

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 17TH MAY 2023

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Ukrainian Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Council has a proud record of reaching out and supporting refugees. We continue to stand side by side with our Ukrainian friends and I am pleased to say we have supported over 1000 Ukrainian guests to build new lives in the county. We are ready to do more, if required.

We have also worked with our partners to manage the challenges presented by the relocation of asylum seekers into both hotels and houses across the county. We recognise that the sudden placement by the Home Office of asylum seekers is placing unfunded demands on council services such as education and social care. Meetings are taking place with the Home Office and we are pressing our case for additional resources to help us support these individuals and families. We have also written to all our MPs highlighting the costs involved, the deficiencies with the Home Office's consultation and engagement process, and pressed them to ensure that the distribution of asylum seekers across the region is fair.

Meeting with Chancellor and F20 Update

Mrs Taylor, Mr Breckon and I met the Chancellor at the end of April to discuss a fairer funding deal that Leicestershire deserves. We put our case forward for a pragmatic temporary solution that targets the lowest funded councils. The Chancellor had a very good grasp of the issues presented and acknowledged the strength of our argument.

It is a positive start, but there is still a long way to go due to the national finances.

We'll be meeting up with Lee Rowley MP, the Minister for Local Government, who was at the meeting with the Chancellor, and look forward to progressing our work with him to achieve a better funding outcome for Leicestershire.

Finally, it would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the support of the Leicestershire MPs in arranging the meeting and actively supporting us to make the case for a better funding deal.

Devolution Update

Although the current deal on offer from Government for Leicestershire remains at level 2, through no fault of our own, a level 3 deal isn't available.

This has been the position for some time, and it is deeply frustrating for us knowing our original bid for a level 3 deal was the most ambitious from any of the original nine councils invited by Government to bid. On 7th February, the leadership of the county council and its chief officers held a meeting with Dehenna Davison MP, the Minister of State at DLUHC with responsibility for Devolution and County Deals, at her request, to discuss our position. I have to say it was one of the more positive and constructive meetings we have had with Government.

I have now received a follow up letter from the Minister, copied to the City Mayor, which encourages the County and City Council leaderships to be ambitious in pursuing a level 3 deal with Government. I am sure that will be helpful in our ongoing discussions.

Coronation of King Charles III

Further to your announcements, Chairman, I would like to say that in order to help Leicestershire residents celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty The King, we waived the standard fee for applying for a road closure or holding an event on highway land adjacent to the road to facilitate street parties and celebrations. In total we approved 151 applications, comprising 120 road closures and a further 31 for permission to hold an event on highway land. Leicestershire County Council also provided traffic management guidance and advice to event organisers and loaned 220 road-closed signs and over 500 traffic cones to event organisers. I hope our communities across the county had an enjoyable and safe Coronation celebration.

Additional Pothole Funding

Maintaining the 2700 miles of roads in Leicestershire to the standard our residents expect is becoming increasingly difficult. The impacts on our roads of traffic growth, climate change, along with decreasing budgets and the impact of inflation is becoming easy to see, so the additional £3.1m pothole funding made available by the Government is welcome. As with all maintenance money, this additional £3.1 million to reduce potholes will be used where it is most needed and in a way that will deliver the biggest benefit.

This extra money will be used alongside the current road maintenance budget to carry out additional repairs to individual potholes or groups of potholes

through patching works. While the cost of pothole repairs and patching work will vary depending on size, location and traffic management, this latest allocation will help to repair over 30,000 potholes or up to 75,000m² of carriageway patching work.

Mr N. J. Rushton
Leader of the Council

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