

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 27TH JUNE 2018**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Leicestershire China Strategy to boost trade**

On the 11th June I hosted an event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our twinning relationship with one of the largest and fastest growing provinces in China, Sichuan. This is, I understand, the longest twinning relationship with a Chinese province in the UK and I had the pleasure of welcoming Director General Huang and senior representatives from the People's Government of Sichuan Province, along with Minister Counsellor Jin from the Economic and Commercial Counsellor's Office of the Chinese Embassy.

Sir John Peace, Chair of the Midlands Engine joined me in hosting the celebration along with our Chairman, Mr O'Shea, the City Mayor, Loughborough University Vice Chancellor (Professor Bob Allison), Pro Vice Chancellors from both Leicester and De Montfort Universities and the Vice Chair of the LLEP. The celebration was attended by over 100 delegates including senior representatives from local authorities, universities and the business community. Along with celebrating the past relationship and considering future collaborative opportunities, we were privileged to witness performances of traditional Chinese folk songs and Sichuan Opera face changing performances.

At the event we also launched our Leicestershire-China Strategy which aims to capitalise on the growing number of opportunities for developing greater trade and investment, whilst building on our already strong regional links. The strategy, developed in partnership through the Leicestershire China Forum, will help bolster educational and sporting links, build on tourism opportunities and open the door for more companies in Leicester and Leicestershire to do business with China. We are already seeing positive outcomes from this visit including discussions between East Midlands Airport and Sichuan on future cargo opportunities. I am very positive about the benefits to Leicestershire from this relationship, especially as we strive to develop greater international links to strengthen our position beyond this country leaving the EU. Director General Huang very kindly invited me to visit Sichuan in 2019 and I will work closely with local businesses and partners, and Sir John Peace, to consider how we can bring tangible benefits to the Leicestershire economy by making such a visit.

Strategic Growth Plan

I continue to be impressed by the work of the Member's Advisory Group (MAG) which is overseeing the preparation of the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) for Leicester and Leicestershire. By looking as far ahead as 2050, and by commissioning high quality evidence to underpin its proposals, the MAG has been able to develop a visionary yet credible plan for future growth in the city and county. It is important to remember that the scale of growth being proposed in the Plan is growth national

Government will require us to accommodate. It's not about whether; it's about how. I am therefore pleased to see that the proposals in the SGP protect our towns and villages by concentrating future housing and employment in strategic locations associated with new infrastructure such as the A46 Expressway. I am also aware that these plans are impressing key decision-makers in Government and agencies like Homes England, the Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect. This will, I believe, stand us in good stead in securing the funding we need to deliver infrastructure essential for our existing and potential new communities, and to drive forward the growth of the local economy for the benefit of local businesses and residents. Given the SGP is consistent with Government policy, will support economic and housing growth in a sustainable way, will help us secure critical funding, and protects our town and villages from substantial future development pressure I urge the county's MPs to do all they can to support the Plan.

Trading Standards - Scams Intervention Team

Over the last financial year our Trading Standards Scams Intervention Team, collaborating with colleagues in Adults and Communities, provided continued support to over 200 victims of postal, telephone and doorstep scams. These successful interventions prevented the victims incurring further losses. Officers estimated the collective loss to be over £500,000.

In one recent example officers identified an 87 year old Leicestershire resident living alone, who had for some time been bombarded with junk mail. The outcome was a spare bedroom full of unopened packages containing limited edition products and clothing. The victim had made these purchases because, for her, it was a connection to the outside world, an opportunity to chat to the delivery drivers. Unfortunately it absorbed £35,000 of her life savings and sadly now has insufficient means to contribute towards her care.

June is Scams Awareness Month and as part of this campaign the County Council will become a 'Friends against Scams Organisation'. Staff and members will be encouraged to undertake a short online training session aimed at raising awareness around scams: awareness which I hope will then be imparted to others on a professional and personal level. Sadly it is often the case that family members are completely unaware that a relative has become a victim. Alongside the launch I have agreed to act as an Ambassador for the Friends against Scams initiative and I hope all members will support this initiative.

I am also pleased to report that given the success of the Scam Intervention Team the Adults and Communities Service has agreed to provide funding to Trading Standards in 2018/19 to enable this initiative to continue.

Health Scrutiny

Members will be aware of the spending pressures on the NHS and the need for our local NHS bodies to find efficiency savings within their budget.

It was therefore disappointing to read that the two Clinical Commissioning Groups in the County who between them have to find about £40million of savings in this financial year do not yet have firm plans to find these savings. All this came to light as a result of some robust scrutiny by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and I wholly concur with their view that this state of affairs is unacceptable and that there is an urgent need for clarity about the impact on patients of these savings.

A key point made by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was that savings should be targeted to back office staff and management costs. So it is disappointing to then find out that the CCGs have spurned the opportunity to merge their senior management structures. Personally I would urge them to have a full merger of the CCGs not just the senior management structure and make some real savings which could be reinvested in frontline services.

Loughborough University – Lawn Tennis Association National Academy

I am delighted to inform the Council that Loughborough University has finalised a deal with the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) to become one of two national academies. Loughborough will be by far the bigger.

This multi-million pound deal is the biggest ever single investment in sport at Loughborough and brings yet another National Governing Body onto the campus, joining the likes of British Athletics, British Swimming, British Triathlon and England Netball.

The national academy which is due to open in September 2019 will nurture 14-18 year olds (and sometimes younger). Players who demonstrate the greatest potential in the sport will be selected and supported with world-class coaching, science, medicine and welfare experts whilst also being provided with excellent mainstream education up to at least GCSE level.

N. J.Rushton

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