

James Poland CC Annual Report

2023

The last 12 months has continued to be an immensely challenging time for Leicestershire County Council. With Leicestershire being the lowest funded County Council in the country the pressure that services face is acute, made worse by the effect of high inflation on costs. Despite that though Leicestershire has met those difficult, and at times unexpected challenges head on. We obviously couldn't have foreseen the Russian invasion of Ukraine but the way Leicestershire County Council worked to ensure the necessary preparations were in place to welcome Ukrainian guests and meet their needs is something I think we can be proud of.

Leicestershire has a commitment to be a net zero county by 2045, a stretching target but one the County Council has shown in the past year it is serious about achieving. We've seen that in many things done since last May and I think its reasonable to say it runs through everything the authority does. One example is Leicestershire County Council recently took the lead on the Leicestershire Climate and Nature Pact, an agreement to work together between more than 40 organisations to get Leicestershire to be a net zero County by the middle of this century. It is obviously the case that no one organisation can make Leicestershire net zero on its own, so partnership working is essential and this pact formalises that.

In the last year the government announced plans for a devolution framework known as County Deals which came in three tiers. The first tier, which came with the most money and devolved powers is what the County Council bid for but unfortunately without the City of Leicester also joining the bid the government said it couldn't proceed, and the City refused to support the tier 1 bid. That means that the County has been forced to bid for a tier 2 deal, but that does not come with as much money or powers attached. I think its likely devolution will continue to be a discussion Leicestershire has to be involved with given that's the way so many other parts of the country are going now, and because of the finances which come with that.

At Leicestershire County Council I currently serve as a Scrutiny Commissioner, a role in which I am responsible for organising scrutiny of everything Leicestershire County Council does and particularly the work of the Cabinet. In that role I attend Cabinet briefings to be kept up to date on what's going on in more detail at the County Council. I also serve on the Constitution Committee which is responsible for all constitutional matters of the authority.

In my Division I am very active in a number of ways. I have seven Town and Parish Councils in Syston Fosse and I attend them all as often as I can (sending reports on the occasions I am unable to attend in person. I also carry out casework for the many residents who contact me needing my help each year (in the past year I've helped residents with a wide range of matters including road safety, access to community facilities, protection of trees and open spaces as well as green energy schemes and business support). I very much encourage anyone who needs my help to get in touch and I will do what I can to assist.

I also keep residents up to date on my work and what's going on at Leicestershire County council more generally through articles in community magazines. The magazines I write for are the Queniborough Gazette, Rearsby Scene, Thruslington Life, Syston Topic and the Cossington Village Newsletter. I also keep residents up to date via Facebook through my own page and community pages.

In the past year I have secured funding for mobile vehicle activated speed signs in Cossington, Thruslington, Rearsby and East Goscote through my Member Highway Fund. I have also given £25,000 through that fund to Queniborough Parish Council to put towards the installation of bollards outside Queniborough School. The latter project is very much ongoing and will be an important part of my work in the village over the next 12 months.

I would like to finish this year's report by thanking all the Town and Parish Council's with whom I work so closely, especially the Clerks for the work they do for our communities. I'd also like to thank Edward Argar MP for the great work he does for Syston and the villages as well. Finally, my thanks to all the staff of Leicestershire County Council for all the work they do for our county.