

County Councillor Annual Report

This report summarises the activities of the following member of the County Council during

Name of Councillor

Simon Galton

1) Electoral Division activities

Main Activities and the impact during the past year:

Cuts to services and the lack of funding continues to dominate everything that the Council does. This impacts at the strategic level but also at the local level in the day to day issues and casework I deal with. I have worked with my Liberal Democrat colleagues to hold the Conservative Cabinet to account on several issues where we feel they have got their priorities wrong. For example, cuts to SEN transport have proved hugely controversial and resulted in a Judicial review. Although the Council was found to have followed all the correct processes and the decision was upheld it does not mean these cuts won't have a detrimental effect on some vulnerable young people who depend on this service. A few years ago, cuts of this nature would have been unthinkable but now they are having to be implemented in response to the serious and extremely challenging financial situation faced by the County Council.

The Strategic Growth Plan now approved by all Councils in Leicestershire will have a huge impact on the area I represent especially the plan for an A46 Expressway Way to the south and east of Leicester linking the M1 to the A46 north of Syston. It continues to attract strong opposition not least from some Leicestershire MPs who are no doubt being lobbied by their constituents. I set out my concerns in a response to the public consultation in 2017 and on my website. Earlier this year I was pleased to take part in a question and answer session organised by the Leicestershire Branch of the CPRE. I expected the meeting would be well attended – in fact the hall was packed with standing room only. This contrasts with the average council meeting which usually only a handful of people attend. It does highlight however the strong concerns which exist about this Plan and the need for it to be reviewed, demands for which are increasing. There has been some Scrutiny of the plan, but I hope this is an issue colleagues on both sides of the chamber will want to return to.

Engagement with the Council, other statutory bodies and public utility companies (Water, Gas etc) about services in the area

I have regular meetings with senior officers / Directors to keep up-to date on current issues and to try to anticipate what is coming down the line. Flooding incidents continue to affect certain areas across the Division and I have raised these with the Council as Lead Local Flood Authority. They can prove very difficult to resolve especially when they occur on private land because whilst the Council has a duty to investigate the problem the landowner(s) is responsible for carrying out improvement works or maintenance.

There has been an increase in the number of people contacting me about primary care services which like many areas are under increasing pressure. New housing is clearly placing additional demands on local GP Services and whilst some developer funding has been made available to improve facilities and buy equipment this money cannot be used to fund revenue costs e.g. increased demands on staff time. I am keen to work with GP providers to identify what needs to be done to increase capacity locally. However, I suspect this will come down to the availability of funding.

Priorities for the immediate future are:

The impact of a large-scale housing developments in my area continues to occupy a lot of my time as local member. The now committed Strategic Development Area to the North of Scraftoft is a key issue of concern to the local community. I spent 10 days at the Public Examination into the Harborough Local Plan chaired by Inspector appointed by the Secretary State. This considered the legal compliance and soundness of the plan. I prepared submissions and gave evidence on issues including traffic impacts, ecology, the green wedge and proposed primary school. Over 1000 houses are currently under construction in the Division and the SDA will add a further 1,200. The area is having to accommodate significant housing growth and managing the impact of change this is not without its problems.

2) Council Activities

Committees you serve on at County Hall

Scrutiny Commission

Constitution Committee

Scrutiny Commissioners meetings

Local committees/Outside Bodies

I chair a Neighbourhood Plan Group producing an NP for Thurnby and Bushby. I have also advised and supported several parishes with preparing their NPs

With 28 parish councils/ meetings in the Division it is impossible to attend every parish meeting. I try to attend annual pariah meetings and regular meetings of larger parishes in the Division. Sometimes a parish asks me to attend a meeting when they have a particular issue or concern and I am happy to do so. Earlier this year I was appointed to a Parish Council on a temporary basis for one meeting, so the Council could conduct its business. This was caused by the resignation of a majority of the parish Council which meant the Council did not have a quorum. Fortunately, a new council was elected in May which enabled me to stand down.

Other bodies – School governors/community and charity organisations etc

Tugby CE Primary School

I have attended various briefings and training sessions during the year.

4) Other Matters:

I produce regular Focus newsletters which are delivered to every house in the Division. I always include photos to illustrate the article and, so people can identify the location we are referring to.

These are supplemented by street letters on more local issues and I can also assist residents in producing a petition to present to the Council. During the last year I have made more use of social media to let residents know what's happening in their area. There has been an increase in the number of Community Facebook groups locally and posting information on these is the fastest way to get information out.

Social Media

My Councillor website / blog on local campaigns and community issues:

www.simongalton.mycouncillor.org.uk

This provides a comprehensive report and update on current issues in the Division and how people can get involved / raise issues of concern and get in touch.

I also have a twitter account and facebook page. I use these to provide updates and information on current issues and campaigns.

Signed by Councillor

Date 31st August 2019