

County Councillor Annual Report

This report summarises the activities of the following member of the County Council during 2022/23

Name of Councillor

Mr Blake Pain CC

1) Electoral Division activities

Main Activities and the impact during the past year:

2022/23 must have been one of the toughest years the County Council has faced. We're still dealing with the impact of Covid on services and public health, the huge increases in inflation and costs due to Russia's illegal war in Ukraine, housing those fleeing war, dealing with asylum seeking refugees and much more. We have worked through these, whilst still providing excellent, value for money services, despite still being the lowest funded county council in the country.

In addition to my primary role as the elected County Councillor for the Bruntingthorpe Division, my main activities throughout the year have been as a Member of the LCC cabinet, serving as the lead member for the Environment and Green agenda. The role was created in May 2021, focussing on the Council's commitment to act on climate change and deliver the County Council's aim to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2035 and wider Leicestershire by 2045.

In May 2022 the county council agreed a four-year strategic plan covering the period to 2026. At the heart of the plan is a vision for Leicestershire to be 'Clean and Green' with an emphasis on protecting and enhancing nature and the natural environment whilst using resources in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way. The work of the portfolio underpins these ambitions. Many of the in-year achievements can be found within the most recent 'Annual Delivery Report':

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/about-the-council/how-the-council-works/leader-and-cabinet/council-performance>

Notably, we have pledged to plant 700k trees across Leicestershire. As I write, we are about to reach the 250k tree mark. This is a fantastic achievement considering the County Council recorded the planting of less than 20K trees a year prior to the initiative.

Leicestershire County Council has also just been appointed by Government as the Responsible Authority for the Local Nature and Recovery Strategy – A significant development and testament to the ongoing energy and work around this agenda that I lead.

The consequences of Putin's unnecessary invasion of Ukraine has continued to add to existing resource and financial pressures. Such pressures now include a steep rise in inflation, a surge in the cost of providing services and, in addition, for many frontline public services, there continues to be a real difficulty in recruiting staff.

The County Council is striving to address its own worsening financial position, which will continue to result in significant budget pressures and likely reductions, to balance the Council's finances.

Throughout 2023, the County Council has taken the lead with the coordination of work to assist refugees fleeing war in Ukraine. LCC works closely with partners, including Harborough District Council, to ensure those arriving in the district are given the help and support they need to integrate successfully into local communities. The type of help the County Council provides include health, social care and DBS checks, safeguarding vulnerable people, school places and accommodation. So far, we've helped over 1000 guests and more than 500 households have opened their homes, providing a safe, warm and welcoming environment those fleeing war.

I continue to proactively engage and help support and/or resolve concerns that have been raised with me by my divisional constituents relating to some of the following issues throughout the year:

- Highway Closures and Traffic Regulation Orders across the division
- Road Condition and Improvements
- Speeding Traffic Concerns
- Street Lighting
- School Admissions
- Passenger Transport
- School Transport and Parking
- Road Traffic Accidents
- Highways Maintenance
- Flooding
- Land Contamination Problems
- Tree Maintenance and planting
- Environmental Concerns
- Grass cutting
- Condition of road verges particularly during the winter
- Gulley Cleansing
- Wildflower verge planting
- Awards of Leicestershire County Council 'Shire' Grants
- Blue Badge Misuse

Community Leadership Role

In addition to the above, I am aware of and continue to be actively engaged with the following areas of concern that have been raised with me by residents and businesses:

- The Tarmac application for a Quarry at Misterton
- Flooding risk and actual flooding episodes resulting from unsatisfactory utility company consultation and/or local engagement
- Land use and Contamination concerns and the Enforcement of these concerns

I am pleased to report that concerns that were noted in last years' report relating to Highways and Verges have started to be partly or fully addressed through my 'Members Highways Fund':

Over the past year I have agreed to fund projects from my Members Highway's Fund including (but not limited to) the following schemes:

- Request for speed reduction measures in Gumley
- Bollards to prevent dangerous parking outside Gilmorton school
- A VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) in Fleckney to help reduce speeding in the area

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

I have engaged with Severn Trent water about Flooding Concerns
I have engaged with Harborough District Council re numerous planning and enforcement cases

Priorities for the immediate future are:

My main priority is to ensure that residents of the Bruntingthorpe Division are properly represented at County Hall. I'm very proud to lead LCC's ambition to reduce our carbon footprint, take action on climate change and become a carbon neutral organisation by 2035. I will endeavour to ensure that the Authority build and put in place satisfactory infrastructure and systems so as to enable the residents and businesses of Leicestershire to know why the Environmental agenda is so critical; what we are doing about it; and, how people can play their part in helping our County to become Cleaner and Greener.

2) Council Activities

County Council Committees you served on

Cabinet- Lead Member for the Environment and Green agenda

Cabinet Briefing- member.

Cabinet Strategy & Co-ordination Group- member.

Local committees/Outside Bodies

Charnwood Forest Regional Park Steering Group

Cotesbach/Shawell Liaison Committee

Local Authorities National Forest Advisory Group

National Forest Charitable Trust Board

3) Learning and Development

I always look at ways to better my understanding and appreciation of issues and the people affected by the decisions we take at the County Council. I continue to learn from experience and undertake training and seek advice as and when needed. In January 2021 I undertook an LGA led university leadership course on the Climate Emergency.

4) Other Matters:

Leicestershire's funding position remains the worst of any county council in the country. Whilst we work hard to maintain great services and have achieved the award from Impower as the most efficient and productive upper tier local authority in England in past years, we cannot become complacent.

The County Council's yearly revenue budget is £512M. Unlike the NHS or the Government, we're required by law to set a balanced budget. This meant a 2.99% rise in the county council element of council tax plus 2% adult social care precept. Growing demand for services is set to increase our costs by £70M, with inflation adding another £91M by 2026/27. The financial outlook remains tough, with the budget gap set to rise to almost £90M by 2026.

Communications

Virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams/Zoom/Google Meets with constituents and other stakeholders.

I have set up a 'Bruntingthorpe' data base where I forward important notification

Leicestershire Matters

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www.leicestershireconservatives.org.uk

Signed by Councillor Blake Pain

Date June 2023