

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 5TH JULY 2023

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Active Travel England

Over the past few months, the County Council has successfully worked with Active Travel England (ATE) to demonstrate further our commitment to Active Travel in Leicestershire and move us towards a position of being able to bid for capital funding to deliver walking and cycling facilities across the county. Earlier in June, ATE presented to members as part of their support to Leicestershire's work to encourage and enable communities to travel more actively by cycling, walking and wheeling (use of wheelchairs, mobility scooters, scooters etc. to travel at a pedestrian's pace). Having members in Leicestershire who are informed advocates of active travel is an essential part of our joint commitment with ATE to place us in the best position to secure future delivery funding for active travel schemes and Choose How You Move programmes that benefit our communities. Coupled with our ongoing work to develop Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, we hope this positive relationship with ATE will bear fruits in funding for Leicestershire.

Greener Leicestershire Update

We continue to work towards the achievement of our commitment to a Cleaner Greener Leicestershire. Over the past few months, we've reached an important milestone of planting 250,000 trees towards our target of planting a tree for every resident. We've also launched a new booklet on ash dieback, added more highway verges to our scheme for improving biodiversity, and supported Great Big Green Week.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Leicestershire County Council has been formally appointed as the 'responsible authority' to lead on the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. While we welcome this responsibility and understand we will be provided with new burdens funding to develop the Strategy, it will be important that we are also provided with adequate funding to support the delivery of the Strategy. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are one of the Government's flagship nature recovery measures and they will make an important contribution to delivering on the national environmental targets and those of the County Council, and in providing a cleaner and greener place for people to live, now and for future generations. They will also have an influence on future development and local plans, and in how we as a council have regard for nature recovery in delivering our services and functions.

Supporting Veterans

Further to your announcements, Chairman, I would like to say that we continue this year, as ever, to be proud to support those who serve in our armed forces, regular or reserve, as well as those who have previously served and those in our wider forces

family including cadets and adult cadet force volunteers, spouses, partners, carers and dependents.

During armed forces week Mrs Posnett, Tom Purnell and Lieutenant Colonel Field, Commanding Officer, Royal Yeomanry, were proud to publicly re-sign our Armed Forces Covenant, strengthening our support to the armed forces community both in our internal policy changes and also in our public advocacy for the cohort.

Within the Authority we continue to support veterans into our workplace and are making considerable strides towards enabling the transition to civilian life smoother and acknowledging and transferring valuable skills onto our workforce. To this end we have built links with both the Defence Military Rehabilitation Centre and the Career Transition Partnership.

We have a dedicated employee network for those with an armed forces family connection as well as veterans already in our employment who provide peer support and mentoring to service leavers joining the Authority.

In service provision we are pleased to be part of the partnership supporting the Veterans Wellbeing Hubs and continue to work in partnership with our colleagues in Heath around supporting the specific needs of veterans.

Household Support Fund.

I am pleased to report that we have a new £7.2 million pot of money, awarded by the Department of Work and Pensions, for residents who need support with rising food and energy costs. Eligible households can receive an average of £200 in vouchers.

This means that the Council has now made £22m of wide-ranging support available to help ease cost of living pressures. Over half-term, 14,000 children across Leicestershire were able to benefit from £15 school food vouchers. Our support also includes energy efficiency grants and advice and community fridges.

I am also pleased to report that last month, Richard Hunt, Head of Catering, Hospitality and Country Parks, represented the County Council as the only local authority invited to speak at the Work and Pension Committee at Westminster about the cost of living.

Health in All Policies

I hope members will join me in welcoming the approach being taken to embed Health in All Policies across the County Council. Health in All Policies is recognised internationally as an approach to tackle inequities in health, reducing inequalities and tackling the 'causes of the causes'. Committee reports will now make reference to health implications to ensure that they are considered as part of the decision making process. We are also delivering training to officers to ensure that they take into account the wider determinants that affect health outcomes, as well as considering how a proposal could have an impact on the social, economic and environmental living conditions that in turn affect health and mental wellbeing.

Mr N. J. Rushton
Leader of the Council