

COUNTY COUNCIL – 7TH DECEMBER 2016**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Help to Live at Home**

Members will be aware that last month we launched the new Help to Live At Home Scheme. Unfortunately, one of the providers of the scheme pulled out at the last minute leaving a gap in the service.

I would like to pay tribute to staff of the County Council and the NHS who stepped up to the plate and helped to cover calls or find alternative carers. Without their hard work and dedication an already difficult situation would have been a lot worse.

I am naturally sorry for the impact on service users but some of the immediate criticism of the County Council was not merited and I am grateful for the more balanced reporting which followed.

Syrian Refugees and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Members will be aware that the County and District Councils have committed to help the Government resettle Syrian refugees. Two families arrived and were settled in Loughborough in September. Last month two families were settled in Castle Donington and a further two in Melton.

There have been some difficulties with how the resettlement scheme is being co-ordinated but I hope those can soon be resolved.

With regard to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, the County Council is currently looking after nearly 60 children and young people. Most of these arrived and presented themselves at various locations in Leicestershire. Seven children were transferred to the County Council under the voluntary National Transfer Scheme.

The position of the Cabinet is quite clear. We share the Government's commitment to supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children but can only do so if the Government commits to meet the full costs of their placement and care.

Digital Strategy

In these uncertain times, the one thing we can be sure of is that digital technology will feature firmly in our lives. Within the County Council we are working to develop our digital strategy – Digital Leicestershire 2016-20. A one page summary of our ambition is attached to my Position Statement.

Increasingly people are choosing to engage with us digitally. By way of example:

- 4 million page views on our website this year by around 1 million different people;
- 60% of the Council's web traffic comes via Google;
- 85,000 people accessing and finding information on school terms and holidays;
- In August, visits to our websites via mobiles outnumbered visits from desktops.

and we are assisting by our investment of over £6 million to improve broadband.

The County Council will be working to develop our on-line presence so that people can engage with the Council at a time of their choosing which in turn will also reduce the costs to the Council. We need to ensure that the processes we put in place are simple and intuitive, whilst remembering there are still many vulnerable people who cannot engage with us digitally and they must not be forgotten.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and Fairer Funding

The report on the MTFS 2017-2021 will be available to members of the Council at the end of this meeting and will be published on-line tomorrow morning. A member briefing has been arranged for Monday, 12th December when Byron Rhodes will present the MTFS report and also update members on the County Council's campaign for fairer funding which was well received when he presented the findings to the County Councils' Network Conference

Sustainability and Transformation Plan

Members will now have had an opportunity to read the draft Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) issued by local NHS partners. The STP is a five year plan which sets out how the NHS will meet the challenge of demand and demographic growth in the County. I am pleased that we were able to arrange an all-members briefing two weeks ago.

The Plan is a draft and will be the subject of consultation with the public and stakeholders in the coming months. The challenges facing the health and social care means that doing nothing is not an option. To that end it was extremely disappointing that the Autumn Statement made no mention of any new funding for health or children and adult social care.

This Council, like all other Councils is facing an unprecedented demand for social care services and the simple fact is there is not enough money to support that demand. Not addressing the difficulties in social care will impact adversely on the NHS and its ability to deliver on the STP and new models of care which seek to move care out of acute settings.

Infrastructure Funding

It was very pleasing to see the Government award money last week to develop the business case for the Melton Distributor Road. There may be other transport funds made available which we can welcome when we know more of the detail. The additional funding for pothole repair is certainly welcome.

In the Autumn Statement a Local Growth Fund allocation of £392 million for the Midlands was announced. I have been concerned that it was in favour of the West Midlands and have been lobbying for a fair settlement for the East Midlands and the LLEP area in particular. Details of the allocations to individual LEPs are now awaited.

Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable's Briefing

I was particularly pleased that the new PCC, Lord Bach, has agreed to reinstate the confidential briefings provided by the Chief Constable to elected members on the policing challenges and priorities. It is important that elected members, as community leaders, are kept informed as they can play a useful role as a conduit between the police and local communities. I am glad that a good number of members were able to attend the recent briefing.

I am talking to the Chief Fire Officer to provide a briefing on a similar basis early in the New Year.

Bishop of Leicester

Finally, the Deputy Leader, Mr Ould, the Chief Executive and I recently met the new Bishop of Leicester, Rt Rev Martyn Snow. We updated him on some of the key challenges facing the Council and discussed areas where we could co-operate. The meeting was cordial and I am helping the Bishop to have regular meetings with Leicestershire MPs to address local issues and concerns.

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