

County Councillor Annual Report

This report summarises the activities of the following member of the County Council during 2021/22

Name of Councillor Mr N. J. Rushton

1) Electoral Division activities

Main Activities and the impact during the past year:

This year represents my tenth year since I was elected as Leader of the County Council. I continue to serve on both Northwest Leicestershire District Council and Ashby Town Council. I keep all my parish councils within my Electoral Division: Ashby-de-la Zouch, Belton, Breedon on the Hill, Coleorton, Isley cum Langley, Long Whatton, Normanton le Heath, Osgathorpe, Packington, Staunton Harold, Swannington and Worthington- as updated as I can, and I try to attend whenever possible.

The Covid pandemic has impacted many County Council services over the past year. Despite many challenges I'm very proud of the way our staff have managed to keep delivering frontline services. As a council and me as its leader, are responsible for most of the public services you receive, including streetlighting, highways maintenance, waste disposal, fostering and adoption, schools and school transport, commissioning and providing social care for children, adults and those with special educational and disability needs. We also work alongside our strategic partners like the NHS, police and district councils, to deliver the vital public services your council taxes pay for.

Over the last year, the County Council has provided over £7M direct support to communities, businesses and community groups to assist them through the Covid pandemic. We also provided over £40M to support the social care market - including our part of NW Leicestershire- during the pandemic; vital to ensure care homes, commissioners and providers could continue their work and protect vulnerable people.

The cost-of-living crisis is affecting everyone. On top of Government support, the County Council has provided £7.2m to families over the last 12 months. This includes help for free school meals, holiday activities and insulation to help with energy efficiency. There's also a £100 payment to pensioners in receipt of pension credit.

I've continued to hold regular meetings with our local MP Andrew Bridgen. We're continuing our fair funding work, lobbying for a County Deal and we will continue to lobby government for a better deal for Leicestershire.

Finally, I'd like to highlight the help and support the County Council has given supporting those fleeing war in the Ukraine. Working with colleagues in the Local Resilience Forum, the District Councils, NHS and Police, we're making sure those arriving- over 1000 people are currently expected- are getting the help and support they need whilst they are guests in our county.

Community Leadership Role

No-one has been unaffected over the last two years due to Covid. It continues to affect some council services, particularly with recruitment and retention of staff in social work and drivers for our waste and recycling facilities. Nevertheless, I'm proud of the way LCC staff have kept frontline services running.

Last year, we provided over £7M in direct support to businesses, rural pubs, and community/voluntary organisations to help them with their services.

We have also helped people with the cost of living. £7.2M to help families with fuel and food costs, 14,000 children receiving help for free school meals and holiday activities, £3M on making homes warmer and more energy efficient working with District Councils to secure more funding.

I'm also very proud of our Work and Skills Leicestershire programme. It's a completely free service and help people upskill, gain access to qualifications, help with CVs and job clubs, advice on volunteering opportunities and support for those thinking about going self-employed

During the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, we waived £500,000 fees and charges to enable over 300 street parties, including many in NW Leicestershire.

We're a green council and carbon reduction and a greener Leicestershire are top of my agenda. As a council, we aim to be net-zero by 2030 and by 2045, a net-zero county. This means we all have to do our part. So far, the council has reduced its carbon emissions by nearly 70%, we're planting 700,000 trees and promoting biodiversity through the planting of wildflower verges. We are also investing in electric buses in our park and ride services, installing solar energy panels and expanding EV charging points on council property.

As ever, I work with my parish councils with the issues they raise with me, for example, their planning concerns, dealing with issues of serious local flooding in Long Whatton, Diseworth, Breedon and Packington, highway repairs and maintenance, clean signage and gulley cleaning. And to further help with improving our local environment, we established a £25,000 Member Highways Fund for each elected member to help with local projects within their Electoral Divisions.

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

N/A

Priorities for the immediate future are:

- Maintain our vigilance against Covid and ensuring our Public Health department keeps a watching eye.
- Continuing our work on carbon reduction and action on climate change, making Leicestershire cleaner and greener.
- Working with our MPs to ensure a fairer funding deal for Leicestershire.
- Extra investment in our highways and environment services.
- Continue to protect vulnerable children and adults.
- Promote healthier and safer communities.
- Growing the local economy and supporting economic development opportunities.

2) Council Activities

County Council Committees you served on

Leader of the County Council
Cabinet- Chairman
Cabinet Briefing- Chairman
Cabinet Strategy & Co-ordination Group - Chairman
Constitution Committee - Chairman

Local committees/Outside Bodies

Conservative Councillors Association- Member
Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Combined Fire Authority- Chairman
Midlands Engine- Steering group member
Midlands Connect - Executive Board member
East Midlands Councils - Member
Bradgate Park & Swithland Woods Committee of Management - Chairman
Northwest Leicestershire District Council - Elected member
Northwest Leicestershire District Council - Cabinet member
Ashby Town Council - Parish councillor

Other bodies – School governors/community and charity organisations etc

N/A

3) Learning and Development

In September 2022, I will have been Leader of the County Council for 10 years and been its longest serving leader since 1973. Politics and local government continue to change and evolve, and I'm not immune it! Every day is an opportunity to learn and improve everything you do.

The current government's mantra of Levelling up communities in every part of the UK means the council must respond to a raft of White paper consultations- all of them affecting the way local government operates and this means I have to be on my toes as Leader.

Since the Covid pandemic, we have all had to get used to remote working having virtual meetings. Since the government eased Covid restrictions, things are slowly getting back to normal. However, staff and members alike have become used to working flexibly. Personally, I'd like to see this extended as it offers new choices for staff and elected members alike in how we interact, as well as a simple way to reduce our carbon footprint.

I'm always looking at new ways of working to improve the services we deliver to residents.

4) Other Matters:

My number one priority is to ensure I do everything possible to provide great local government to the council taxpayers, residents and businesses in Leicestershire. We remain the lowest funded county council in England but one of the best performing, given the resources we have. The Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis have placed unprecedented pressures on the services we provide, whilst government couldn't have delivered the support they've given without the expertise of local government.

The quid pro quo is that local government must be properly funded by government. Rising cost pressures – for example inflation costs impact delivery of roads, schools and other capital projects- means support for other services is impacted. Demand for our social care services is rising too, particularly those with SEND.

We will always provide help to those who need it, but this places a knock-on effect in the provision of other services.

Finally, we're currently working with the District Councils developing their Local Plans for housing and development, and these plans need properly funded infrastructure to support their viability. As it stands, we can only do this when the money is in place. This is why we need extra support from government and why we're campaigning for a better devolution deal to enable us to take these vital decisions locally.

Communications

www.facebook.com/LeicsConservatives

Twitter- @LeicsCC_Cons and @nrushton

www.leicestershireconservatives.org.uk

Skype, Teams and Zoom meetings with local parish councils.

Signed by :



Nicholas Rushton CC

Date 17/6/22