

## **Annual Report by Richard Shepherd for 2022 – 2023**

It continues to be a pleasure and a privilege to represent the interesting and varied Division of Sileby and The Wolds.

### **What have been the main issues locally during the past year?**

**Highways** – as always, a high priority. The Council continues to deal as quickly as possible with repairs to potholes, but roads across Leicestershire are suffering from insufficient resources being available to maintain them as everyone would wish.

**The Members Highways Fund** was in its second and final year. Projects not yet completed but underway include Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) for Burton on the Wolds, Hoton and Walton on the Wolds.

**Buses** – sadly increasing costs and declining passenger numbers led to a section of the commercial Kinchbus Number 2 being withdrawn by the operator. The Council offers a lifeline in a situation such as this in the form of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) and Sileby Parish Council has been active in gathering evidence of need. At the time of writing, two commercial services are about to start providing a direct link to Leicester which was lost by the Kinchbus withdrawal.

The Council began a review of its fully subsidised services – their budget is overspent – but just recently the Government has provided more money which means the review can be paused and work done on the long-term reshaping of services, bearing in mind the need for value for money. In my Division services 8 and 27 are fully subsidised.

There has of course been concern locally about the bus services and my role has been to clarify what the Council's position is and what can be offered.

**Residents' concerns** – I have continued to respond to issues raised by residents, to find information and seek solutions. Examples are concerns about land use and grass cutting.

**Working with Parish Councils** – There are six Parish Councils in my Division, covering eight Parishes. I attend their meetings as often as possible to provide reports and receive requests for help or information, which I provide as much as I can. The need for pothole repairs has been raised with me and I have drawn officers' attention to the matter. I am grateful for the responses I have received from officers and been able to pass on, and the visible action taken.

Being on hand to respond to residents' concerns and to work with Parish Councils and local Borough Councillors is important to me.

**Communication** – I quite often circulate County Council media releases to the Parish Councils and Borough Councillors within my Division, and contribute a news article to two local magazines. Sileby Parish Council kindly allows me to contribute a Blog to their website.

### **And what of wider County Council matters?**

As an upper tier authority the Council has a wide range of responsibilities. Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care are the ones which take up much of the Council's budget, involving the wellbeing and safeguarding of vulnerable people.

Highways I have already mentioned, and others include country parks and trading standards. A significant focus is on the ambitious Net Zero campaign.

The Council's website, and the newsletter for residents, "Leicestershire Matters", provide information about these and other issues.

As the lowest funded County Council our finances are under constant pressure. We would dearly like to get the fair funding which Leicestershire deserves. A delegation from the County Council have met the Chancellor of the Exchequer and County MPs to request a modest step to improve our situation. We wait to hear what may be done, even though it would not be full fair funding.

As a member of the Council's Cabinet I contribute to discussion and decision-making about Council matters, with particular reference to my particular role working with the Lead Member for resources.

Across the country local government finance is in a precarious position. Despite the challenges involved I share the ambition of my colleagues to make the best possible use of the money the Council has.

I serve on the Cabinet Strategy and Co-ordination Group, Cabinet Briefing, the Employment Committee and the Constitution Committee, and on the Local Pension Board. I am a Council representative on the British Gypsum (Barrow Project) Liaison Committee. In May I stood down from the East Midlands Shared Services Joint Committee, having served on it for seven years.

As Chief Whip for the Conservative Group my duties involve assisting in the conduct of Council business. That includes ensuring that the Group works as an

effective political unit, within which each Member has the opportunity to contribute as they wish and fulfil their aspirations, conducting themselves according to the Nolan principles. It also includes acting as a channel of communication between the Group's leadership, particularly the Leader, and other Members.

### **Training and Development**

I have benefitted from attending the All Member Briefings which have been held on a number of Council policies and responsibilities. I have also received training about pensions – a complex subject – to assist me as a member of the Local Pension Board.

Until May I was a Member of Charnwood Borough Council, and gained knowledge through All Member Briefings there and attendance at training sessions, notably about planning matters.

### **Do I enjoy being a County Councillor?**

Yes, I find the role enjoyable and rewarding, despite the challenges posed by the Council's finances. It is pleasant to be able to help in whatever way is possible, and to interact with so many people.

Richard Shepherd

June 2023

Amended 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023