

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 22ND MARCH 2017**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Midlands Engine/Midlands Connect**

Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with Rt Hon Sajid Javid, the Communities Secretary and Midlands Engine Ministerial Champion and told him that as a member of the Midlands Engine Board and the Midlands Connect Board I welcome the recent Strategy and proposed investment of £392million announced by the Chancellor. This investment is in addition to the £1.5billion of Local Growth Fund investments in the Midlands that has already been announced.

The Midlands, and in particular the East Midlands, has been at the forefront of the recent increase in economic growth and this new investment will enable us to create even more jobs and enhance growth by investing in infrastructure and helping people to acquire the necessary skills to enter the labour market and take advantage of the new opportunities on offer.

The Midlands Connect Strategy sets out proposals for improving connectivity between the East and West Midlands and also between the Midlands and the rest of the country. It is particularly pleasing to see that the early priorities include proposals that I believe will have significant benefits for Leicestershire and the City of Leicester. A list of some of the proposals is at the back of this Statement.

Over the next 3 years Midlands Connect will use £17million of Government funding to undertake planning and design work on these early priorities. The delivery of these projects will depend on further Government funding and I will ensure that this Council works with its Midlands Connect partners to secure the investment so that we can fulfil the economic potential.

Fire and Rescue Service – Member Briefing

I am sure that those members who attended the briefing on 3rd March will have had a useful insight into the day to day challenges facing the Service.

Members were able to see the new technology and equipment in which the CFA has invested to ensure that the Service provides a timely and appropriate response to incidents.

But it is more than just investing in technology. In 2015/16 5086 home fire safety inspections were carried out. 4481 smoke alarms fitted, 1431 events were held promoting fire and road safety which included 332 school visits. This, together with new innovative projects such as the Braunstone Blues, has seen a 46% decline in fire related incidents in the

last 10 years and so the Service is able to protect local communities in a more efficient and cost effective way.

Energy and Water Strategy

I hope that members had the opportunity to see the display in the Members' Lounge showcasing the work done in reducing our energy and water consumption.

Following the approval of the Energy Strategy in 2014 there has been considerable capital investment in energy saving technologies, including amongst others a biomass boiler at County Hall, solar panels on Council buildings and the conversion of street lights to LED.

As a result of the investment, made the Council has reduced building running costs by nearly £420,000 per annum. Renewable technologies now provide nearly 5% of our energy usage and earn us about £130,000 per annum. The scheme to upgrade our street lights is at the half way mark but is already generating annual savings of £680,000.

More can be done and we will engage with schools to help them to upgrade their assets to make them more energy efficient and thereby reduce costs.

The work done to date is of high quality and we are now exploring the possibility of selling our expertise to other public sector bodies.

Help to Live at Home

The Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee was provided with an update on the current position on the Help to Live at Home Scheme. I acknowledge there have been problems with the launch and this has had an on-going effect whilst the Council, NHS bodies and the providers work hard to fill in gaps as a result of the firm, TLC, withdrawing at the last minute. Additionally, we have had to deal with the problems of performance by another provider, Hales but I am pleased that they are working with our staff to put in place the necessary improvements.

I must pay tribute to the staff in the Customer Service Centre, the Adult Social Care teams and our contractors who have stepped up to the plate to ensure we continue to deliver a service to our most vulnerable residents.

To set the context, the Council and the NHS now provide, through the Help to Live at Home Service, 22,566 hours of care to 1619 service users each week, and every week an average of 531 hours of additional care are commissioned for 42 new service users.

The tendering process for the contracts previously held by TLC is not yet concluded. We have asked officers to engage in discussions with potential providers to fully understand their tender submissions and their plans for roll out. Given our previous experience it was

felt necessary to include this additional step to seek the assurances we need before awarding any contracts.

Glenfield Children's Heart Hospital

The consultation on the future of the East Midlands Congenital Heart Centre at the Glenfield Hospital is live until 4 June. I would urge all of you who have not already responded to the consultation to do so; we need to make every effort to keep this service, which has been recognised by the CQC as outstanding, in Leicester.

I would like to thank the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its excellent work in holding NHS England to account and asking them the difficult questions about these young, vulnerable patients who will definitely be put at risk and could be made to travel as far as Birmingham, London or Leeds for treatment.

Elections

I would like to echo your words, Chairman, and pay tribute to all members of the Council who will not be seeking re-election for their work and contribution to the Council and wish them well for the future.

The next Council will face significant challenges as it is clear that austerity will continue and that the Council will need to reduce expenditure. Whilst the work we have done so far means that we are in a much better financial position than most other Councils we will need to implement the next stage of our Transformation Programme, continuing to change the way we work and deliver our services, keep a keen eye on costs, pay down debt and importantly keep council taxes as low as possible.

We will also be a powerful driver of economic growth, deliver the very best Children's, Adults and Health services, despite the pressures we face. But most of all, will keep our focus on outcomes for the people we serve, making Leicestershire the best place to live, to work and to prosper.

MIDLANDS ENGINE/MIDLANDS CONNECT PROPOSALS

- A package of improvements along the A46 corridor running across the Midlands from Tewksbury to the Lincolnshire coast to support the manufacturing sector – this could deliver a new Junction on the M1 (J20a) and a south eastern bypass for Leicester, which would provide substantial traffic relief to places such as Oadby and Wigston and Thurnby and Bushby.
- A strategic enhancement of the A5 route with phase 1 being upgraded between the A38 and the M1. This has the potential to address traffic problems along the A5 at Hinckley.
- The ‘Midlands Rail Hub’ (improvements to rail infrastructure in and around Birmingham), allowing up to ten extra trains an hour through central Birmingham – currently a key bottleneck limiting east-west rail movements. This has the potential to deliver vastly improved rail services for people living in South West Leicestershire.
- Leicester to Coventry and Leicester to Birmingham rail improvements.
- M1 (Junction 19 to 23a) Smart Motorway Scheme.
- Business cases for use of HS2 ‘released capacity’ and classic compatible services.
- A52 Corridor Multi-Modal Study (Derby, Nottingham, HS2 Hub Station and East Midlands Airport).
- Improvements to the A42 and A1(M).