

This report summarises the activities of Craig Smith as a member of the County Council during 2022/23

Electoral Division Activities

After comments by Lee Anderson MP, with regards to food poverty I was approached by The Marlene Reid Centre (MRC) general manager Paul Fagan. They operate the “Plenty 2 Cook” Social Supermarket with a mission to support our community to eat well. They have seen customer numbers increase as the cost of living rise has continued to affect all areas of the community.

They encourage everyone to support the Plenty 2 Cook market each Weds and Thursday from 09:00 to 14:30 and to engage with their free tasting menu whilst picking up some bargains. Their friendly team are on hand to provide recipes and cooking hints and tips to make your purchases go further and to provide inspiration to home cooks.



Each week they save over 800kg of food from going to landfill so as well as representing value the Plenty 2 Cook market has strong environmental credentials. Sales at the market directly support their emergency food bank provision which sees referred customers having the opportunity to select their own items age with our cooks around cooking ideas and cooking skills.



A project that I have been heavily involved with is the restoration of Mantle Lane Bridge as a lead member of the steering group. After a lot of negotiations with multiple agencies and stakeholders we have been successful in getting Network Rail to agree to not only fund but carry out the stripping and repainting of the bridge in heritage colours. I was also able to broker a site meeting with all stakeholders from NWLDC and LCC with regards to available funding.

I was pleased to be able to donate £40,000 of my allocation of the Leicestershire County Council Members Highway Fund towards the project, which was used for the decorative replacement railings.

Keith Merrie MBE County Councillor for Coalville South also supported the project with £9,000 of his allocation of the Members Highway Fund, which went towards the resurfacing of the road itself.



I was able to garner the support of local company JB Tool Hire who kindly supplied equipment and manpower to clean some of the 100 years of grime off the walls.

I have continued to join in regular litter picks around the town and in particular the several large industrial estates around Coalville. It's very apparent that the majority of litter around these estates is down to lorry drivers who stay over night on their trucks then dispose of the litter in the verges by the side of the road.

I have designed signs that can be placed around the estates that hopefully these drivers will take notice of. I have also ask the local beat teams to regularly patrol, however it's near impossible to catch them in the act.

I have organised a monthly community litter pick, for any resident that would like to take part please contact me directly.



Each Christmas I send a bespoke Christmas card out to every household in the Coalville North Division, these are designed by my own fair hand, printed locally and paid for by myself at no cost to the tax payer. I do this so that residents get an end of year update as well as to ensure they have my contact details to hand should they ever require my assistance

Last Christmas Keith and I also personally paid for and delivered 300 selection boxes for the children at Forest Way School.

Spreading a little Christmas cheer.

I continue to be an active member of the local veteran community both with the RBL and other veterans organisations.

I have attended all the almost all the local parades over the last 2 years including Coalville's Remembrance Service and Parade, which I consider to be one of the finest in the country and is a real testament to the community and the local authorities coming together to pay respect.

I have also attended parades for VE Day, Falklands 40th anniversary and the Dambusters 80th anniversary at Coalville where I was honoured to be asked to deliver speeches, as someone who has served in the Falklands and as a former member of No. 617 sqn The Dambusters.

In addition I have attended the County Council "Stand Easy" parades and I act as their representative at the East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadet training centre.

I also regularly attend the Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs





I have forged strong relationships with local and regional emergency services and I continue to build upon these relationships.

I believe it is incredibly important to have direct contact and understand the difficulties and pressures that these organisations are under.

Wherever possible I substitute on the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) meetings and I regularly have face to face meetings with North West Leicestershire Neighbourhood Policing Area (NPA) commander Inspector Wayne Nimblette and the Police and Crime Commissioner Rupert Matthews.

Last November I was fortunate to be offered the opportunity to spend an evening shift with the response team, so I could see first hand the issues that officers deal with every day.



During the 11 hour shift we attended a child welfare concern, a domestic incident, a theft, assault, a drink driver, a suspicious vehicle resulting in a ticket and a fight with a weapon which led to a male resisting arrest.




I was able to observe officers conducting licensing checks as well as helping with drug wipes in which every pub tested had traces of cocaine.

The evening ended with a large scale public disorder in Ashby in which an officer was assaulted, as well as several members of the public were injured, one receiving a serious head injury.

Overall a real eye opener and reaffirmation of what a great job our police do day in day out



I would say that the top 3 things that I have really got my teeth into this year are

-  **INCONSIDERATE PARKING**
-  **INCONSIDERATE DEVELOPERS**
-  **POTHOLES (I HATE POTHOLES)**



I have been dealing with several cases where residents are regularly blocked in their streets by inconsiderate parking. Like many Victorian towns the infrastructure was never designed for cars let alone multiple car households. I will continue to work on behalf of the residents and try to negotiate a solution between LCC Highways and the Local Police.



Whilst I understand developers have a job to do, that does not give them free reign to do so to the local residents detriment. I have personally gone out on site to stop developers working at 0700 on a Sunday morning, I've spoken to foreman about the mud they leave on the roads, I have even had stand off's with site workers who are blatantly in breach of their planning conditions.



Potholes.... Where do I begin? I have developed a bit of an obsession with Potholes! I report new occurrences on a weekly basis, I chase up old reports to find out how they are progressing, I encourage residents to report them also. I am doing EVERYTHING in my power to rectify this issue. I welcome the £3m extra funding the Government recently announced for Leicestershire, and I will lobby to get as much of it as possible to sort out Coalville's roads.

I have always been active in our local community, long before being elected. However the platform of being a County Councillor has really helped me make new connections and get involved in more community initiatives.

I work closely with Coalville Town Football Club, assisting them wherever I can, I often go to home games to cheer them on. Much of my spare time is taken up with Veteran groups for which I help out and participate in many of the activities, such as organising quiz nights and route marches, I even teach a over 60s indoor rowing group.

I am also preparing to lead a crew of four rowing 3000 miles unsupported across the Atlantic in aid of MacMillan Cancer Support, so I spend a great deal of time fundraising and training for the crossing.





As LCC is the only Council that I sit on, I have worked hard to forge positive working relationships with both Councillors and Officers at NWLDC. This ensures that we all can do the very best for our residents. I regularly meet with Councillors (Cross-Party) and officers at NWLDC ensuring that we are all pulling in the same direction and to offer my support wherever possible.

I have worked closely with lots of community organisations such as The Marlene Reid Centre, The George Smith Hub to name a few.



I sit as Chairman of the Bardon Hill Quarry Liaison Committee, as one of the largest employers in the area and a company that works incredibly hard to offset the environmental impact of their business. As chair it gives me direct access to not only hold them to account but also to help them as they endeavour to be better neighbours.

I also regularly frequent business such as The Coal Bunker and The Snibston New Inn, not because I like a pint and a chip cob but because these local businesses are hubs within our community that bring people of all walks of life together. For example, The Snibston New Inn raises thousands of pounds each year to support local veterans.



Although the main body of my County Council Division is the centre of Coalville which is “Un-Parished”, the Division does cross over slightly into both Hugglescote and Donington Le Health Parish and Ravenstone with Snibston Parish. As such I regularly attend both Parish Councils meetings so that I can deliver my County Council report and listen to any concerns residents have. I also like to attend Parish Council functions wherever possible, last year I was invited to officially turn on Ravenstone’s Christmas lights.



This past year I have continued to serve as Vice Chairman of the Children's and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee, standing in twice as Chairman. This has helped me expand my knowledge of the County Council's largest portfolio, an incredibly important and hard working department that I am proud to work with.

In addition I was also appointed to serve on the Development Control Regulatory Board (DCRB). This was a new appointment and one that I have enjoyed learning more about.



I always try to contribute in every meeting that I attend and wherever possible I will offer to substitute for other members in the committees. This year I have substituted 16 times in other committees including The Scrutiny Commission, Highways and Transport OSC, Environment OSC, Health OSC, and am a regular attendee on the Combined Fire Authority.

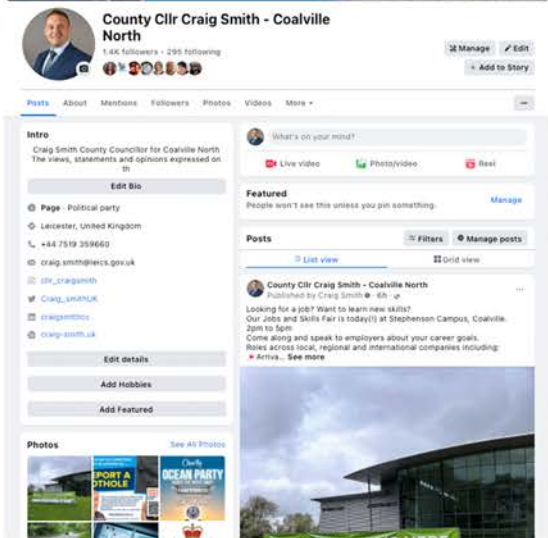
In addition I attend the Children's Social Care Panel, the LCC Armed Forces Network and as LCC liaison I attend the East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association meetings.



I have a simple self imposed policy that I will get back to anyone who contacts me within 48 hours. Be that email or by phone. In addition I deliver regular leaflets across the Division several times per year. I believe it is essential that elected representatives are accessible.



I am very active on Social Media, particularly Facebook as I find this is the best way to communicate with residents. I also have Twitter, (Not a fan) Linked In and more recently instagram. I can be contacted on any of these platforms.



Each month I produce a monthly report which I forward to Parish Councils along with publishing it on Social Media and my Website.



The year started off relatively slowly, however it did not stay that way for long. In addition to my own Leicestershire County Council duties, I also substituted for colleagues at Highways and Transport as well as the Combined Fire Authority.

Locally, I have been heavily involved in the Coalville Town Football Club's planning application for their 3G pitch upgrade, assisting them with LCC Highways. I have also attended the Armed Forces Breakfast Club and the Royal British Legion committee meeting, speaking with local veterans and assisting them wherever possible.

I have undertaken 2 litter picks within the Division and met with representatives of the Sribston Heritage Trust to discuss ways of improving communications with LCC. I have also met with NWLDC colleagues with whom I am working with to improve the Mantle Lane Bridge area.

Socially I have attended 2 Burns nights, the first in support of "Living Without Abuse" a local charity who provide help and support for ANYONE suffering from domestic abuse or sexual violence in Leicestershire. The second was in support of the Whitwick branch of the Royal British Legion.

I have had meetings with John Merson of the Friends of Sribston, Shane Toon of Pulse Signs and graphics, trying to help with vehicle crime happening around our industrial estates. I have also had meetings with Cllr Geary in relation to CTFC. Shaun Culpin discussing inclusive sport for all and Vicky Lister, our LCC Local Area Coordinator, who has an uncanny ability to extract money from me in support of her various fantastic local initiatives.

Finally, I was invited by NWL Police to attend the youth speed awareness day at Stephenson College, this is the second year running this event has been staged and yet again it was a resounding success, engaging with young drivers. It really does hammer the message home when young people see first hand the carnage that a road traffic accident can cause. LLR Fire & Rescue service have a fantastic simulator called "The Hazard Express", having attended the launch of this state of the art bit of kit, I can tell you first hand just how effective it can be at making you rethink your driving practices. There were also demonstrations of LLRFRS cutting off vehicle roofs and extracting casualties.

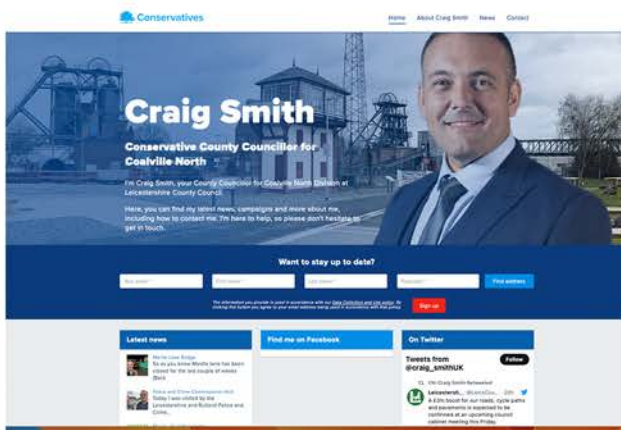
Cllr Merris and I (LCC members for Coalville North & South) will be hosting a Division Surgery on Saturday 11th March, 10.00am – 1.00pm. To book an appointment please email either councillor using our LCC emails.

The police were asked to monitor a number of locations were identified as having a high amount of speeding cars. As promised, this request was passed this to the Road Safety Unit who deployed their monitoring equipment with the following results.

Grange Road – 56% of vehicles exceed the national threshold – The Road Safety Unit will assess the location and deploy a mobile speed camera over the next couple of months.

Central Road – Survey of the location showed that there is no requirement for further action by the road safety team.

If you need my help, please get in touch



**FINALLY: I have commissioned a new Website so that residents can better get in touch
www.craig-smith.uk**