable households and the Deputy Leader will outline some of the actions taken.

The Council has also been working alongside district councils to ensure the County doesn't miss out on Government funding allocated to district councils to install energy efficiency measures in those homes most in need of support. As a result, over the next year, more than £3m will be spent making Leicestershire's homes warmer and tackling the crucial issue of rising energy prices.

Later on the agenda for this meeting, there is a notice of motion which refers to a LLR wide group looking at how we can all work together to address this issue and build on the work we have already started.

Supporting Ukrainian refugees

I am very proud of the way Leicestershire residents have stepped up to support those fleeing the conflict in the Ukraine. The way local people have raised money and donated goods to support those seeking refuge has been humbling. An extra special mention should go to those in the County who have offered to host Ukrainians in their homes and I know that to date over 700 visa applications have been made for Ukrainians who will be hosted by 'sponsors' in Leicestershire. A significant minority of these have already arrived in the County and the Council has worked closely with partners to make sure they are supported on their arrival.

Our preparations have not been helped by the quality and timeliness of data provided by the Government, but I am happy to report that local partners are working well together to make sure that Ukrainian guests and their sponsors get the support they need and richly deserve.

I am particularly pleased that our officers have been liaising closely with the Ukrainian Centre in Leicester; their input is helping the Council and partners to make sure that the local response is as effective as possible.

With regard to the notice of motion on providing free bus passes we will look at how best to accommodate that request.

Supporting the economy and delivering economic growth

This Council continues to support businesses including through the provision of advice and guidance and providing space for innovative businesses to locate and expand in the County. We are working with partners and the LLEP to support the local economy's recovery from Covid19 and will work with partners to secure the funding we need to provide key infrastructure and improve skills.

There is, however, an area of major concern. Continuing to forward fund major schemes arising from district councils' local plans is going to be incredibly difficult and impossible in some cases, with inflation making matters far worse than we ever imagined. Going forward, we will need to be innovative in identifying sources of funding for capital, including working with planning authorities and developers to ensure infrastructure required to support economic and housing growth is fully funded and maintaining sound financial management of the resources that we do have to meet this challenge.

Fair Funding

The County Council continues to be one of the lowest funded authorities and continues to campaign for a fair funding deal, recently leading the formation of the F20 group. The group is made up of those authorities who have higher levels of council tax and lower levels of core spending power and we will continue with our efforts and lobbying of MPs.

The Council's financial position, both in relation to Capital and Revenue funds is grave. Existing service demand pressures are being compounded by high inflation. As the lowest funded Council in England, the Council has limited capacity to continue to invest in vital services or the infrastructure which Leicestershire needs.

Green Leicestershire

Fresh proposals designed to tackle climate change and make Leicestershire a net zero carbon County have been published recently. The draft Leicestershire Net Zero 2045 Strategy and Action Plan sets out Leicestershire County Council's plan to join forces with residents, councils, businesses, universities and others in the race to net zero carbon from the County. Tackling climate change across the whole of Leicestershire is too big a job for any one organisation. This plan sets out how we can work together to get to net zero by 2045.

A cleaner, greener Leicestershire has much wider benefits for our health and our economy, and everyone can make changes to help make it a reality.

We all have a role to play - collectively, we can make a big difference!

'Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge'

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to let members know that our colleague, Craig Smith, the County Councillor for the Coalville North Division is to lead a team of 4 friends taking part in what is billed as the "World's Toughest Race", the "Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge" – an incredible 3,000-mile unsupported rowing race across the Atlantic Ocean.

The race begins in December 2025 from La Gomera, Canary Islands. The 40 participating crews expect to spend anywhere between 29-75 days at sea on average. Finishing at Nelson's Dockyard in Antigua.

The team named "Anchor Management" will be a mixed crew of 4 and will be rowing non-stop, 2 hours on 2 hours off, 24 hours a day for the duration of the voyage. The crew are not just aiming to complete the crossing safely and successfully, but to beat the current mixed crew World Record of 40 days and 23 hours, that was set this year by a British Army crew.

The crew hope to raise more than £200,000 for McMillan Cancer support, a charity that holds special meaning to the crew, in particular Sarah who 7 years ago was diagnosed with Breast cancer. As well as raising funds they also hope to raise awareness of the beauty and fragility of the Ocean and urge people to take action and to protect it for future generations.

Craig's crew are in the Chamber with us today and I am sure all members will want to wish the crew every success and assist them in raising funds for McMillan Cancer.

**N. J. Rushton CC
Leader of the Council**

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