

COUNTY COUNCIL – 27th SEPTEMBER 2023

POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEAD MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND STAFF RELATIONS

Communities Annual Report

I am delighted to introduce the 2023 Communities Annual Report. The Report highlights work with Leicestershire Communities that has been carried out within my portfolio over the past financial year. It celebrates and showcases some great initiatives and the success of locally led responses and action. This work, and that of the County Council as a whole, is guided by the framework of the Council's Communities Strategy: Our Communities Approach. The Approach was adopted by the County Council in May 2022 and since then there has been good progress across all departments, led by the corporate Communities Board, in embedding the core principles of prevention, participation and supporting voluntary sector catalysts.

We have a lot to be proud of in Leicestershire and the Annual Report brings to the forefront some of the very many ways in which the Council is collaborating with communities to promote asset-based approaches and social action; where people come together to support each other, building on the strengths of people, places, and local institutions. This approach is well illustrated in our support for the community response to ongoing cost-of-living pressures, close working with town and parish councils, Neighbourhood Planning Groups and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and wide engagement on equalities issues.

There are many other inspiring examples of our work within the Report, and I would urge Members to consider how we can link with and further support social action in our role as Community Leaders and Champions.

The Annual Report is available on the Leicestershire Communities website and on the Elected Members Portal.

Digital Update

The Digital Leicestershire team at Leicestershire County Council secured funding from Building Digital UK (BDUK) for a project to install full fibre broadband infrastructure to 43 public sector sites, mainly schools (30), in Leicestershire. Project Gigahub has connected its first four sites: Fleckney, Desford and Lutterworth Libraries and Barlestone C of E Primary School and Community Centre, with a further 11 estimated for completion by the end of September 2023, this will complete tranche 1. The remainder of the sites will be implemented before the end of March 2024.

Leicestershire premises are included in 7 different Lots for Project Gigabit. Project Gigabit is the UK Government's £5bn national programme that aims to accelerate gigabit broadband rollout across the UK. Project Gigabit is helping to achieve the Government's aim of 85% Gigabit coverage nationwide by 2025, and at least 99% by 2030.

Lot 11 (with Warwickshire) has the most premises in Leicestershire with approximately 24,000 and delivery is expected to start on this from Summer 2024.

The digital team has also been working with Openreach to encourage a number of Fibre Community Partnerships to the east of the County. Rotherby, Scalford, Rearsby and Waltham were target areas and Openreach will be starting to build soon in these areas. Openreach continues to work with Somerby, Wymondham and Knipton to encourage uptake.

The Digital Leicestershire website has been updated <https://digital-leicestershire.org.uk/broadband/project-gigahubs/> and includes a map that shows all the Gigahub sites and details of when they will go live.

The Digital team is undertaking a mapping exercise to understand further the digital coverage in Leicestershire, this will help us identify gaps and continue to support those hard-to-reach rural areas.

Mrs Pam Posnett CC

Lead Member for Communities and Staff Relations