

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Devolution**

This Council has been working hard for the last two years developing plans for a unitary structure for local government in Leicestershire.

These proposals were published in the Strategic Business Case, which outlines the case for reform. It remains my intention to submit these proposals to the Secretary of State and the Cabinet at its last meeting authorised me to write to him with a view to submitting our ambitious proposals.

In early September, I held a joint meeting with the then minister for local government, Simon Clarke, with the leaders of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils, and we had an excellent discussion on the need for reform and the opportunity to deliver an elected mayor for the East Midlands, to counterbalance the West Midlands combined authority.

Despite the publication of the Devolution and Recovery white paper being delayed, I have spoken with the new minister for local government, Luke Hall MP, who has assured me that it remains the government's policy to publish the white paper and I look forward to receiving its proposals. The Minister has agreed to a follow up meeting in due course with the three county leaders and I shall keep Members updated.

Along with my fellow county leaders in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, we are all united in getting the best possible devolution deal for the East Midlands. We firmly believe this remains a once in a generation opportunity to improve local government in the region, level up the economy, drive skills, jobs, growth and investment, and ensure a strong recovery from the Covid pandemic.

Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

Next month, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse will hold its hearing into organisations' responses to allegations relating to children including those who were in the County Council's care against former Leicester MP Greville Janner.

It is timely and important that we acknowledge the experience of those who have suffered abuse and that we recognise the courage it takes to step forward and recount historic events. It is also important that their voices are heard.

From the outset, we pledged our full support to the inquiry. And since 2016, we've provided wide-ranging information to ensure that we have met the inquiry's expectations at every stage of the process.

We know that children and young people rely on us to keep them safe - and this is a priority for us. We know that there have been failures in the past - and where the County Council should have taken more action, more quickly to prevent abuse, I am sorry that this did not always happen.

Children's safeguarding locally and nationally has completely transformed since the period in question. But we remain committed to learning and to improving services to ensure that children are safe.

N. J. Rushton CC