

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2016**

### **POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

#### **Combined Authority/ Devolution Deal**

I can report that we remain very much on track to establish the Leicester/ Leicestershire Combined Authority by the Autumn. The positive collaboration between the County Council, City Council, district councils and the LLEP means that we are in an increasingly strong position to take advantage of the Government's devolution agenda, in stark contrast to some other places where combined authority and devolution plans have been unravelling on a weekly basis. We are fortunate in that Leicester and Leicestershire's boundaries broadly match those of the functional economic area which means that our partnership working and proposed activities are rooted in a meaningful economic geography. And our strength is reflected in the fact that other authorities are discussing the possibility of joining us, in particular Rutland, where I had positive engagement with the late leader Roger Begy and am having equally positive conversations with his successor, Terry King.

We are now building on our Combined Authority platform to develop a Devolution Deal with Government. Whilst still at an early stage, the nine Councils are committed to exploring radical and innovative ideas across a range of issues for inclusion in our deal. These will be discussed at the next meeting of the Economic Growth Board (now acting as the Shadow Combined Authority) on 22<sup>nd</sup> March. We hope to engage with Government on a Devolution Deal proposition before the summer recess.

#### **Midlands Engine**

I am continuing to engage fully with the emergence and development of the Midlands Engine which is our local version of the Northern Powerhouse and provides the opportunity to raise the profile of the Midlands both nationally and internationally and secure increased government funding to boost economic growth. I am particularly

keen to ensure that Leicestershire, and indeed the wider East Midlands, is fully and effectively represented in the Midlands Engine governance arrangements.

To this end I am keen that the Midlands Engine office should be based in Leicestershire and along with Loughborough University, Leicester City Council, the other City and County Council's in the East Midlands, the LLEP and other partners I am supporting a proposal for the office to be hosted at Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park.

I am also pleased to report that two schemes in the county have been submitted, via the Midlands Engine, for Government funding. These are further expansion of Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park, and further phases of the Leicester North West transport scheme. I am also a member of the Midlands Connect Board, which is effectively the transport arm of Midlands Engine. The main focus for Midlands Connect is to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy for road and rail by March 2017. The Government has provided £5m to fund the development of this strategy.

### **Charnwood Campus**

The closure of the Astra Zeneca life sciences facility in Loughborough was a shock to the town's and the county's economy. I am delighted to report that the site, now known as Charnwood Campus, is fast becoming a major economic development focus yet again. Earlier this month Nicky Morgan MP and the Life Sciences Minister, George Freeman, attended a roundtable at Charnwood Campus. At this event a substantial new occupier of part of the campus, the pharmaceutical company Almac, was welcomed. Almac's announcement of a £16 million investment in the site expected to create 180 new jobs over the next 5 years is a welcome vote of confidence in Loughborough as a centre for life sciences activity.

George Freeman also launched a new toolkit for the revitalisation of major life sciences sites, and invited Charnwood Campus and local partners to put forward the site as a pilot Life Sciences Opportunity Zone. The County Council will be represented on a task force chaired by Nicky Morgan MP which will put a bid together. I look forward to working with Nicky, Charnwood Campus, Almac, the LLEP, the borough council and other key partners such as Loughborough University in ensuring the potential of this site is maximised alongside complementary expansion of the University's Science and Enterprise Parks and other key sites in the area.

### **Street Parties to celebrate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

Finally, I am delighted to advise the Council first that the County Council will be offering free road closure applications for street parties held to mark The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday and secondly that the City and County Councils will be arranging a joint celebration for The Queen's Birthday in Jubilee Square on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> June.

In regard to local street parties I would ask members to help and support communities and urge them to get in touch as soon as possible so the arrangements can be put in place. I understand the process takes about 6 weeks in total so it is important to get applications in early.