



DATE: 27 September 2023
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ORDER PAPER, QUESTIONS AND POSITION STATEMENTS SUPPLEMENTARY PACK

1. Order Paper and Questions (Pages 3 – 14)
2. To receive position statements under Standing Order 8. (Pages 15 - 26)
 - (i) Position Statement from the Leader of the Council
 - (ii) Position Statement from the Lead Member for Children and Family Services
 - (iii) Position Statement from the Lead Member for Health
 - (iv) Position Statement for the Lead Member for Communities and Staff Relations



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MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 2.00 P.M.

ORDER PAPER

EVACUATION PROCEDURE

In the event of having to evacuate officers will be able to advise and be on hand to assist any people with disabilities.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1
CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The CHAIRMAN will make his announcements.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2
MINUTES
(Pages 3 to 16)

The CHAIRMAN will move and MR ORSON will second:

'That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 5th July 2023, copies of which have been circulated to members, be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3
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. 4
QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1) (2) & (5)

(A) Question by MR BRAY

"I have had a number of representations from residents in my division about holiday provision for disabled children in the Leicestershire County Council area.

In the email the residents say:

Holiday Clubs provided during the school holidays offer children the chance to meet other children, socialise, increase social and learning skills and try out new hobbies and have fun.

For the families of disabled children, holiday clubs also provide the opportunity for parents to have a break from their caring responsibilities and spend time with their other children. In addition, they help disabled children to manage the transition back to the new school term.

However, families with disabled children too often find there is a lack of holiday club provision that can meet their child or family's needs, leaving them without support or fun activities over the holiday period, creating further pressure for the whole family, families who often live stressful and isolated lives.

New research from the Disabled Children's Partnership has found that the majority of families with disabled children (81%) would like a holiday club for their disabled child during the six-week break: 40% to enable them to work and 77% so their child can socialise with other children.

But just 10% have found something suitable and only 4% of everyone surveyed said they'd found something for the days and hours they need.

The parents and grandparents of the children are asking that the County Council carry out an audit of holiday provision in the Leicestershire County Council area to see how well it meets the needs of families with disabled children and take steps to address any shortfall. Would the Leader commit to undertake to do this and report the findings to all members?"

Reply by MRS TAYLOR

"The County Council is committed to ensuring children with disabilities and their families are supported during school term time and school holidays with inclusive activities that support their play and leisure, progression within their ability, as well as offering an opportunity for parents to have a break from their caring duties for those children whereby time away from their parents is age appropriate and enhances their identity, self-esteem, learning and development. This area comes under our short breaks offer.

There are many clubs and activities available across Leicestershire in the local offer, there is a local offer Facebook page that advertises opportunities. There is a nominal fee for parents and carers to access these resources as a personal choice across the year including the summer school term holiday. Disability allowances can also be used.

Whilst we will not undertake an audit of holiday provision, as part of our commitment to improving opportunities we are currently reviewing our short breaks provision across Leicestershire and we are working closely with the SEND parent carer hub, gaining parents voice to create more choice and opportunity for the use of direct payments, and local short breaks provision year-round and during school term breaks. A survey for parents/carers in receipt of short breaks has recently closed. We are currently reviewing the responses which will help to shape support in the future for children and their families.

Children who meet the threshold for assessment and services across the Child and Family Wellbeing Service or Social Care Children's Disability Service are offered an assessment of need for short breaks and additional parenting/carers

advice and support in line with needs. We know there is a higher number of providers of specialist support in the north of the County compared with the south. We have a commitment to developing this and work with local providers to provide local services that meet the local need.

Our Defining Children's Services for the Future improvement plan is embedded and in relation to short breaks we are reviewing how short breaks are accessed utilising a blend of direct payments and commissioned services, so to give children and their families more choice. The Children and Families Department can provide updates and assurance to members on the improvement plan and review."

(B) Question by MR HUNT

"1. Our current Local Transport Plan* tells us that *"Evidence from our research into the impact of housing growth in the Leicester Urban Area of the county in particular, suggests that encouraging people to change travel behaviour, supported by improvements to public transport and walking and cycling facilities, will reduce the impacts of population growth on the performance of our transport system and road network"*.

What would those impacts be in terms of traffic congestion and what other areas of the county are likely to be affected?

2. With the exception of some demand responsive interventions, what significant improvements to public transport, if any, have been effective in mitigating housing growth?
3. The plan states that available evidence *points towards the need to investigate, and possibly introduce, some form of active demand management during the second half of this strategy*. Accepting that we are well in the second half of the LTP strategy, and we are regularly warned of the demands on cost and scale of measures to mitigate housing growth, what form of active demand management has been investigated, and what might be introduced?
4. Do you intend to make a similar offer in the next Local Transport Plan, whenever that may be?"

* [Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 \(LPT3 Section 5.83, Monitoring\)](#)

Reply by MR O'SHEA

"1. The evidence base (research) for the current Local Transport Plan (LTP3) was developed over 10 years ago, based on data and information available at that time and predating the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan 2050 (SGP) and the changed emphasis of strategic spatial distribution of housing across Leicestershire that it sets out.

Thus, it is not possible to directly answer this question relating to a quote

based on out of date evidence. A new evidence base is being developed for the Authority's next Local Transport Plan (LTP4), which will reflect the SGP and take an up to date look at the future impacts of population growth across all areas of Leicestershire. The conclusions of this evidence work will be reflected in LTP4.

2. Public Transport provision and infrastructure for new developments is secured through the planning process and we continue to work with operators to ensure such provision is attractive and viable in order to mitigate traffic impacts and single occupancy vehicle journeys. Some recent examples include the extension of service My15, which commenced on 25th June 2023 in Castle Donington to serve the Park Lane development and a new service in Hinckley (service 11), which commenced on 15th April 2023 to serve Hollycroft Grange. In addition, through the Leicestershire Enhanced Partnership we have a mechanism to work closely with bus operators to seek opportunities to address the challenges facing rural passenger transport in the County.
3. In recent reports to the Cabinet, officers have made clear that, based on recent evidence work, significant changes in people's behaviours and expectations will be required if the impacts of population growth on the County's transportation system (and on carbon levels) are to be lessened significantly. However, during the LTP3 period no form of demand management has been investigated. While we would have anticipated being able to take forward some form of demand management in the latter part of the LTP period at the time we wrote the document, the reality around public support and mechanisms to achieve this have proved to be challenging.

To demonstrate this, the idea of 'pay as you drive' does not appear to be included in the thinking of the Government as to a way to fill the deficit in national taxes generated by the move away from petrol or diesel powered vehicles to electric vehicles. Additionally, the Mayor of Leicester has cancelled his plans to introduce a workplace parking levy with only one city (Nottingham) in the country having managed to implement such a scheme despite the regulations being in place since 2009. Similarly implementing any kind of congestion charge is equally as difficult as recently exemplified by Cambridge City Council announcing they are no longer pursuing their congestion charging proposals and very few areas outside London having such a scheme. It would be very difficult for Leicestershire County Council to consider introducing demand management measures in its market towns in isolation in such an environment.

4. The Authority's LTP4 is likely to be structured around setting out: firstly, the things that are within its gift to do and influence (subject to funding as appropriate), and the predicted impacts that they will have on future levels of traffic and emissions (most particularly carbon); and secondly, where support and actions are required by other local, regional and national partners to address the impacts of population growth on the County. In that

context, and reflecting the response to question 3 about Leicestershire not being able 'go alone', it is very probable that LTP4 will talk about the need for ways to reduce future levels of traffic through some form of demand management, but in the context of working with regional and national partners to identify a UK-wide approach."

(C) Question by MR MIAH

"The traffic into Loughborough via the A6 Leicester Rd every weekday morning is causing severe delays for motorists and bus users alike. Most weekday mornings traffic is backed up along the A6 and sometimes for several miles, with stationery traffic adding to air pollution. Please can I ask if the County Council is aware of this issue and if so, how it plans to address it?"

Reply by MR O'SHEA

"We are aware of the issues (Charnwood Borough Council Local Plan evidence) and have proposed to work up three transport strategies to look at what can be done in Charnwood to mitigate planned growth (this includes one for the Loughborough and Shepshed area).

The transport strategies focus initially on sustainable modes with highway intervention only after other options have been exhausted; the recently consulted on Loughborough Area Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan will form a core element of the Loughborough and Shepshed area strategy. Seeking to improve passenger transport provision will also be a key element. The Authority has recently been successful in receiving Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) funding which has enabled us to retain services that were planned to be reviewed under the Passenger Transport policy and Strategy. This funding will also allow us to support commercial bus operators to grow patronage post-Covid-19 pandemic through the Enhanced Bus Partnership. In the short-term, we will be reviewing our Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy (PTPS) approach to ensure it is aligned with the Government aspirations as set out in the national Bus Back Better strategy. Additionally, the Authority is exploring the potential to roll out digital demand responsive services more widely across the County, based on experiences with the current Rural Mobility Fund pilot 'FoxConnect' service currently operating in the south west of the County. The current Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) includes a commitment to develop and implement bus priority interventions as well as undertaking behavioural change campaigns. However, these measures are dependent on the Authority receiving future BSIP+ funding.

Funding for the strategies is reliant on the collection of developer contributions but we will look to explore Government funding such as from Active Travel England, further BSIP+ funding or Major Route Network funding where possible.

Ultimately, the level of traffic using the road network across the country is continually increasing and unless we can get people out of their cars to travel sustainably especially for short journeys, we will see more and more congestion

on our network.”

(D) Question by Mr MULLANEY

“The number 1 and 2 bus services which served Hinckley and Barwell and Earl Shilton were recently removed by Arriva. I have been contacted by a number of residents in Hinckley and Barwell and Earl Shilton who are unhappy with the loss of these services and do not believe the alternative options to the bus service that have been provided are sufficient. Could the County Council please look again at this and work with bus providers to see if an alternative provider could deliver a new 1 and 2 bus service for these communities?”

Reply by MR O’SHEA

“Arriva made the commercial decision to withdraw Services 1 and 2 following a sustained period of low demand.

The County Council considered the withdrawal of these services and any alternative provision in the context of its Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy (PTPS). The PTPS outlines the need to consider how residents can make journeys to access essential services such as food shopping and primary healthcare that are generally available at a local centre. As part of its assessment, it also needs to consider value for money.

The Council’s impact assessment determined that a majority of residents in Hinckley, Earl Shilton and Barwell continue to have access to an alternative bus service in the form of the Arriva 158 and Stagecoach 148L. Certain residents of Hinckley also have access to the Arriva 7/7a services.

The County Council has no regulatory powers over commercial bus operators, as such all decisions regarding their network are made entirely at the operator’s discretion. For residents over 800 metres walking distance from a stop served by local bus services, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services are in place. The DRT’s offer journeys from Earl Shilton, Hinckley and Barwell, Monday to Saturday to the local centre. There is a significant cost to replace services 1 and 2 and with the majority of residents having access to alternative bus services it would not be cost effective or viable to deliver a new service to meet the travel demands of a small number of households.”

(E) Question by MR PARTON

“I understand that, in light of the significant costs of highways and transport infrastructure provision identified to support Charnwood’s planned growth, the County Council plans to implement an interim transport strategy to manage planning applications in the period before a local plan is in place. I also understand that this approach would mirror the approach to be taken once the plan is adopted. Has the interim plan been implemented and if not, what are the potential consequences?”

Reply by MR O'SHEA

“The Interim Transport Contributions Strategy for Developments in Charnwood District (approved by the Cabinet in February 2023) was produced with the support of Charnwood Borough Council, National Highways and Leicester City Council. When developed, it was envisaged the Strategy would be in place until at least Charnwood’s adoption of its Local Plan and provide the basis for the more detailed transport strategies set out through the proposed main modifications to the Local Plan put forward by Charnwood Borough Council (with the agreement of Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and National Highways).

The Strategy was prepared in response to the ongoing development pressures across Charnwood, with the purpose of providing an evidence base for the Borough Council to seek necessary transport contributions through the development management process towards the Local Plan mitigation package, in advance of an adopted plan and/or associated detailed area transport strategies to be developed in support of this, including setting out the broad approach to implementation of the Strategy. This has become necessary because a number of developments identified within the Local Plan are also coming through the planning process ahead of its adoption.

Subsequent to the approval of the Interim Transport Contributions Strategy on 10 February 2023, and pursuant to the Cabinet resolution, officers have been refining the Strategy and in light of ongoing discussions with Charnwood Borough Council and its implementation through the development management process, officers have been working to implement the Strategy whilst managing associated risks. However, despite previous indications to the contrary, Charnwood Borough Council officers have recently confirmed they do not agree to the proposal although no alternative has been put forward. The application of the Interim Transport Contributions Strategy implementation is therefore currently paused.

It is the position of the County Highway Authority that, given the proposed approach to the distribution of development set out within the proposed Local Plan and the number of developments that have already received planning permission, the Plan, as previously submitted to the examination, requires modification and that the transport strategies are necessary to support sustainable growth in Charnwood. This position remains unchanged, subject to the continued commitment of Charnwood Borough Council. Charnwood Borough Council’s current Local Plan is now nearly seven years old, and the Borough Council is also unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of housing land. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) a local planning authority in such a situation is in a relatively poor position to seek to resist speculative, unplanned sites coming forward through the planning process. Unplanned development can lead to cumulative impacts on infrastructure such as roads and schools that have not been mitigated, in turn having a negative impact on existing residents and communities. The County Council has therefore sought to support Charnwood Borough Council in developing, adopting and implementing

a new local plan to help manage this risk.

However, in-lieu of a firm commitment from Charnwood Borough Council that it will support the County Council's Local Plan approach and the implementation of the Interim Transport Contributions Strategy and its delivery, the County Council will need to reassess its position to support the Local Plan, given the financial risk and lack of a mechanism to mitigate against the negative impacts of development. Without a mechanism to secure contributions through the development management process, the Plan could be adopted underpinned by a transport strategy that is undeliverable."

(F) Question by MR HUNT

- “1. The Prime Minister has announced the Government’s intention to delay the move to EV cars and vans by extending the sale of new ICE vehicles to 2035, which of our own Net Zero Leicestershire Transport Actions are likely to be affected by this, and how?
2. In addition to the above, given the changes proposed on insulating rented properties and sale of gas boilers, which Buildings & Energy Actions are likely to be affected, and how?
3. Would he agree that it is important “how” we reach net zero, not just “when” because delay means more severe consequences and overshooting the 1.5°C Paris Agreement?
4. What progress are we making to establish a robust baseline to provide annual progress updates to members. (Net Zero Strategy 3.4)?
5. Will the Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan be reviewed and updated, in accordance with the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy (3.6)?
6. How will the annual update Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan be published in order to keep pace with new opportunities and changes in government policy and will it supersede the previous Plan?”

Reply by MR PAIN

- “1. The County Council is currently working with consultants to look at producing a roadmap for greening the Council’s fleet. At present, it would not be possible to replace all of the fleet vehicles with electric alternatives (the vehicles are not available on the market). It is not clear if the Prime Minister’s announcements will impact on the availability of new vehicle types coming onto the market. The County Council is currently exploring the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as a diesel alternative for those vehicles that are difficult to transition to electric.
2. The County Council has carried out a review of all its properties and the ability to comply with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES). It

has a strategy in place to ensure a programme of improvement works to meet the required standards which may include disposal. The County Council will continue to monitor the legislation and make any further improvements in line with any changes to the MEES standards

In relation to the Net Zero Leicestershire Action Plan, the County Council will continue to deliver initiatives such as the Green Living Leicestershire Home Upgrade Grants which provide energy efficiency improvements or clean heating (such as air source heat pumps) for homes that do not have mains gas heating.

The Warm Homes service, which is leading the delivery of several Green Living Leicestershire partnership schemes, is continuing to explore future funding opportunities and intends to continue the development of a domestic retrofit advice offer, providing in home advice and community events as well as access to retrofit assessment and recommendations. This will include building links with local building societies to develop resources providing advice and promote green finance initiatives.

The County Council does not anticipate that the recent announcements will impact the ability of the service to support the aims of the Action Plan, noting that new schemes of support, including the recently launched Great British Insulation Scheme and an extension and increase in the funding available per household under the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, were included in the recent announcement.

The removal of the deadline to require private rental properties with minimum EPC band of C by 2035 (proposed changes to MEES regulations) may be a balancing response to housing pressures such as a rise in landlords selling properties to allow more time for improvements. The impact is that landlords will be less likely take steps to act sooner to improve household energy efficiency.

3. Yes, I agree that it is important how we reach net zero – it is the cumulative amount of carbon dioxide released that has an impact rather than just the amount emitted in one specific year.
4. A robust baseline was established and is shown in the Net Zero Strategy (section 3.5). Leicestershire's emissions in the baseline year (2019) were 4.87 MtCO₂e (million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent).
5. Yes, the Net Zero Action Plan will be reviewed and updated in accordance with the Net Zero Leicestershire Strategy.
6. The annual review of the action plan will be presented to the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024. All Scrutiny Committee papers are published on the Council's website and, in addition, I expect that the action plan update will be published on the Council's net zero web pages also (where all of the Council's net zero

documents are published).”

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5
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.

LEAD MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

The Lead Member will make her statement.

LEAD MEMBER FOR HEALTH

The Lead Member will make her statement.

LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND STAFF RELATIONS

The Lead Member will make her statement.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6
NOTICE OF MOTION

(A) Ivanhoe Line

With the consent of the Council, MR BILL will move and MR MULLANEY will second the following altered motion:

“Bearing in mind the time, money and effort expended by the County Council starting in the early 1980s, the work of the Campaign for re-opening the Ivanhoe Line and the support from the Government’s Restore Your Railway Fund, this Council urges the Department for Transport and Network Rail to reconsider its decision not to restore a passenger service between Leicester and Coalville and Ashby.”

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COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2023**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Trading Standards work at East Midlands Airport**

I am really pleased to inform members that almost 440,000 potentially dangerous or non-compliant items have been intercepted and seized by Leicestershire Trading Standards at East Midlands Airport in the last year.

The seizures are worth more than £15.3m and include electrical goods which could overheat and cause fires, toys which failed to meet UK safety standards, jewellery with high levels of hazardous metals and cosmetics containing toxic ingredients. All of these unsafe items have now been stopped from making it into shops and online marketplaces. They are all sent to a specialist disposal firm for recycling.

Our Trading Standards team works in partnership with Border Force on a nationally-funded project at East Midlands Airport. The partnership is intelligence-led, which means that Trading Standards and Border Force can target resources in the areas of highest risk, with potentially unlawful and non-compliant consignments being identified, targeted and then intercepted.

Most of the seized items are destined for sale at large online marketplaces, where they are sold on behalf of the importer.

The Trading Standards team has made an excellent video examining a consignment of unsafe goods, which can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXYQeFizvow. It is one of our most watched videos to date, with over 24,000 views on TikTok alone.

I'm sure members will wish to join with me in congratulating the Trading Standards team for their important work in this area.

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Firefighters in Morocco

As Chairman of the Combined Fire Authority, I am proud to report that Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) staff have been deployed to the earthquakes in Morocco.

The LFRS supports the United Kingdom International Search and Rescue Team (UK-ISAR). This is a highly trained and skilled group of individuals, that, if requested by foreign governments and approved by the UK Government, will deploy on to foreign soil to render humanitarian aid and save lives.

A UK-ISAR team of 60 people and 4 dogs were mustered and have now deployed into Morocco to conduct Search and Rescue. Within the team two LFRS personnel are included. I am proud of their involvement and commitment in rescuing people in a horrific and deeply troubling natural disaster.

Both personnel are highly trained and work within Leicester City, one of whom also responded to Turkey recently.

Bradgate Park

As Chairman of the Bradgate Park Trust, I am delighted to be able to inform members that Bradgate Park is the first place in Leicestershire to be recognised as a Green Heritage Site and has secured a prestigious Green Flag award for the second year running.

Bradgate Park now ranks alongside East Midlands neighbours, such as Wollaton Park in Nottingham and Derby Arboretum, which are also recognised as Green Heritage Sites for their interesting history.

Run by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy, the Green Flag award scheme sets the standard for the management of parks and beaches and inspires people to be litter-free, to waste less and live more sustainably. The scheme is also dedicated to recognising heritage through the Green Heritage Site accreditation, supported by Historic England.

To support Bradgate Park in its efforts to 'go green', we have been able to use the Active Travel Grant to enable rangers and volunteers to carry out tasks around the Park such as litter picking or updating the noticeboards on an electric cargo bike.

The e-bike will replace some of the Trust's diesel vehicles, supplying an eco-friendly alternative for the short trips taken along the Park's most popular pathways. We hope that this will improve air quality in heavily used areas of the Park and make walking on the pathway more peaceful for visitors.

Devolution

I reported in my Position Statement to the May Council that the County Council Leadership had had, at her request, a meeting with the Levelling Up Minister, Dehenna Davison MP, and it had been a very helpful and constructive meeting. She subsequently wrote to myself, the City Mayor and the Leader of Rutland asking us to pursue a level 3 deal with the Government.

As members will know, a level 3 deal is only available if there is agreement locally to have an elected mayor for the combined authority area and that remains unacceptable to the City Mayor.

The Minister then wrote to the three Leaders to ask us to state clearly if we intend to pursue a level 3 deal or the lesser level 2 deal. In the circumstances we have replied to say level 2 and we wait to hear from Government officials as to next steps.

I was very sorry to learn of Dehenna Davison's decision to stand down as a Minister and the reasons why. I wish her all the best for the future. She was always wanting to be positive in our meetings.

Ministerial Visit

I would like to this opportunity to thank Lee Rowley, DLUHC Minister, for his recent meeting with Mrs Taylor, Mr Breckon, Mr Bedford, Mr Ashman and me. The discussion was positive and followed constructive talks with the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, in Westminster. We set out a pragmatic, temporary fix which would see Government put in an extra £350m to level up 32 of the lowest funded councils.

We discussed the County Council's funding and the pressure that we are currently seeing in some service areas. The Minister advised that the Government will bring forward its proposals for the Local Government Finance Settlement 2024-25 in the usual way later in the year and that he welcomed frontline feedback as to what is happening at the current time.

We have a credible solution which can be implemented quickly so we were pleased with the reassurance that the Minister will take our comments back to Government.

MTFS Update

Members will be aware that the latest budget monitoring position shows a £9m overspend this year due to the increasing costs of children's and adult social care. Inflation, the National Living Wage and increasing pressures on vital services are also driving up costs and could push our budget shortfall to over £100m by 2027. Members should be reassured that intensive work is taking place focusing on managing future demand and close management of costs will continue to reduce the forecast overspend.

Our latest financial forecast typifies the grim reality facing councils up and down the country. Let me be clear – the section 151 officer is not about to issue a section 114 notice. We're super-efficient and pride ourselves on doing the best we can with the money we have, but spiralling costs are making it much harder to keep our head above water. With many other well run authorities also facing similar pressures, local government is reaching new territory.

Section 114 notices have gone from a once in a decade event to a regular occurrence. Authorities have got into trouble through poor management and governance rather than funding so it can seem irrelevant to our County Council. Birmingham's recent demise exemplifies this, the only surprising thing was that they didn't go under sooner. However, the sheer number of councils declaring serious issues are making things feel closer to home.

York's recent warning is notable as their funding per head of population is similar to our own, they have lower levels of deprivation and none of the challenges of a rural authority. I would also draw attention to Derbyshire's plight. As neighbours we have a lot of similarities. Despite being significantly better funded than we are, their financial position does not look good.

Some of the choices we will have to make will be politically difficult, but in the medium term they will deliver far better for Leicestershire than the alternative of not adapting to the financial position.

RAAC Update: Schools and County Council Buildings

Members will be aware of the potential risks from RAAC construction and will have seen the briefing note circulated on 18 September. Going forward, an update will be regularly included in the newly re-established Weekly Digest.

Since the Council became aware of RAAC vulnerabilities, surveyors have been actively looking for the presence of RAAC in the corporate estate during the five yearly cyclical condition surveys of all buildings. The corporate estate is now undergoing a targeted review. Any buildings that have not been surveyed in the last three years and fall within the new date range of buildings that may contain RAAC and have concrete plank construction will be subject to further inspections.

I would remind members that all relevant maintained school buildings have been assessed and that RAAC has not been discovered within maintained schools. The Director of Children and Family Services has recently been notified that RAAC is present at an Academy in the county. Mitigating actions had already been put in place by the Academy Trust, including closing off the areas affected. Further surveys are being undertaken by the DfE in order to decide on the course of action needed at the school.

Adults' and children's third party providers have been written to providing guidance on requirements and where to seek advice should providers have concerns.

Further guidance is awaited from the Government and I can assure members that it will be addressed as a priority when issued.

Electric Vehicle Chargepoints in Leicestershire

I am pleased to announce that more than £3 million in Government funding has been allocated to install electric vehicle chargepoints across Leicestershire.

We worked with a number of other councils and Midlands Connect on the bid and have been allocated funding through the Government's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure scheme (LEVI).

The earmarked funding will be used from 2024/25 and is expected to deliver up to 2,500 public electric vehicle chargepoints in Leicestershire by the end of 2030 to meet the needs of the growing electric vehicle (EV) market. Locations have not yet been identified and our next step is to develop a delivery plan with a focus on locations with the greatest public need, centring on residential streets where there is a high proportion of housing without access to private off-street parking.

The funding will also enable us to continue our green agenda and make a significant contribution to securing EV infrastructure across Leicestershire.

CaseworkerGov Software

Over the last few months, a small number of members from all groups have been piloting a software package called CaseworkerGov which is designed to help Members manage their constituents' casework. The pilot has been a success and

those Members who have used CaseworkerGov have found it beneficial. Some of its features are as follows:

- Set up and record individual constituent queries
- Set dates for follow up actions
- Tag the same issue against multiple constituents
- Ability to send emails to officers and constituents from within CaseworkerGov
- Ability to transfer emails sent to your @leics.gov.uk email address into the software
- Ability to create letters using standard templates
- Ability to analyse data as to the type of queries you are managing

For more information you can also view a YouTube video at

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLytbBA8Hlt_QpUMq7OV5cl1bKEFK0t-J1

All members have now been offered the opportunity to have access to CaseworkerGov and I would encourage you to sign up. Training sessions have been arranged for the end of October.

Mr N. J. Rushton
Leader of the Council

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COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2023
POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Family Hubs

Over the last 5 months I am pleased to share that we have opened 9 out of our 25 Family Hubs across Leicestershire. The opening events have welcomed parents and carers and members of the community into the Hubs for us to share the range of services and support on offer. The Leicestershire Family Hub offer is both wide and extensive, offering a 'one stop shop' for parents and carers with 0 to 19 year olds or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

The Family Hubs are a mixture of physical and virtual spaces, where people will have easy access to a range of family advice, support services and guidance on issues such as social care, education, and mental and physical health.

We are particularly pleased to be working with our colleagues in library services to help extend the reach of the Family Hubs concept. Leicestershire Libraries have always been buildings that welcome children and families and so are a natural partner in this programme. This partnership is enabling us to create Family Hub areas in libraries with resources for families to borrow, and use of public access computers to support with the digital poverty agenda.

Change Programme Partnerships SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Social Care Authorities and the Integrated Care Board have been selected in the East Midlands region to pilot a range of changes, set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The SEND AP Improvement Plan Sets out the Government's plans to change the SEND and AP system in England. There are nine change programme partnerships across the country that will be piloting and testing the reforms.

The main areas of testing during the programme, running from September 2023 to August 2025, are a set of national standards, developing Local Area Inclusion Partnerships, working with stakeholders to deliver a standard digitised Education, Health and Care Plan template with supporting processes and guidance, improving information available to families and providing a tailored list of suitable settings informed by the Local Area Inclusion Plan. The partnerships will also work with schools and further education colleges to develop a three tier AP ladder of intervention and an Early Language Support for Every Child programme will be rolled out jointly, through NHS England and Department for Education resourcing, to support Speech and Language therapy.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The Children and Family Services Department continues to provide support to children and young people who arrive in Leicestershire as unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Over the last year the Department has seen a significant rise in children arriving unaccompanied both through the National Transfer scheme and through spontaneous arrivals in the County. The department is responsible for assessing unaccompanied asylum seeking children's needs and arranging a suitable placement for them to live, alongside providing support to access education and other services. The Department is fully committed to supporting children who arrive in the County, unaccompanied, however the increase in numbers arriving is placing significant pressure on the Department's budget.

Story Book

And finally, I wanted to share a lovely book that has been written by 9 year old Amaya. Amaya has autism and is very passionate about the planet. In April this year she wrote a book 'The Adventures of Boo: Save the Sea Animals', which has been published and is available for people to buy. Amaya says: "I am really proud of this and if it educates one person then I have achieved something. To date I have sold nearly 50 books." Amaya is looking to write more books in the future.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 27TH SEPTEMBER 2023
POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE CABINET LEAD MEMBER FOR
HEALTH

Homelessness

Members will be aware that the Council has recently completed a consultation on a proposed new model of support to help improve the health of those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The consultation responses are currently being analysed prior to consideration by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on 1st November before Cabinet consider a final proposal for approval at the November Cabinet meeting.

Members will also be aware that there has been a large amount of publicity and lobbying by the current provider of that existing model. I do not wish to be drawn into an unseemly exchange of words with the current provider on their funding or Charnwood Borough Council's benefit rules but would remind members that this is about how we support improved health in a part of the population that experiences poorer health. I would urge members to view the scrutiny coverage of the homelessness item at HOSC on 13th September and consider it themselves.

COVID

Members will be aware that we're approaching that time of year where the nights draw in and colds and flu circulate once more. COVID might no longer be the threat it was but now sits alongside the other respiratory nasties we have to contend with. Although it remains unclear as to whether this new B.2.86 variant leads to more serious illness than recent variants, the NHS has wisely brought forward the COVID campaign to combat any threat. I would urge members to encourage those that are eligible for flu and covid jabs (the over 65s, and certain vulnerable groups) to get their flu and COVID jabs.

The NHS

Members will have seen the recent CQC report on maternity services at University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) which have been rated as 'requires improvement' with concerns expressed about staffing levels. Whilst recognising the pressure the NHS is under we look forward to seeing the benefits that should arise from the Integrated Care Board now that it has been in operation for over a year. However, I have regularly read articles in the trade press alluding to possible further changes in NHS structures. I would urge NHS colleagues not to be distracted by such coverage and to work together locally in the interests of our patients.

Smoking

Finally, members will be encouraged to hear that the adult smoking rate in Leicestershire has fallen into single figures for the first time ever, lower than all other East Midland authorities bar Rutland and bucking a trend in other areas of slow

decreases or even increases. We've said for a long time that we have a top notch smoking cessation team and it is pleasing to see the outcomes flowing from their impressive work

**Mrs. L. Richardson CC
Cabinet Lead Member for Health**

COUNTY COUNCIL – 27th SEPTEMBER 2023

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND STAFF RELATIONS

Communities Annual Report

I am delighted to introduce the 2023 Communities Annual Report. The Report highlights work with Leicestershire Communities that has been carried out within my portfolio over the past financial year. It celebrates and showcases some great initiatives and the success of locally led responses and action. This work, and that of the County Council as a whole, is guided by the framework of the Council's Communities Strategy: Our Communities Approach. The Approach was adopted by the County Council in May 2022 and since then there has been good progress across all departments, led by the corporate Communities Board, in embedding the core principles of prevention, participation and supporting voluntary sector catalysts.

We have a lot to be proud of in Leicestershire and the Annual Report brings to the forefront some of the very many ways in which the Council is collaborating with communities to promote asset-based approaches and social action; where people come together to support each other, building on the strengths of people, places, and local institutions. This approach is well illustrated in our support for the community response to ongoing cost-of-living pressures, close working with town and parish councils, Neighbourhood Planning Groups and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and wide engagement on equalities issues.

There are many other inspiring examples of our work within the Report, and I would urge Members to consider how we can link with and further support social action in our role as Community Leaders and Champions.

The Annual Report is available on the Leicestershire Communities website and on the Elected Members Portal.

Digital Update

The Digital Leicestershire team at Leicestershire County Council secured funding from Building Digital UK (BDUK) for a project to install full fibre broadband infrastructure to 43 public sector sites, mainly schools (30), in Leicestershire. Project Gigahub has connected its first four sites: Fleckney, Desford and Lutterworth Libraries and Barlestone C of E Primary School and Community Centre, with a further 11 estimated for completion by the end of September 2023, this will complete tranche 1. The remainder of the sites will be implemented before the end of March 2024.

Leicestershire premises are included in 7 different Lots for Project Gigabit. Project Gigabit is the UK Government's £5bn national programme that aims to accelerate gigabit broadband rollout across the UK. Project Gigabit is helping to achieve the Government's aim of 85% Gigabit coverage nationwide by 2025, and at least 99% by 2030.

Lot 11 (with Warwickshire) has the most premises in Leicestershire with approximately 24,000 and delivery is expected to start on this from Summer 2024.

The digital team has also been working with Openreach to encourage a number of Fibre Community Partnerships to the east of the County. Rotherby, Scalford, Rearsby and Waltham were target areas and Openreach will be starting to build soon in these areas. Openreach continues to work with Somerby, Wymondham and Knipton to encourage uptake.

The Digital Leicestershire website has been updated <https://digital-leicestershire.org.uk/broadband/project-gigahubs/> and includes a map that shows all the Gigahub sites and details of when they will go live.

The Digital team is undertaking a mapping exercise to understand further the digital coverage in Leicestershire, this will help us identify gaps and continue to support those hard-to-reach rural areas.

Mrs Pam Posnett CC

Lead Member for Communities and Staff Relations