

Mr James Poland CC Annual Report

2024

The last 12 months have been another very challenging year financially for Leicestershire County Council. The issue continues to be low central government funding, high service demand and inflation outstripping the County Council's ability to raise money through Council Tax. Added to that an increase in the National Living Wage announced before Christmas and essentially Leicestershire is left requiring to do more with less resources available. For that reason the fairer funding campaign has continued apace and the Council's Administration have met with a number of members of the Government, including a meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer at No.11 Downing Street to make the case for local government funding reform.

There has been some good news in government funding for Leicestershire however. In the past year Leicestershire has had committed:

- £1.78m in funding for buses
- £2.25m for road repairs and potholes
- £5m in additional funding (mainly to go towards social care)
- £238m in Network North money towards transport projects in the county (to be spent over a seven-year period from financial year 2025/26)

These are of course very welcome but until local government funding reform is introduced Leicestershire will continue to have the fundamental problem that demand exceeds the Council's ability to pay for it and that is obviously not a sustainable situation in the long term.

At County Hall I have continued to serve as a Scrutiny Commissioner, one of four Councillors who manages the scrutiny function at Leicestershire County Council. The Scrutiny Commission examines in detail both reports coming to Cabinet for decision as well as the work and performance of the Authority more generally. Scrutiny is a really important way policy is refined and decision making is improved, it is therefore one of the most important aspects of the democratic accountability of Leicestershire County Council.

I also serve as a member of the ESPO Management Committee. ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) is a Purchasing Organisation, owned by a number of Local Authorities (including Leicestershire) which supplies all manner of goods (but is best known for stationary and other such supplies) to schools, offices, government departments and a wide range of other organisations both across the UK and now internationally as well. It is a profitable enterprise and generates an income for Leicestershire County Council.

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, Thrussington Life, Syston Topic and the Cossington Village Newsletter. I also keep residents up to date via Facebook through my own page and community pages.

I have continued to work with getting funding for local projects through the Members Highway Fund, these include new Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs for East Goscote, Thrussington and Cossington, and a pedestrian safety project for children going to Queniborough school (alongside Queniborough Parish Council and the school itself).

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.

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