

# Annual Delivery Report

| 2024



# Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. Our Vision for Leicestershire.....	2
3. Strong Economy, Transport, and Infrastructure .....	3
4. Clean and Green .....	12
5. Improved Opportunities.....	20
6. Safe and Well .....	27
7. Great Communities .....	36

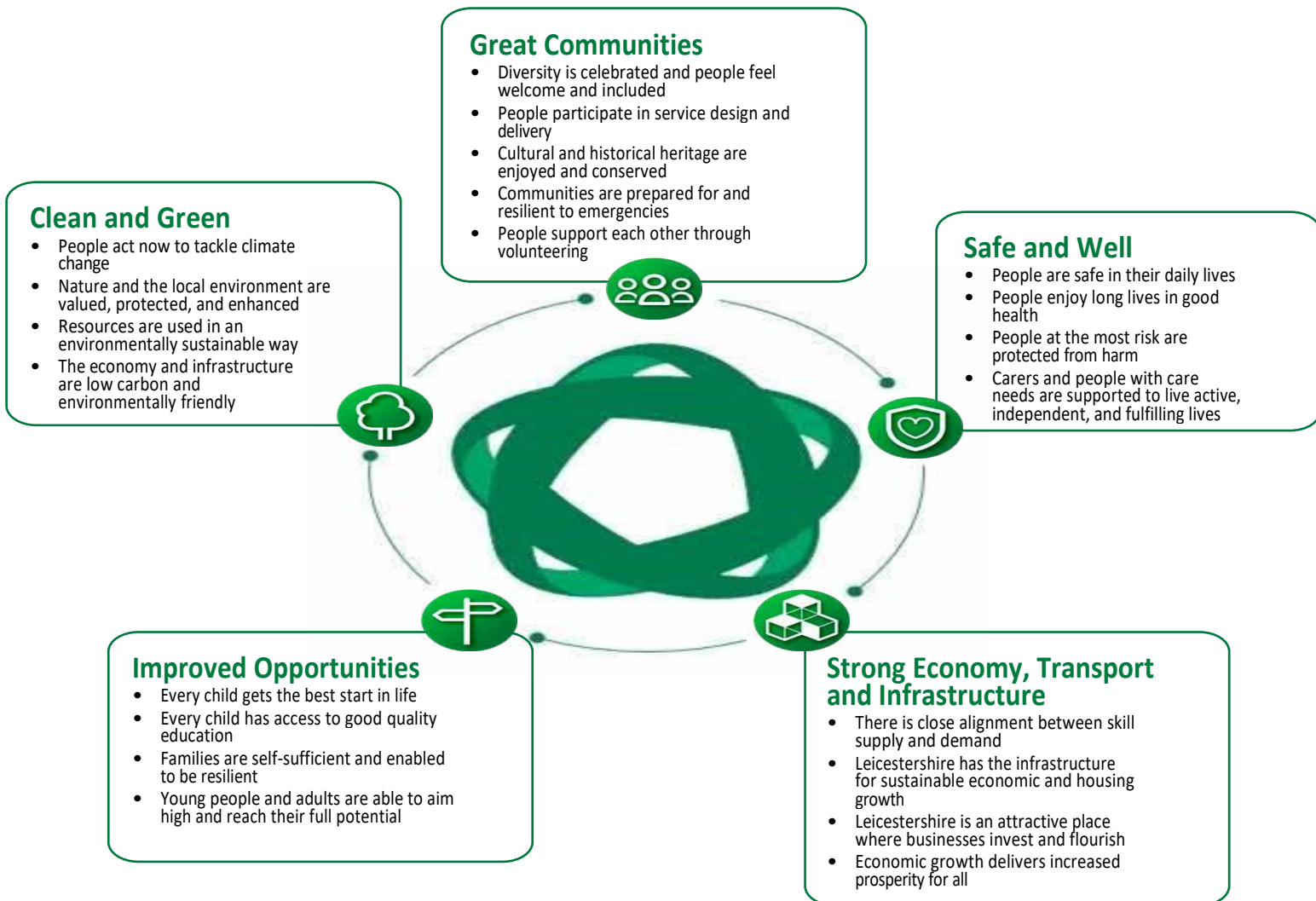
# 1. Introduction

Our Council Strategic Plan is a key four-year document which sets out the main outcomes that we seek to achieve for Leicestershire. The five strategic aims set out in the Plan are intended to guide the Council in prioritising our activity, resources and finances, as well as reflecting the Council's ambitions for Leicestershire as a place. In May 2022 the County Council agreed the four-year Plan, covering the period to 2026. In April 2024, the Plan was refreshed to align with the Council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the continued low comparative funding provided for Leicestershire.

This progress and performance report covers the period from September 2023 to September 2024, highlighting our key achievements and delivery against the Strategic Plan priorities and related services. A separate Performance Compendium looks at evidence of progress in more detail, using a variety of performance indicators and benchmarking data, as well as the continued risks to delivery.

The financial context that the Council is operating in continues to be extremely challenging, with increasing demands being made on budgets and resources. The Council continues to be the lowest funded county and without a fair funding deal this will continue to impact on the delivery of outcomes and a continued reduction in services for residents.

## 2. Our Vision for Leicestershire



### 3. Strong Economy, Transport, and Infrastructure

This outcome reflects our aim to use innovation and skills to build a productive, inclusive and sustainable economy at the cutting edge of science, technology and engineering. We also need our transport, housing and digital infrastructure to support a growing population and economy.

Sub-Outcome	Council Aims by 2026
There is close alignment between skill supply and demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer employers reporting skills shortages or gaps.</li> <li>• Increased opportunities in the labour market for young people.</li> </ul>
Leicestershire has the infrastructure, including transport, for sustainable economic and housing growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure capacity and capability supports growth and net zero carbon emissions.</li> </ul>
Leicestershire is an attractive place where businesses flourish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased investment in Research and Development.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of businesses and business survival rates.</li> </ul>
Economic growth delivers increased prosperity for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) in the local economy corresponds with a reduction in deprivation.</li> </ul>

#### 3.1 There is close alignment between skill supply and demand.

It is important to ensure that education and skills are aligned to employers' needs as this will drive economic growth and ensure people can get good jobs and make progress in their careers.

#### Our aims by 2026

- Fewer employers reporting skills shortages or gaps.
- Increased opportunities in the labour market for young people

## Progress in 2023/24

- In partnership with the Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership and the City Council we have been successful in gaining £1.7m in 'Wave 5' Skills Bootcamp funding, to deliver a wide range of courses.
- We also continue to operate the Multiply Programme, through gaining £3m of government funding to help adults to improve their numeracy skills. Free Multiply courses are available across Leicestershire in person or online.
- To date the Multiply programme has engaged with 2743 people through events and short sessions. 1356 people have moved on to enrol in a variety of different courses delivered across the County, such as Cook, Meet & Eat, Keeping Tab of Costs, Safe Internet Use and Maths Skill Building. All the courses are practical, fun, and informative with individuals going on to employment, volunteering, and further learning as a result.
- We have partnered with Voluntary and Community Sector organisations and a range of training providers to ensure delivery meets those hardest to reach. In addition, the charity National Numeracy have trained 32 Numeracy Champions across Leicestershire who work to promote the importance of numeracy skills for work and home life.
- Our Work and Skills Leicestershire project offers comprehensive information and access to support for anyone actively seeking paid employment, training, or volunteering through our web site. We are also supporting individuals with drop-in support sessions at 3 libraries across the County which is funded via Multiply.
- In October 2023 11 grant funded providers and 3 FE providers showcased the various courses and projects they were running to deliver the Multiply programme, led by our Adult Learning Service. The three-year programme, as well as helping adults to improve their numeracy skills, helps businesses to upskill their workforces.
- In September 2024 it was announced that the Freeport would be investing more than £2m to train students for careers in advanced manufacturing and clean energy. The Freeport is investing in the Future Skills Hub, a project led by the East Midlands Institute of Technology which promotes high quality technical training.
- In January 2024 free courses we run to help adults improve their number confidence at venues across the county. The courses were open to anyone aged 19 and over who didn't have a maths GCSE at grade C/4 or equivalent, or who had lost their skills with numbers.
- The social value commitment via Project Gigahub created an opportunity to collaborate with the BT Group to offer four 'Work Ready Webinars' to Leicestershire residents. The free employment webinars were delivered by BT Group experts who covered topics of job applications, CVs, interviews, and assessment centres. We saw over 110 attendances across the four webinar sessions.

- In May 2024 our Adult Learning Service ‘have a go’ month offered more than 50 free taster sessions for people to learn a new skill, as well as offering a ‘Skills for Life Roadshow’ to showcase skills that might be needed in the future.
- An innovative scheme for residents to trade their skills and knowledge was expanded to Charnwood following its initial start in Melton. Time4Leicestershire is a free skills exchange, where members can sign up to share their skills and knowledge and support others and can request skills they would like to learn in return.
- Working with employers, our Adult Learning Service has supported over 60 apprentices in a range of subjects including Adult Social Care, Business Administration, Payroll and Management.
- Our Trading Standards Service offered professional level 6 apprenticeships. An opportunity to become a fully qualified Trading Standards Officer, with currently 10 apprentices.
- Through Midlands Highways Alliance+ we are contributing to the development of ADEPT’s Gen Z campaign, aimed at encouraging and supporting 18–24-year-olds into local authority roles.
- Creative Leicestershire’s Engaging Collections Programme has continued to use our museum collections to inspire creativity and develop the skills needed within the creative economy. Students from our regional universities including De Montfort University, University of Lincoln, Nottingham Trent University and the School of Art and Design at Loughborough University regularly use the fashion collections as part of their project work. Students and researchers from further afield, including internationally, also travel to study our collections, with the Symington Collection being the purpose of many of these visits.

### 3.2 Transport and Infrastructure for sustainable economic and housing growth

We need our housing, transport, and digital infrastructure to support economic and population growth, whilst helping to deliver net zero carbon emissions.



## Our aim by 2026

- Transport, infrastructure capacity and capability supports growth and net zero carbon emissions.

## Progress in 2023/24

### Major Schemes and Maintenance Supporting Growth

- Major construction work continued on the north and east Melton Mowbray distributor road to reduce congestion and support new homes and employment growth in the town. The new road is expected to open in early 2026.
- The Freeport has convened private and public sector partners across the region and funding work by Midlands Connect to address the barrier to growth posed by Junction 24 of the M1 and the surrounding highway network. This has involved close working with the County Council, which is spearheading work on behalf of the local highway authorities, National Highways and other partners.
- A package of road improvements around Rugby Road, Hinckley was completed in 2023, resulting in a reduction in congestion at peak times and smoother and more efficient journeys for motorists.
- £887k Active Travel England Capital funding has been secured to deliver the County's first cyclops junction at the A6/The Parade junction in Oadby. The scheme will provide segregated facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, encourage modal shift away from car use and reduce carbon emissions. The scheme is planned to be constructed in Autumn/Winter 2025.
- Design work continues to progress on the Desford Crossroads junction improvements to reduce congestion, improve journey time reliability on the A47/B582 corridor, and re-distribute traffic away. This improved capacity at the Crossroads would unlock development, housing, and support delivery of employment.
- Works are progressing on the Zouch bridge replacement which forms part of the A6006 and is an important part of the road network, linking the region's transport and trade routes, including the strategic road network, East Midlands Freeport, and East Midlands Airport. Temporary works were being undertaken between August and October 2024 and full construction works begin in Spring 2025.
- In 2023/24 a total of £23.3m was invested in Highways Asset Maintenance including £17.9m on carriageways, £1.6m on footways and rights of way, £1.1m on bridges, £1.9m on street lighting, £0.3m on flood alleviation and £0.5m on traffic signal renewal.
- In 2023/2024 our highways teams were out across Leicestershire as part of a £2.7m summer maintenance programme of surface dressing covering more than 660,000m<sup>2</sup> (around 60 miles) of road. The process will prevent potholes and keep roads waterproof.
- In November our 23 gritters were on standby to grit 1,300 miles of highway with 18,500 tonnes of salt stored in grit barns across the county. The team carried out 62 runs on 17 routes in 2022/23.



- We have begun developing our new Local Transport Plan, known as LTP4. This work has focused on the development of the LTP4 Core Document which sets out the strategic vision, core themes and policies which set the direction of LTP4 and support economic growth, housing delivery and strategic sustainable development.

### **Public Transport**

- In October 2023, we were successful in achieving an additional £4.05m revenue funding for 2024/25 (Network North) to support local bus transport.
- In October 2023 the Council received £1.79m extra government funding toward public transport in the county. On top of a previous £1.79m from the Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus. The funding will maintain and support bus services on a value for money basis.
- In December 2023 our Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy was refreshed to align with the Government's National Bus Strategy. This will enable a blended approach to service provision and better-connected places with the right service in place.
- In September 2024 we approved a new Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan aiming to achieve a high-quality efficient bus network with greater coordination of timetables, integration with other travel modes such as cycling, the use of Demand Responsive Transport in more rural areas and using more modern lower emission and zero emission vehicles.
- We announced a successful Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme (ZEBRA 2) in March 2024. Bus operators Kinchbus and Arriva have worked with us on the proposal to kick-start greener passenger transport, emphasising the role of the Leicestershire Enhanced Bus Partnership. With £8.7m awarded from DfT and £15m committed by the operators, there will be 46 new electric buses on the Leicestershire network by June 2026.
- Through the Enhanced Bus Partnership, a free travel trial was introduced during Easter 2024 to encourage young people to use public transport. It enabled under 16's to travel for free over a 2-week period. Over 12,000 children/young people travelled from Leicestershire during the promotion.
- The FoxConnect service (digital Demand Responsive Transport) continues to enable residents from south-west Leicestershire to connect to key destinations. There were over 24,000 passenger journeys during 2023/24.

### **Active Travel, Cycling and Walking**

- We have continued to work with Active Travel England to further our commitment to active travel in Leicestershire, with associated walking and cycling facilities and behaviour change programmes. We hope to see our capability rating increase to a score of 1 this autumn.
- In September 2023 our Sustainable Travel Team hosted its first Cycle Walking and Wheeling forum which had over 80 attendees from advocacy groups, partners, and stakeholders. The Forum will continue to meet to shape future plans. We are aiming to transform the role which cycling, and walking plays in

the transport system. Our cycling and walking strategy and plans aim to create local cycling and walking infrastructure across the county.

- The 'Betterpoints' regular driver campaign saw 100 drivers targeted with specific messaging and incentives, 52% changed behaviour, resulting in a 25% drop in single occupancy car journeys. The 'Betterpoints' general programme continues to run successfully with a total of 4915 users. More than 930,000 active and sustainable journeys have been recorded, and approximately 586,000 active and sustainable journeys have directly replaced single occupancy car trips, this equates to approximately 206 tonnes of CO2 avoided.

## Road Safety

- We have refreshed our Road Safety Strategy, which sets out how we will address road safety concerns to protect residents and communities as they travel across the County.
- The LLR Road Safety Partnership continued to deliver a programme of targeted road safety initiatives across the area. Social media campaigns, press and radio interviews focused on e-Scooter use/legality, the Fatal4 (speeding, drink, and drug driving, driving whilst distracted, non-wearing of seatbelts) and, following the 2022 Highway Code changes, educating drivers about vulnerable road users.
- Bikeability courses are designed to equip young riders with practical skills and understanding of how to cycle safely on today's roads. Our team of Road Safety Tutors/Bikeability Instructors delivered Bikeability cycle training to 3,000 primary school children.
- Our Driver Education Workshop team administered and delivered National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) courses to 35,000 clients.
- Community Speed Watch is an educational scheme to help residents reduce speeding traffic in their community. We worked with 18 communities/parishes and c200 volunteers to deliver the 2023 programme.
- In 2023 we delivered the Pre-Driver initiative targeted at 16/17-year-olds who have not yet started to drive and ran 6 courses during the school holidays. The course offers a variety of workshops highlighting the key issues faced by young and inexperienced drivers, including an introduction to driving, issues relating to speed, and impairment, and a practical off road driving session with a qualified driving instructor.
- 2023 was the 70-year milestone of the School Crossing Patrol Service and a training event was held with our patrols to celebrate their dedication to making the roads safer for our young people. We continue to manage our circa 70 school crossing patrols across the county to ensure safer crossings for school children and parents during the school run.
- School Streets were adopted at two schools in Leicestershire. The trials led to permanent schemes being introduced with 93% of parents saying that the scheme was positive, attendance improving at one school, and parents of years 5 and 6 feeling confident to let their children walk to school independently.

### 3.3 Leicestershire is an attractive place where businesses flourish; and 3.4 Economic growth delivers increased prosperity for all.

To support a flourishing economy, we need higher productivity rates facilitated by increased investment in research and development (R&D). There are also opportunities to capitalise on our prime location for international business. Inclusive economic growth does not just contribute to Gross Value Added in the local economy; it improves living standards by reducing levels of deprivation and creating opportunities for everyone.



#### Our aims by 2026

- Increased investment in Research and Development.
- Increase in the number of businesses and business survival rates.
- Growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) in the local economy corresponds with a reduction in deprivation.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- In June 2024 Andy Reed OBE, was appointed to chair a new Business Board tasked with helping to shape economic strategy in Leicester and Leicestershire. The Business Board is a key part of the new Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership which will oversee functions such as the Business Gateway Growth Hub and the Careers Hub.
- The Freeport has secured £25m in seed capital to drive growth in the region by unlocking our tax sites. This includes over £5m for a £17m net zero carbon innovation centre for clean energy research with Loughborough and Nottingham Universities, over £2m to support new low-carbon industries, and more than £2m in the Future Energy Skills Hub (FESH).
- The Ratcliffe on Soar power station site has secured a Local Development Order planning approval and a grid connection offer and is now being actively prepared for investment in our target sectors of low carbon energy and advanced manufacturing. Uniper has announced plans for large-scale hydrogen on the site, which the Freeport is actively supporting.
- In November 2023, major new plans for a multi-million-pound East Midlands Zero Carbon Innovation Centre - aiming to transform cutting edge green

research into commercial products – were unveiled by East Midlands Freeport. The innovation centre will provide the necessary technology and laboratories to progress research in electrification, hydrogen propulsion systems, and advanced manufacturing for industry use.

- We continue to be a key partner in the Enterprise Zone Programme which supports Research and Development businesses on 3 sites in the County - Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park, Charnwood Campus and MIRA Technology Park near Hinckley.
- In August 2024 we revealed new plans to kickstart a major development and generate thousands of jobs. The Council plan to unlock benefits of the 550-acre Lutterworth East site on a phased basis including creating business spaces, unlocking a prime 30-acre development site on the M1, investing in infrastructure, marketing the 6-acre Swift Valley Business Park and further considering options for housing delivery, including affordable homes.
- In July 2024 the Council's plans to continue to develop Airfield Business Park were approved. The next phase will boost the local economy as well as generate income. An application for 11 more business units and 2 drive-thru food and drink units was agreed. The development will feature sustainable construction methods such as solar panels and have electric car charge points.
- Our Investing in Leicestershire Programme (IILP) continues to invest in property and other indirect holdings to generate income to support services and contribute to our wider strategic objectives and the economic wellbeing of the area. The IILP showed total forecast income of £8.75m for the year.
- Work has also been completed to design health impact assessment thresholds on Local Plans including planning applications for employment land.

### **Inward Investment and Tourism**

- Our Economic Growth Team facilitated collaborative UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes with the City and district councils to maximise the impact of funding. These included the procurement of a Leicestershire Business Advisory Service and creation of a series of promotional videos and trails to support the County-wide food and drink campaign 'Taste the Place'.
- In 2023, 31.27 million visitors generated £2.39bn for the local economy and directly and indirectly supported 22,922 local jobs. The target in the Tourism Growth Plan 2020-2025 was to increase the value of tourism to the local economy to £2.1bn by 2025 so this objective has been achieved ahead of time.
- Invest in Leicester, working in partnership with the public and private sector, has showcased major Leicestershire development sites at a key investment event, the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) conference. This highly regarded event connects people, places and businesses to accelerate and unlock sustainable, inclusive and transformational investment.

- Working in partnership with the Team Leicester network, 'Invest in Leicester' has secured sponsorship to deliver events and promotional activities to showcase Leicestershire as a great place to live and work.
- Invest in Leicester has also secured government funding to provide an account management service to foreign-owned companies based in Leicestershire, encouraging them to interact with local business support provision, including our colleges and universities.
- We applied successfully with the City Council to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership with Visit England (VE) which will provide tourism businesses with opportunities to reach more visitors nationally and internationally through a raised profile and centralised VE marketing.
- Successful marketing campaigns such as Taste the Place (TTP) increased the profile for tourism businesses reaching 1.6 million people and over 19,000 clicks through to the dedicated TTP website. Local businesses have reported business success due to the campaign.

### **Cultural Economy**

- The Department of Culture, Media and Sport funded the Create Growth East Midlands Consortium (of which the Council is a member) and has benefitted 12 creative businesses across Leicester and Leicestershire, getting them to an investment ready stage with tailored workshops and mentoring.
- Our Libraries and Heritage Services have been recognised as a National Portfolio Organisation by Arts Council England and secured £780,000 of funding over three years.
- Culture Leicestershire has created 20 paid opportunities for free-lance creative practitioners to develop co-created projects with our audiences. The service has also developed specific values for working with Creative Practitioners which will underpin plans for improving application processes, training and development opportunities and fair pay, all contributing to a positive cultural ecology for Leicestershire.

### **Broadband Roll Out**

- Through Project Gigahubs we collaborated with Building Digital UK to bring gigabit-capable broadband to 43 rural public sector sites, including 30 schools, 7 libraries, 3 depots and 3 recycling centres, between July 2023 and March 2024. We have supported Openreach to gain community backing, and subsequent Government funding, to bring full fibre broadband to approximately 30 rural Leicestershire villages that otherwise would not have received an upgrade commercially, through 8 Fibre Community Partnership Schemes.
- We are working closely with Building Digital UK on the delivery of Project Gigabit in Leicestershire. Gigabit-capable broadband will be rolled out to 14,400 homes and businesses in the County with the potential for more premises to be included the project. The rollout began in Summer 2024 and is expected to conclude in 2029.

## 4. Clean and Green

This outcome reflects the need to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change.

Sub-Outcome	Our Aims by 2026
People act now to tackle climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More residents actively involved in tackling climate change</li> </ul>
Nature and the local environment are valued, protected and enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the percentage of county land which promotes diversity of habitat and species</li> </ul>
Resources are used in an environmentally sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting and reduction in the percentage landfilled</li> </ul>
The economy and infrastructure are low carbon and environmentally friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Net-zero carbon emissions from the Council's own operations by 2035.</li> <li>• Work with partners to ensure Leicestershire is on track to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050</li> </ul>

### 4.1 People act now to tackle climate change and protect the environment.

To achieve net zero carbon emissions, we need people to take action to reduce their environmental impacts, such as by being more resource-efficient and travelling by sustainable modes.

#### Our aim by 2026

- More residents actively involved in tackling climate change.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- In June 2024 we supported the 'Great Big Green' week to encourage residents to take part in community action to tackle climate change and protect nature.
- Climate Change Awareness sessions have been delivered in collaboration with our Net Zero team, Communities Team, Adult Learning Service and Library Services, at venues across the county. We attended the annual parish liaison event and several community events with the 'How Bad are Bananas' carbon

footprint game, allowing people to consider the carbon footprint of everyday activities and how to reduce these.

- We have worked with Solar Together to provide residents with the opportunity to reduce energy costs by investing in solar panels and battery storage. In 2023, the scheme saw 216 solar panel and 8 battery storage installations across the county saving an estimated 4,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e over the next 25 years. Over its lifespan the project has created a contribution to renewable energy production of 2.7MW through £6.7m of private investment and will mean more than 12,000 tonnes of carbon reduction over the next 25 years.
- Our Adult Learning Service introduced 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD) into the curriculum and now include activities to raise awareness about environmental protection and climate change. For example, the impact lifestyles can have on our carbon footprint. The 'Cost of Living' courses include tips on avoiding waste and cooking on a budget and 'Make Do and Mend' classes to support sustainability.
- Culture Leicestershire launched a new Cultural Youth Forum (CYF) which chose to focus on climate change and environmental responsibility. Over 60 young people engaged with over 20 workshops in our museums. Insight gathered from over 200 young people will help shape and inform the future Council Net Zero Strategy.
- Animating Leicestershire Towns, a project developed by Creative Leicestershire involved residents in cultural activities to raise awareness about climate change and reusing materials. 549 people took part in creative workshops in Melton, Coalville, Loughborough, Market Harborough, and Hinckley.
- We have been developing our new Local Transport Plan, known as LTP4. Protecting the Environment is one of the core themes and seeks to facilitate an enhanced environment through the delivery of better transport solutions and enabling travel choice.
- We have submitted a report to the Climate Disclosure Project (CDP), a world leading environmental reporting platform, with the council scoring well for implementing measures to reduce emissions and having awareness of the main local risks and impacts of climate change.
- Working with the Green Living Leicestershire (GLL) partnership, we have developed a Net Zero toolkit for Parish, Town Councils and Local Groups, to support communities to achieve their net zero ambitions.
- Climate change and sustainable resources outcomes are supported by the Council's Environmental Action Volunteers (EAV's) in a variety of ways from improving carbon literacy to reusable nappy use.
- In collaboration with Green Fox Energy, we have worked with Parish Councils to participate in a pilot project to establish Electric Vehicle Car Clubs in Leicestershire. The first EV car club launched in Tilton on the Hill in September 2023.

- The Leicestershire Neighbourhood Planning Network have focused on Net Zero and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), through topic focused events and advice/information provided as part of Neighbourhood Plan consultation responses.
- There has been continued coordination and support on the climate change agenda through a series of sessions with the Communities Network – working in partnership with partner organisations to engage Leicestershire communities.

#### 4.2 Nature and the local environment are valued, protected and enhanced.

Biodiversity describes the enormous variety of life on Earth. Biodiversity and the eco-system clean our water, purify our air, regulate the climate and provide us with food and resources for medicines. Loss or damage of natural environments is among the biggest threats to wildlife. In Leicestershire, where more than 80% of the land is farmed, our wildlife continues to decline due to a lack of good habitats.



#### Our aim by 2026

- Increase in the percentage of county land which promotes diversity of habitats and species.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- Working in partnership with other local authorities, public bodies, environmental groups, farmers, landowners, and residents, we have led on the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland.



- Our partnership with local wildlife charity, Nature Spot, continues to boost biodiversity and wildlife by leaving wildflowers on urban roadside verges across the County. The Wildlife Verge scheme now includes 79 verges across 60 parishes.
- We have awarded grants worth over £6,000 to local projects that will improve biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions in Leicestershire.
- As of July 2024, over 437,000 trees have been planted as part of the Council's Tree for Every Person scheme. We also launched a new County Tree Preservation Order (TPO) web page and map providing information on doing works to a protected tree and showing the location of County managed TPOs.
- In September 2023, we opened our popular scheme, run in conjunction with the Woodland Trust, which offers free trees and hedges to landowners and farmers in a bid to encourage more planting across Leicestershire. Each free tree pack includes 50 native trees. In 2023 alone, we gave away 50,000 trees.
- In partnership with the Green Living Group, Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society and others, we secured £77,000 from Natural England for Swift conservation across the county. The project is funding the purchase of bird callers, Swift boxes, access to sites and community engagement to provide more homes for the birds and also educate people about the importance of Swifts.
- We have put in place a Countryside Stewardship Woodland Improvement agreement with Defra for woodlands within the Council's parks. This promotes excellence in the care and cultivation of woodlands, whilst increasing biodiversity and making woodlands more resilient to pests and diseases. Over the past year we have undertaken coppicing and thinning across several sites, as well as the installation of bird, bee and raptor boxes and pest control to protect young trees.
- Working with the County Invasive and Non-Native Species (INNS) Local Action Group, we secured almost £17,000 in funding from Natural England and DEFRA for recording invasive and non-native species as well as for controlling the spread of certain species such as Himalayan Balsam, Floating Pennywort, American Mink, and Japanese Knotweed.
- A reedbed that cleanses water used to sustainably maintain water levels in Ashby Canal was substantially refurbished. Elsewhere on the canal, a section of embankment was reinforced using a resin injection technology.
- We completed the Trent Rivers Trust Airwick project which undertook wildflower meadow restoration in Watermead Park and Broughton Astley. We also produced a conservation grazing plan for land that is managed by tenants along the River Soar with the purpose of reducing the pressure of heavy sheep grazing to help restore wet grassland important for biodiversity in the area.
- Our scheme which gives community groups, parish councils and schools free packs of fruit trees to create new orchards around the county was awarded more than £28,000 in extra government funding to extend for a further year. The community orchards scheme was launched in 2022 and the new funding is providing trees and support to 20 new larger schemes through 2024.

- We delivered two Designing an Orchard Training courses for 38 participants who had ordered orchard trees to create new orchards in Leicestershire. The course has continued to prove popular alongside our orchard free tree scheme. The training was also supported by the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme.
- In September 2023 our work to tackle ash dieback was recognised in a new national report. Our Ash Dieback Action Plan sets out work to tackle the problem and protect trees in Leicestershire. The county's 130 tree wardens also support the proactive work.
- The 1620's House and Garden encourages visitors to learn about the environment and nature. Locally sourced products are used in the café alongside traditional vegetables grown in the garden. Volunteers have created a Bug Hotel from recycled materials, a wildlife pond and log piles. The orchard has new Hazel saplings successfully grown from hazel nuts.
- We have been refreshing the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide. As part of this the inclusion and requirements for green infrastructure have been a key element to enhance the environment.
- Nature and the local environment protection outcomes are supported by Rights of Way, Parish Nature Network, Conservation Park Groups, Tree Wardens, and Environmental Action youth projects. Through community action, dedicated volunteers continue to keep our green spaces safe, clean, biodiverse and protected from harm.

### 4.3 Resources are used in an environmentally sustainable way.

We are using the planet's resources at a faster rate than they are being replenished and in a way which does not allow them to be reused. To address this, we need to move to a more efficient alternative to a traditional linear economy (make, use, dispose) where resources are used for as long as possible, then recovered, regenerated, or recycled.

#### Our aim by 2026

- Increase in the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting and reduction in the percentage landfilled.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- The Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy sets out how the Leicestershire Waste Partnership (consisting of the County Council and seven district councils) intends to manage municipal waste up to 2050. Work continues on implementing pledges in the Strategy including delivering a fly-tipping campaign and action to reduce waste to landfill to less than 5% by 2025.
- We promoted campaigns to reduce food waste, such as "Love Food Hate Waste". This included Food Waste Action Week with the theme of "Choose What You'll Use", encouraging purchasing fruit and vegetables loose to avoid over-buying.

- We promoted several national campaigns by Material Focus, “Bincident” and “Hidden batteries” to remind residents to only dispose of batteries and electrical devices such as laptops in designated containers to avoid fire risks.
- An ongoing campaign to reduce contamination in recycling was delivered during 2023/24. The campaign utilised bus advertising, digital screen advertising and online platforms such as catch-up TV and ensured clear and consistent information to residents on what can be recycled. We also promoted the national Recycle Week 2023 campaign with the theme of recycling items that can be recycled but are commonly missed in the home.
- In January 2024, we supported Keep Britain Tidy’s “Buy Nothing New Month” which encouraged residents to change their buying habits towards second-hand and to repair or restore items rather than replacing with brand new. Later in the year we adopted a new campaign with the strapline “Recycling is good, but we can do better” to challenge the perception that activities such as repair and reuse are the same as recycling.
- Adult learners have joined up with other volunteers for litter picking campaigns which, as well as cleaning up local communities, enhances their own learning and sense of personal responsibility and citizenship.
- We ran a series of cross-cutting seasonal campaigns across the year associated with religious and cultural festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, Diwali, summer sporting events and Halloween focusing on a range of waste prevention behaviours.
- Our reusable nappy campaign focused on demonstrations and direct engagement. During 2023/24, the campaign was expanded to raise awareness of reusable products for periods and bladder incontinence.
- We awarded grants totalling £2,538 to Hinckley Fixers and Coalville CAN, to enable both groups to hold repair events for residents, thus saving household items from going to waste and providing residents with the skills to make their own repairs in future.
- We continue to support the Environment Action Volunteers scheme, helping residents to establish positive environmental behaviours through attending events, delivering talks and providing support and advice to residents. The offer was extended to include tasks assisting our Environment and Nature team and the volunteers recorded 860 hours in 2023-24. We have increased our level of direct engagement with Leicestershire residents, speaking to 4,805 people at 141 talks and roadshows.
- We resurfaced the Loughborough Waste Transfer Station shed, prolonging the life of an asset that supports efficient disposal of non-recyclable waste.
- A further three Household Waste and Recycling Sites were fitted with a Rehome Zone to enable residents to reuse unwanted belongings.
- Nine Household Waste and Recycling Sites were also converted to LED lighting to increase safety and to the reduce environmental impact.
- Our Adult Learning Service continues to work with our Waste Management Team to deliver related courses for the public. E.g., Re-use and mend.
- Our Library service has amended their book disposal policy to ensure books are recycled where possible.

#### 4.4 Economy and infrastructure are low carbon and environmentally friendly.

Decarbonising the economy and infrastructure is one of the key solutions to addressing the climate emergency, as nearly 70% of Leicestershire's emissions come from commercial, industrial and transport sources.



#### Our aims by 2026

- Net zero carbon emissions from the Council's own operations by 2035
- Work with partners to ensure Leicestershire is on track to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- We continue to deliver our Net Zero Council Action Plan to tackle emissions across our operations. To date emissions have been reduced by over 70% since 2008-09.
- Between August 2023 and September 2024, our Energy Team's work has focused on completing a Heat Decarbonisation Plan for the authority. The plan was grant funded by the Low Carbon Skills Fund and included surveying most of our gas heated properties to identify the best way to get them to Net Zero and the expected cost.
- Our Energy Team has continued to work with properties to reduce their gas and electricity consumption. Examples include monitoring the biomass system at County Hall to ensure it is running as efficiently as possible and work at Beaumanor Hall to reduce their electricity consumption.
- In November 2023, we secured £2.56m from Innovate UK to deliver an exciting demonstrator project alongside a consortium of partners. This will deliver several actions within the Net Zero Leicestershire 2050 Action Plan, including development of a Local Area Energy Plan, support to develop new community energy projects, support for local businesses to tackle climate change and local governance to support net zero activity.
- We have been developing our new Local Transport Plan, known as LTP4. The development of the Core Document sets out the strategic vision, themes and policies. Protecting the Environment is one of the core themes and seeks to

facilitate decarbonisation of transport through the delivery of LTP4, implementation of transport solutions, maintenance and enabling travel choice.

- We have been working as part of a consortium led by Midlands Connect on Local Electric Vehicle infrastructure funding (LEVI). A key element of this has been the development of Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (EVCS), which is a requirement to secure the funding, but will also support the delivery of our core themes and objectives through the LTP4 and Net Zero Strategy. We have secured £222,373 of capital funding towards delivery of the Pilot Project and been allocated an additional £3.15m towards further charge-point delivery, subject to the success of the business case.
- We have been conducting a study of our fleet operations to understand the best ways to decarbonise our vehicles and move away from fossil fuels. We have been running larger vehicles such as those used in waste haulage operations on HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) fuel.
- In December we approved the implementation of an 18-month trial to dim County streetlights to 30% intensity to reduce carbon emissions and light pollution and reduce energy consumption and costs.
- We chair the Midlands Highway Alliance+ Carbon Steering Group, which raises awareness and knowledge of carbon reduction in the delivery and maintenance of highway infrastructure across more than 30% of England's local authority highway network.
- A Health and Carbon Subgroup has been established to inform the LTP4 and final plan. A full Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be undertaken on the final version of LTP4, covering environment and health impacts. A full Impact Assessment (HIA) is being conducted on the Local Highway Design Guide, covering elements such as active travel and air quality.
- Our Legal Services and Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation have worked together to strengthen supplier obligations in relation to ESG (environmental, social and governance) matters.
- The new 'Greenstone Primary' forest school in North-West Leicestershire will feature green technology such as solar panels and air source heat pumps and is set to open in autumn 2025. The school will offer education based on a Scandinavian idea which promotes learning through contact with nature.

## 5. Improved Opportunities

This outcome aims to ensure that all children and young people get the best start for life and have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential, regardless of their circumstances. We believe children are best supported to grow within their own families and as such the outcome reflects our aspiration for families to be self-sufficient. It also aims to ensure that disadvantaged adults, such as those with learning disabilities and/or mental health conditions, can aim high and achieve their aspirations.

Sub-Outcome	Our Aims by 2026
<b>Every child gets the best start for life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More children achieving the expected level of development at age 2-2.5yrs</li> <li>• More children achieving a good level of development at foundation stage</li> </ul>
<b>Every child has access to good quality education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sufficient, high quality school places and specialist SEND provision.</li> <li>• Improved educational attainment amongst disadvantaged pupils</li> </ul>
<b>Families are self-sufficient and enabled to be resilient</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families are able to deal with issues as they arise, and the Council achieves its targets for the number of families achieving progress through the Supporting Families Programme</li> </ul>
<b>Young people and adults are able to aim high and reach their full potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best 25% of counties for the rate of young people aged 16-17 who are NEET.</li> <li>• Best 25% of counties for the percentage of adults (learning disability) who are in employment/living independently.</li> <li>• Percentage of adults (mental health) who are in employment/living independently is above national average</li> </ul>

### 5.1 Every child gets the best start in life.

The first 1,001 days from pregnancy to age two set the foundations for cognitive, emotional and physical development. We want to improve how we support families during these 1,001 days.



### Our aims by 2026

- More children achieving the expected level of development at age 2-2.5yrs
- More children achieving a good level of development at foundation stage.

### Progress in 2023/24

- Between July 2023 and June 2024, over 700 mums/pregnant women joined the Active Mum's Club (the majority of whom had been unactive). There were also over 1000 new social media followers for the Club and over 16,000 website hits. As part of the activity, over 60% of engaged women increased their physical activity levels, which creates a positive start in life for babies.
- For children aged 1-2 years, where there are concerns around speech, language and communication (identified at the child's 10–12-month health visitor review), we provide advice, knowledge and understanding of communication and language skills to parents to support the child's development.
- Oral health eLearning was launched aimed at early years settings and healthcare professionals to ensure oral health is understood and embedded early on in life.
- Healthy Eating in the Really Young (HENRY) completed its 1<sup>st</sup> year of delivering 'Healthy Families: Right from the Start' to families with children aged 0-5. 5 programmes to 43 families and 60 children were completed within Leicestershire's Family Hubs.
- Healthy Start continues to provide support to eligible families. Uptake of vouchers and vitamins has seen a steady increase since the vouchers became electronic and widened the retailers able to accept Healthy Start cards.
- Culture Leicestershire delivered 'Bookstart' in partnership with the Book-Trust. 2250 'Bookstart' packs were distributed to preschool children in Leicestershire facilitated by Loughborough, Wigston, Hinckley and Coalville Libraries, as part of a new targeted approach. Our libraries co-ordinate deliveries of the baby

packs which are gifted to every baby born in Leicestershire at their six-week health check.

- We continue to develop an early year's fundamental movement programme to support children aged 2 to 5 to develop foundation skills of movement. 82 settings have been engaged with 15 training sessions.
- In September 2023 free sessions were held at Family Hubs across the county to help parents and carers to support their babies' brains develop at a faster rate. The first 1001 critical days are a crucial time for babies – by the age of 2 their brain is 80% developed.
- Through our partnership arrangements, the Family Hubs team have supported the production of Leicestershire's first Maternity and Early Years Strategy and published a Start for Life offer.
- We have continued to support the reduction of child health inequalities through Supervised Tooth Brushing in early years settings and schools, as well as offering training to health professionals.
- Our Adult Learning Service has delivered family learning programmes in collaboration with schools and Family Hubs targeted in areas of deprivation. The introduction of school readiness courses has supported families during the transition into school and the resilience activities included within the curriculum, have helped families to develop social and emotional wellbeing. The curriculum has also been tailored to provide additional support to families of SEND children.
- Stay and Play Volunteers continue to provide free early years foundation stage support and family support.

## 5.2 Every child has access to good quality education.

Education has the potential to drive social mobility and improve outcomes for the next generation. It is therefore important that children have access to good quality education. Further, we believe that most children with SEND should have their needs met in a mainstream school to promote inclusion and better outcomes.





## Our aims by 2026

- Sufficient, high quality school places and specialist SEND provision.
- Improved educational attainment amongst disadvantaged pupils.

## Progress in 2023/24

- LLR Social Care Authorities and the Integrated Care Board have been selected in the East Midlands region to pilot a range of changes, set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. The SEND AP Improvement Plan sets out the Government's plans to change the SEND and AP system in England. There are nine change programme partnerships across the country that will be piloting and testing the reforms.
- We saw a high level of success in meeting parent preferences for first time admissions into primary schools and phased transfer into secondary schools. Mid-term applications were processed quickly where we were undertaking this. 94.8% primary applications secured their first choice and 99% one of their top 3. 91.2% secured their first choice of secondary and 98.3% one of their top 3.
- Improved educational attainment has remained a priority for us with a good number of schools rated good or outstanding.
- In July 2024 the Leicestershire Virtual School became one of the first virtual schools in the country to be granted a platinum 'Artsmark' award. Assessors noted a significant increase in the number of children taking part in arts activities as well as an increased sense of belonging and improved wellbeing.
- In May 2024, the new 'Greenstone Primary' forest school in North-West Leicestershire was named, reflecting the landscape and mining heritage of the area. The school, to open in 2025, will offer education based on a Scandinavian idea which promotes learning through contact with nature.
- Culture Leicestershire supported the 2024 Summer Reading Challenge. The Challenge inspires children aged between 4 and 12 to read for pleasure and combines free access to books with fun social activities and a creative online element. Taking part in the challenge helps to overcome the reading 'dip' children experience during their summer holidays. Nearly two thousand more children took part in the challenge than last year, reading 252,035 books and reading or listening to 2,644 e-books.
- Our Creative Learning Service provided learning opportunities for thousands of young people across all key stages, giving them access to inspiring collections and supporting all learning needs and abilities. The service supports literacy and the curriculum and encourages reading for pleasure.
- The Creative Learning Service also provided young people with access to original works of art and museum collections. These inspiring collections are used to create curriculum-based workshops which engage every pupil and ensure each child can participate in the learning opportunities and achieve quality outcomes.
- Charnwood Museum developed a bespoke offer for children and families with additional and special educational needs, called 'Chilled Charnwood' – a

monthly quiet opening, providing a safe and relaxed space for families to enjoy and learn from the displays and participate in activities. A social story was developed in partnership with 'GoLearn' and a sensory map of the museum to help families to feel confident when visiting.

### 5.3 Families are self-sufficient and enabled to be resilient.

Many families have complex needs which require support to enable their children to achieve good outcomes in life. We need to identify issues early and work directly with families in collaboration with other services.

#### Our aim by 2026

- Families are able to deal with issues as they arise, and the Council achieves its targets for the number of families achieving progress through the Supporting Families Programme.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- In July 2024 our Children and Family Services were rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Their report followed a three-week in-depth inspection of services in April. Inspectors praised work which led to many families achieving positive changes in their lives and a culture that put the experiences and progress of children at the heart of social work practice. Our commitment to care leavers was also recognised.
- During 2023/24, good progress was made on the development of Leicestershire's Family Hubs programme, following the award of just under £1 million in grant funding. Family Hubs provide a one-stop-shop, virtual and through buildings, which enable all Leicestershire families to access advice, information, and signposting, and where needed, support.
- The Council developed a new Family Hubs website, which brings together information, links to other websites, and self-help resources to support families to increase resilience.
- Through our partnership arrangements, the Family Hubs team have supported the production of an updated Early Help Strategy.
- In our recent Ofsted feedback about services for children who need help and protection, our early help offer, and range of preventative and targeted services were highlighted, alongside praise for the Family Hubs and early help assessments. Inspectors praised the work undertaken to re-shape services for children and their families through the development of the new Family Help service that brings together targeted early help and work with children in need.
- The Whole Family Relationship Service continues to provide wrap around early help preventative support to families to become resilient, addressing issues of conflict in families and training to schools to improve the lives of children and young people.
- Substance Use family support continues to offer support to families who are affected by substance use.

- Our Supporting Families Programme has continued to provide high quality, intensive family support to Leicestershire families. The service was able to evidence outcomes for 380 families during the reporting period.
- We have run a range of fostering events to encourage more foster carers to come forward and support the over 700 children and young people in care across Leicestershire.
- Delivery of the Healthy Eating in the Really Young (HENRY) programme has enabled families to become more self-sufficient and resilient around health and wellbeing. 43 families and 60 children completed the 1<sup>st</sup> year of delivery with 75% of families reporting a healthier lifestyle, increased confidence and efficiency at their parenting skills after the programme.
- Our Adult Learning Service, Family Learning Team has delivered an increased number of programmes to support parents and carers. The introduction of a Resilience programme supported 54 families to develop knowledge and understanding of their family's mental well-being and take action to improve their resilience.
- Creative Leicestershire has delivered a programme to provide Family Friendly Spaces in Libraries which encourage all children to fulfil their potential. In 2023, this focused on Ashby Library where a nature-inspired space was created, highlighting the library's location within the National Forest. Following the opening the new children's space, junior book loans increased, spiking at a 27% increase on the previous year.
- Partnership working with libraries is also enabling us to create Family Hub areas in libraries with resources for families to borrow, and use of public access computers to support with the digital poverty agenda.

#### 5.4 Young people and adults are able to aim high and reach their full potential.

To fulfil their potential, young people need access to relevant, good quality post-16 education, training and employment opportunities. It is also critical that adults who may be disadvantaged due to learning disabilities and/or mental health issues are able to live as independently as possible and access suitable employment.



## Our aims by 2026

- Best 25% of counties for the rate of young people aged 16-17 who are NEET.
- Best 25% of counties for the percentage of adults (learning disability) who are in employment/living independently.
- Percentage of adults (mental health) who are in employment/living independently is above national average.

## Progress in 2023/24

- Our Inclusion Service continues to provide advice and signposting for NEET young people in Leicestershire. Those who are vulnerable, including young people with an education and health care plan, can access support to find and secure a place in education or training. The Inclusion Service also carried out preventative work with Year 11 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET when they leave school. In the 2023/24 academic year, 127 young people were supported by the service.
- The Teen Health service, incorporating the healthy child programme, continues to provide early intervention and prevention, promoting healthier lifestyles, and reducing risk taking behaviour.
- We have boosted 'supported living' options – with over 100 new placements created since 2020, enabling people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health needs to learn life skills and live independently.
- Adult education activities were delivered in 43 venues across the county, engaging approximately 5000 adult learners (19 + years of age). These programmes were targeted towards supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Courses prioritised basic skills, vocational skills and the development of mental health and wellbeing. Overall service growth in adult learner numbers (+7%) has been driven by increasing demand for mental health courses and the Adult Learning Service's work to support English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- Our Adult Learning Service continues to offer a discrete programme to support learners with learning difficulties and disabilities. It supports approximately 350 learners per annum. This programme has helped vulnerable adults develop independent living skills.
- Our Community Delivery Team offers a county-wide network of support to individuals with a goal of them identifying a 'good life' and achieving their goals related to this.
- In February 2024 we committed to making being a Care Leaver a protected characteristic. The move encourages all to consider how they engage with care leavers and what services and support is offered in areas such as housing, employment and training, mentoring, access to entertainment, physical activity, and transport.

## 6.Safe and Well

This outcome aims to ensure that people are safe and protected from harm, live in a healthy environment, and have the opportunities and support they need to live active, independent, and fulfilling lives.

Sub-Outcome	Council Aims by 2026
<b>People are safe in their daily lives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More residents feel safe in their local area.</li> <li>• Fewer children and young people involved in and impacted by criminal behaviour.</li> </ul>
<b>People at the most risk are protected from harm</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable children and adults are identified and protected from harm and abuse.</li> </ul>
<b>People enjoy long lives in good health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved healthy life expectancy and reduced health inequalities.</li> <li>• Increased proportion of residents with a healthy weight.</li> <li>• Improved mental wellbeing and reduced prevalence of mental ill health.</li> </ul>
<b>Carers and people with care needs are supported to live active, independent and fulfilling lives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More people find it easy to access information and advice about Adult Care services.</li> <li>• Improvements in the experiences of those who receive adult social care and support.</li> <li>• Carers feel more recognised, valued and supported to undertake their caring role.</li> </ul>

### 6.1 People are safe in their daily lives.

We aim to keep people safe by working with partners such as district councils, NHS, Police and Fire and Rescue services to raise awareness of and prevent crime.

#### Our aims by 2026

- More residents feel safe in their local area.
- Fewer children and young people involved in and impacted by criminal behaviour.

## Progress in 2023/24

### Community Safety

- We continue to work with partners through the Community Safety Partnership to ensure that Leicestershire is a safe place to live, visit and work in.
- Work is continuing to procure a new Anti-Social Behaviour Case Management System, enabling communities to report concerns more easily and ensure data is more accessible.
- We remain committed to disrupting the exploitation of children within Leicestershire. We are developing our Harm Outside the Home strategy in response to escalating concerns around child exploitation.
- The Vulnerability Hub has continued to work with children who are impacted by child exploitation. During 2023 we received 173 referrals for young people where Child Criminal Exploitation was a concern. Leicestershire Police and the Hub undertook 107 association mappings, a high proportion of those referrals were from social care. We dealt with 118 referrals for young people where Child Sexual Exploitation was a concern.
- Specialist Child Exploitation workers spent time building a positive working relationship with children. Children are kept at the heart of our practice and their voice is heard throughout our intervention.
- Youth Justice Services are measured by the number of children who are recorded as First Time Entrants (FTE's), that is those children who receive a substantive outcome of a Youth Caution or above. In April 2022 – March 2023, Leicestershire had 118 FTE's and during April 2022 – March 2024 this reduced by 13.1% to 103 FTE's. The figures for Leicestershire across both years are significantly lower than the regional average and the Family Group. The rate for England in 2022/23 stands at 172 FTE's and 161 FTE's for 2023/24. This data shows a decrease of Leicestershire children involved in and impacted by criminal behaviour and strong performance regionally and nationally.

### Consumer Safety

- 173,617 products, excluding vapes, were removed from or prevented from entering the supply chain via our Trading Standards airport team. The total estimated market value is approximately £7m.
- Trading Standards qualified food officers also continued to visit and inspect businesses to provide advice and guidance surrounding allergens and keeping customers safe. All new food businesses were contacted, registered and provided with allergen advice (approximately 90 new businesses a month).
- Intelligence led visits by the Trading Standards Team to 25 retailers in Leicestershire resulted in 10,340 vapes, 3633 cigarettes and 322 packets of hand rolling tobacco being seized.
- We have signed up to National Trading Standards Charter 'No blame no shame campaign' which aims to remove the stigma of being the victim of a fraud/scam.
- We continue work to raise awareness of scams and supporting vulnerable victims. Partnership work with First Contact, safeguarding talks, and target hardening advice is provided. Call blockers have been fitted in homes to

prevent/reduce the number of scam calls. 13 talks have been carried out across the county.

- Our Trading Standards Service continues to have a dedicated scams officer to advise victims of scams and to provide advice to prevent reoccurrence. Victims will be identified and referred where appropriate to safeguarding and First Contact Plus. Advice is provided to victims of scams to prevent them being targeted again; vulnerable victims receive more support.
- We have also continued to work jointly with the police to address doorstep rogue traders. This is a multi-pronged approach to reduce instances of crime, educate potential victims on how to prevent becoming a victim and taking enforcement action against the persistent or most serious fraud being reported.

## 6.2 People at the most risk are protected from harm.

There is a long-term upward trend in demand for child safeguarding, and we have a duty to work with partners to identify and protect vulnerable people.



### Our aim by 2026

- Vulnerable children and adults are identified and protected from harm and abuse.

### Progress in 2023/24

- Our Safeguarding Children Partnership has delivered work on safeguarding babies, child head trauma, mental health and wellbeing and CAMHs, keeping adolescents safe from youth violence and exploitation, diversity, independent and out of school settings, and transitions to adult services. There has been continued positive feedback from the national Child Safeguarding Panel.
- Our Safeguarding work at the front door to children's services was praised by Ofsted inspectors for responding quickly and according to the level of need and risk in the presenting information and for its strong assessments and decision making to ensure that children benefit from the right service at the right time.

- Our Public Health staff commissioned Barnardo's to provide tiered trauma informed practice training to staff working across Leicestershire. Additionally, a toolkit was developed for the health visitor and midwifery teams for Leicestershire Partnership Trust and University Hospital teams.

### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

- Our Safeguarding Adults Governance Group sets strategic priorities in relation to safeguarding practices and processes within the Council. Following these set out guidance, in 2023/24 we have received 1,732 Safeguarding Alerts, from which 796 Safeguarding Enquiries have been completed, and 95% out of the 76% of people spoken to have advised that their safeguarding outcomes were met.
- The Safeguarding Adults Governance Group continues to maintain robust links with the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and ensures that the policies and procedures in place for safeguarding are consistent with SAB priorities. In line with this, we have progressed the business priorities for this year, which are Self-Neglect, Mental Capacity Act, and Domestic Abuse through case audits and shared with staff at Continuous Development Days.
- The Suicide Audit and Prevention Group (SAPG) and High-Risk Groups and Locations sub-groups have been proactively and reactively working with partners using the best available data to prioritise partnership approaches to reducing risk.
- We have conducted work to target self-harm awareness training where there are clusters and in high-risk populations. Public Health also continue to lead and deliver the suicide bereavement and postvention service in collaboration with system partners.
- We contribute to the Combating Drugs and Alcohol Partnership, which aims to work collaboratively to ensure that protection is provided to those most at risk of harm from drug and/or alcohol misuse.
- The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service (CIPCS) has conducted a comprehensive IPC audit in County care homes, which reviews environmental cleanliness, IPC practice and governance to ensure that staff are delivering care in line with best practice to keep service users free from harm.

### **6.3 People enjoy long lives in good health.**

Good health is a basic precondition for people to take an active role in family, community and work life. Health outcomes are influenced by a wide range of social, economic and environmental factors, known as 'wider determinants of health'. We will embed a 'Health in all Policies' approach to systematically consider the health implications of all decisions.

#### **Our aims by 2026**

- Improved healthy life expectancy and reduced health inequalities.
- Increased proportion of residents with a healthy weight.
- Improved mental wellbeing and reduced prevalence of mental ill health.





## Progress in 2023/24

### Improved healthy life expectancy and reduced health inequalities.

- We have increased organisational awareness around the wider influences on health and understanding across all departments through a tiered training programme available to all staff as part of our 'Health in All Policies' approach.
- Assessment of health Impacts are now sought on all proposals and policies going to our Cabinet.
- In January 2024, a multi-million-pound investment was awarded to the Council to help research and reduce health inequalities in Leicestershire. £5.25m of Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC) funding was provisionally awarded to us by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), as part of a five-year programme to find out more to help tackle the health differences in the county.
- Our Public Health Service has provided evidence to inform health considerations in District Local Plans, to cover life expectancy and health inequality data and headlines.
- Local Area Coordinators (LAC) and our Health Inequalities Team have supported engagement with vaccination programmes and the distribution of materials to support community testing to reduce the spread of Covid-19, have supported work around homelessness prevention and increased the accessibility and inclusivity of the support available.
- We have developed a new innovative adolescent public health service. The Teen Health 11-19 service is essential to all aspects of health and wellbeing and is crucial to reducing health inequalities and influencing the wider determinants of health. School based Health and Wellbeing Officers are delivering evidence-based interventions to improve health outcomes for young people.
- Our Warm Homes Team has continued to provide preventative support and advice to those at risk of struggling with fuel poverty and emergency heating and warm packs to those in crisis.
- A Healthy Conversation Skills webinar has been developed to provide training across LLR Primary Care Networks. This includes working within GP surgeries to increase and improve working knowledge of having a healthy conversation.
- The Young Health Champions programme teaches young people between the ages of 14 - 24 about managing their health and wellbeing and how to promote health messages to their peers, culminating in a Level 2 qualification.

- An online sexual health service commenced, offering sexual health testing, treatment and contraception to residents to support good sexual health. The service also supports access for rural communities who find it difficult to attend in person services.
- We have worked closely with the ICB (Integrated Care Board) on the development and delivery of Women's Health Hubs, with a pilot hub established in Northwest Leicestershire.
- Our Quit Ready service supported over 2500 residents to set quit dates and over 1500 residents achieve this through a 12-week program. In October 2023 Leicestershire topped the table for the lowest rate of smoking in adults in the East Midlands. Quit Ready advisors deliver a free and confidential programme to help residents become and stay smoke free.
- In November 2023 new resource packs for Key Stage 1 and 2 children were launched to highlight the dangers of passive smoking to children, in a new county-wide project. 11% of children asked said someone smokes at home indoors in a room they use and 13% in a car.
- £2,330,445 was invested in 2023/24 through the Leicestershire Sports Partnership to get people more physically active. £1.43m was invested into 106 local clubs, groups, and organisations across LLR. 74080 young people participated in level 2 and 3 school games and Team Leicestershire events.

#### **Increased proportion of residents with a healthy weight.**

- Our Weight Management Service has received and triaged over 3500 referrals, and over 500 residents have completed our Level 3 12-week programme.
- In January 2024, work to promote healthy, sustainable, and local food in Leicestershire was given national recognition. Our Good Food Leicestershire initiative, which works with partners to tackle issues from reducing food poverty to diet related ill-health, was given a silver award from Sustainable Food Places. The first authority in the Midlands to receive silver food status.
- Good food projects include community fridges in Coalville, Hinckley, Market Harborough and Wigston Magna which have prevented hundreds of tonnes of food from going to waste. There is also a mobile pantry planned in Melton to help rural areas with food insecurity.
- Work has been carried out with local businesses on new legislation that seeks to ensure food deemed to contain high sugars, salts and fats are not available near checkouts (where 'impulse' buys are more likely) in larger supermarkets and food retail businesses. In total 11 supermarkets were inspected, all those stores that it applies to have received advice and information provided on social media.
- Our Public Health Team have offered hot food takeaway policy support for all Local Planning Authorities who are renewing their Local Plans.
- In December 2023, we agreed a new service model for physical activity including specialist evidence-based programmes to support inactive people with existing health conditions to be more active.
- The Let's Get Moving programme has aimed to motivate every resident across LLR to participate in more physical activity. £15857 has been invested into 40 community groups to support this with 51 Let's Get Moving Champions.

- Agreement was established to embed health design considerations into newly built schools across Leicestershire as part of our Health in All policies approach.

### **Improved mental wellbeing and reduced prevalence of mental ill health.**

- In September 2023 we launched a new project to help mental wellbeing. Mental Health Friendly Places aims to train local organisations and groups to become a mental health friendly place and help encourage local people to start or support conversations about mental health.
- Healthy Workplaces has continued to provide support to the working age population by providing Mental Health First Aid training to staff.
- Our 'Start a Conversation' approach has broadened its remit to include mental health by developing an eLearning offer, as well as encouraging people to pledge and become champions.
- Our Community Delivery Team has continued to offer a 'Making Every Contact Count' approach to conversations around Mental Health and their community presence often means this reaches people in a timely way and prevents a crisis being reached.
- The Wellbeing and Mental Health programmes provided by our Adult Learning Service have offered 1,000 spaces on courses to support resilience and people's recovery from poor mental health. Links with partner agencies have also been developed to improve referrals from community services.
- Our Care Leaver Service has continued to offer a range of services to support Care Leavers to manage their emotional wellbeing, including parent and baby groups, a support and befriending group (SYPAC), access to a mental health practitioner, benefits officer or housing officer when needed, and the service will maintain contact with the young person up to age 25. Where young people are deemed to be very vulnerable, multiagency meetings are convened to explore how best to support them.
- We have produced a gambling harm needs assessment to explore the populations vulnerable to the harms from gambling, inequalities in the extent to which populations are affected and the links this has with mental ill health.
- Our Local Area Coordinators (LAC) have continued work with key groups of people at risk of poor mental health (such as frailty related to ageing, those living with a disability and people experiencing life changing trauma which leaves them vulnerable).

### **6.4 Carers and people with care needs are supported to live active, independent and fulfilling lives.**

It is important that people find it easy to access information about social care services and that service users are satisfied with their care and support, live as independently as possible and report a good quality of life. The Council also aspires for unpaid carers in the community to feel more recognised, valued and supported to undertake their caring role.

## Our aims by 2026

- More people find it easy to access information and advice about Adult Care services.
- Improvements in the experiences of those who receive adult social care and support.
- Carers feel more recognised, valued, and supported to undertake their caring role.

## Progress in 2023/24

### Adult Social Care Services, Information and Advice.

- The Council and care providers have continued to maintain adult care services to ensure flow through hospitals and provision for new community requests. With a recent reduction in assessment waiting lists. The number of people awaiting a home care service remains very low due to good capacity in the market.
- Our in-house HART service continues to deliver increased reablement to people, supporting increasing numbers of people in the community and to facilitate hospital discharges. The service now undertakes visits to University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL) and community hospital wards to ensure that the right people are being provided with reablement, which in turn reduces demand for ongoing need.
- We have rolled out 'care technology' - over 2,600 pieces of equipment, including falls detectors and GPS location trackers - over last year, benefiting over 1,000 people.
- Our initiative to improve healthcare for residents in care homes across LLR was shortlisted for a 2024 Digital Award and Health Service Journal award, recognising innovative digital projects which transform care delivery and improve patient outcomes. The Connected Care Programme was developed jointly between the LLR Integrated Care Board, City Council, County Council and Rutland. The programme uses remote technology to reduce avoidable hospital admissions by enabling staff to recognise deterioration early, escalate concerns and receive a timely response from a health professional.
- In November 2024, the Council agreed a new Living Well with Dementia Strategy to 2028 to support people living with or caring for those with dementia.
- Our Learning Disabilities service has focused not only on the number of patients accessing health checks, but also targeted those who had not had a health check for the last two years. As a result, 4,215 checks were achieved through the year, equating to over 80% of the cohort. Due to the success of this approach, it is being rolled out to mental health services.
- There has been a 15% reduction in emergency admissions for falls when compared to the same point last winter, largely due to a newly launched falls assessment service across the County.

## Carers.

- The hospital discharge grant for carers (HDGfC) was set up to support carers to facilitate the cared for person's discharge from hospital. The HDGfC can be used to support carers with cleaning, housework, short-term sitting service, equipment, or loss of income due to the carer taking time off work to look after the cared for person. Between 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2024, 283 successful grant applications were processed totalling £108,301.
- Our Local Area Coordinator (LAC) and Health Inequalities teams have continued to engage with communities and encountered a high number of carers or those who have caring responsibilities unrecognised. We have helped establish informal carers support groups and helped carers access local support.
- In June 2024, we publicised an initiative to give unpaid carers across Leicestershire all-year-round free entry to two top county attractions.
- As part of improvements to making on-line information easier to find, the navigation from the Adult Social Care page of the website has a specific section to find all information on "Looking After Someone". This takes people directly to all the information on being a carer.
- A recent user survey showed that the percentage of carers who find it easy to find information rose from 49.4% in 2022-23 to 56.1% in 2023-24.



## 7. Great Communities

This outcome aims for Leicestershire to have active and inclusive communities in which people support each other and participate in service design and delivery. Communities also need to be resilient; able to avoid, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Sub-Outcome	Our Aims by 2026
Diversity is celebrated and people feel welcome and included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with partners to increase community cohesion and tackle hate crime.</li> <li>• Council services are more accessible and inclusive.</li> </ul>
People participate in service design and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the percentage of residents who feel that they can influence Council decisions.</li> </ul>
Cultural and historical heritage are enjoyed and conserved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of residents and visitors engaging in cultural and heritage activities.</li> </ul>
Communities are prepared for and resilient to emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of active Community Response Plans.</li> </ul>
People support each other through volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide variety of volunteering opportunities and activity across Council services.</li> <li>• VCSE organisations remain financially viable and maintain their service delivery.</li> </ul>

### 7.1 Diversity is celebrated, and people feel welcome and included.

We are committed to equality and diversity because we believe that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and to feel that they can be themselves without fear of discrimination or inequality.

#### Our aims by 2026

- Council services are more accessible and inclusive.
- Work with partners to increase community cohesion and tackle hate crime.

#### Progress in 2023/24

- In September 2024 we agreed a new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to 2028 building on the Council's already strong reputation and work

programme around equalities issues. It focuses on embracing diversity, eliminating bullying, harassment and discrimination, the way our services are delivered and ensuring they are accessible for all.

- We were shortlisted for Local Authority of the Year for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion by the Local Government Chronicle.
- A new Equality Impact Assessment process was launched to ensure that all proposed changes to policy or practice are reviewed for potential negative impact.
- In May 2024, a Communities Network session explored the benefits of Asset Based Approaches. Gather, Create, Grow, a community organisation, shared their experience of how they used the principles of an Asset based approach to make a positive impact in the community.
- Our Adult Learning Service delivered 27 British Sign Language and Deaf Awareness classes at venues across the county. Many of those attending the programmes were either carers or professionals working in support services. These skills help individuals to live independently and provide groups the opportunity to access services and contribute.
- Our Community Delivery team has increased accessibility to council services by connecting with communities and sharing information directly to those who have a need but are not aware of offers. Examples include working with Refugees and Asylum Seekers rehomed in our communities through Central Government programmes (Syria and Ukraine), and with residents who have learning disabilities to develop easy read materials.

### **Community Cohesion and Hate Crime**

- We continue to actively participate in the LLR Hate Strategic Group, chaired by the Police and including partners from Leicester, Rutland, the district councils, Fire and Rescue Service, Victim First and Probation.
- A Partnership Hate Crime Hub has been created, which aims to unite positive voices from the Police and partners, to reach the communities of LLR who have been impacted by crime.
- The Home Office Face to Face Training Resource Platform is being launched from October 2024, and we are currently taking part in the Wave 3 Pilot.
- A joint bid with Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire for the Radicalisation Project Fund was accepted in early 2024. The bid was for workshops, with a grant allocation of £22,000. Each local authority received 6 webinar sessions (3 for parents and carers and 3 for third sector professional staff). The project bid focused on online workshops to raise awareness for parents/carers of teenage boys with neurodiverse conditions.
- Our Local Area Coordinators (LAC) have supported where community issues have been identified, such as in Ibstock around the use of a local hotel for Asylum Seekers. The team were able to work proactively with the community, District Council and other departments around tackling hate crime.
- We have also launched our own new internal system for recording and acting on hate crime against employees.

- All learning programmes delivered by the Council's Adult Learning Service include content that promotes fundamental British Values. Learners leave their courses with a greater understanding of different values and customs together with greater tolerance and respect for others.
- Our Children and Families Service have focused on tackling racism, driven through the departmental 'We Care' Strategy. This focus has seen increased understanding of the discriminatory experiences children and families face in communities and how we can help them achieve positive outcomes for children. An example is the introduction of the Race and Ethnicity Excellence Forum (REEF) which gives practitioners an opportunity to reflect and receive views from a range of agencies.
- Our Adult Learning Service has continued to work closely with internal partners to support the Homes for Ukraine and Hong Kong Nationals programmes and has a separate contract with Charnwood Borough Council to fund the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme. The funding has enabled us to deliver a range of courses to support these groups to develop their English skills. Language skills enable these groups to integrate and contribute to their communities.
- In Market Harborough, members of the Gypsy and Traveller community worked with Culture Leicestershire to develop an exhibition sharing stories of their lives. The result was special insight into their often-misunderstood community, who have experienced previous prejudice and discrimination.
- A total of 543 people were welcomed as new citizens of the United Kingdom in Leicestershire.

## 7.2 People participate in service design and delivery.

Residents should feel that they can get involved in decisions about public services and policies which affect their lives. County Councillors have a key role in representing the needs and interests of residents, however the Council aims to improve how it engages residents in service design and delivery so that more residents feel they can influence Council decisions.





## Our aim by 2026

- Increase in the percentage of residents who feel they can influence Council decisions.

## Progress in 2023/24

- We carried out a wide range of public consultations during the year on topics such as homelessness support services, schools' admissions policy, electric vehicle charging, road safety, recycling and household waste centres and equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy.
- A range of questions from the public were submitted to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings during the 2023/24 year and there were 2920 views of webcasts for these Committee meetings.
- We implemented a new casework software solution to support elected members to better manage constituents' issues and queries, following a successful pilot of the system.
- Our Adults and Communities Engagement Panel continues to support that Department in shaping and developing service delivery and resources.
- Our Children and Families Service continue their commitment through the Voice and Influence Strategy, to ensure the voice and experiences of all children and families are heard and responded to during the planning and delivery of services.
- Our Community Delivery Team have supported with engaging communities around Council decisions. Support was given to accessible versions of the Homelessness Prevention Consultation, the Equality, Diversion & Inclusion (EDI) consultation and work around carers and have shared consultation information over their social media channels.
- Culture Leicestershire established the Community Connectors Network which sees local people working with the service to overcome the challenges of under-representation, provide insight into the needs and aspirations of Leicestershire's diverse communities and break down barriers for people who are marginalised, or excluded. They have been involved in the co-creation of 15 new heritage projects.
- The Lived Experience Network (LEN) has recruited 10 experts to support with LLR Suicide Prevention work utilising service user voice. Lived experience colleagues are key members of the Suicide Prevention Strategy Refresh steering group and lived experience voice from wider than the Lived Experience Network (LEN) has helped shape the refreshed strategy.
- A Substance Use Harm Reduction Network has also been designed to ensure participation with voluntary sector organisations and include the service user's voice. Service users have also developed questions for evaluation of sexual health tenders and formed part of evaluation panel reviewing and scoring bids received.
- The Echo Project, ran by Safe Lives and supported by the Council, is currently working with survivors of domestic abuse to share their insight, and lived experience. This will ensure that survivor expertise is put at the

centre of domestic abuse prevention and will inform the design and delivery of dedicated support for all victims.

- Our Adult Learning Service conducted successful engagement events with local businesses and residents to capture views on course content and making programmes more accessible. In 2024, this led to the introduction of new courses that appeal to more diverse audiences and more online courses were introduced to facilitate remote learning.
- Several Parish Councils and Local Groups are taking part in a pilot initiative, launched in October 2023, with the aim of supporting parish and town councils and community organisations to carry out small-scale improvements to their local areas. This includes extra grass cutting, asset maintenance, public rights of way maintenance, painting assets, sign cleaning and weeding. The project will be reviewed in October 2024 and if successful, will be rolled out to other areas.
- Our Council Communities Board have made recommendations on key priorities, such as how we can engage with young people, capitalise on social action, work with community groups, our VCSE partner and town and parish councils to tackle issues such as climate change, community cohesion and social value.

### 7.3 Cultural and historical heritage are enjoyed and conserved.

Culture is our past, present, and future. It's what we have inherited, what we are experiencing now and what we would like to see remembered. We want to preserve and make accessible our local cultural and historic heritage to enhance the wellbeing of residents.

#### Our aim by 2026

- Increased number of residents and visitors engaging in cultural and heritage activities

#### Progress in 2023/24

- Our museum and heritage sites are recognised through the Visit England Visitor Attractions Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS). All five sites improved their scores in 2023/24 and three have now reached the gold standard.
- The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland retained its Accredited Archive Service status awarded by The National Archives (TNA)
- Bosworth Battlefield Heritage received The Heritage Education Trust's 'Sandford Award' which recognises high quality, inclusive and accessible learning and promotes continuous provision. In addition, the Bosworth Medieval Festival attracted thousands of visitors to the site in August 2024.
- Harborough Museum revealed new displays making the first century, silver gilt Roman Cavalry Helmet the centrepiece of the Hallaton Treasure gallery. This project was the culmination of over 20 years of conservation at the

British Museum and restoration and research into this unique silver gilt Roman cavalry helmet.

- The Record Office continues to promote and host the permanent home of the Thomas Cook archive, made up of thousands of items and images.
- In April 2024, a new popular exhibition at Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre explored the close historical links between the Battle of Bosworth and the beginnings of the Sikh faith in Punjab.
- In September 2024 the 1620s House and Garden improved its tourism rating after an inspection by Visit-England, with an overall score of 93%.

#### **7.4 Communities are prepared for and resilient to emergencies.**

Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of communities being able to respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations. Developing a Community Response Plan enables a community to identify the skills, knowledge and resources in their local area which can be mobilised during a crisis.

##### **Our aim by 2026**

- Increase in the number of active Community Response Plans

##### **Progress in 2023/24**

- There are currently 62 active Community Response Plans, an increase of 4 from 2023.
- The Local Resilience Forum are delivering a series of webinars in association with Communities Prepared, related to Community Response Plans and why they are important. This is part of the Building Resilience Together Project which is funded by Aviva and in association with the British Red Cross. It is hoped that our communities will explore how they are able to help themselves increase their resilience and be more prepared for any time of incident or emergency.
- Our Community Delivery team has supported emergency situations, such as the gas outage in Ratby and Kirby Muxloe. This has included delivering emergency food parcels, welfare checks and supporting Test and Trace.
- In November 2023, we agreed a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to support work with communities and partners to prevent and respond to flooding events.
- Work has continued on a new website for the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to encourage and support community education around flood risk and how best to be prepared for severe storm events.
- In January 2024, the Council and other partners worked together to support communities to get back to normal after unprecedented rainfall across the County. Around 350 properties flooded, and work included setting up rest centres, visiting flooded homes to support and signpost and pumping water from flooded areas.

- In May 2024, the Council offered financial help of up to £5,000 to people whose properties had been affected by flooding – we administered the property flood resilience repair grant on behalf of the Department for the Environment Food and Rural Affairs.
- A series of multi-agency flooding drop-in sessions were held in February and March 2024 in Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Syston and Narborough for residents and businesses affected by Storms Babet and Henk. To learn about which agency does what and explain the role of the Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and Highway Authority with respect to highway drainage.
- The Warm Homes Team facilitated warm packs to help address those experiencing a fuel crisis. These supplies provide low running cost items to people to keep them warm such as heated blankets and handwarmers. Our public health and adults and communities' teams also delivered a joint initiative to provide emergency heaters.
- Working with the Resilience Planning Group and Government agencies during disease outbreaks, our Animal Health team has continued to assist with information, guidance, signage, and foot patrols to assist with outbreak containment. Inspections have continued on farms, tackling non-compliance of rules and poor standards of welfare to reduce the risk of disease and protect the food chain.

### 7.5 People support each other through volunteering.

Volunteers perform a key role in supporting local communities and delivering our vision for Leicestershire. We want to support volunteering opportunities and activity as volunteers provide wide community benefit beyond the Council's direct service provision.



#### Our aims by 2026

- To offer a wide variety of volunteering opportunities and activity across Council services.

- VCSE organisations remain financially viable and maintain their service delivery.

### **Progress in 2023/24**

- In January 2024, our Communities Team successfully procured a new volunteer management system which aims to improve the way the Council manages and supports our volunteers and volunteer managers. The new system, Go Assemble, will be live by the end of the year.
- The Time-banking approach has been established to offer a skills exchange opportunity, which is currently live across Melton and Charnwood as a pilot.
- Our Community Delivery Team engage with communities to support volunteering opportunities and individuals who could benefit from volunteering.
- The team also support Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations in increasing their visibility, accessing funding, sharing their offers on social media and across partners and helping residents to make use of the offers.
- Culture Leicestershire has supported a network of 34 Community Managed Libraries (CMLs), with the majority entirely volunteer run. Collectively they provide 600 hours of access to library venues per week, 305,551 books and have signed up 8,000 new library members. In addition to access to a wide range of books, CMLs are rooted in their local communities and offer a range of provision that meets local need.
- Culture Leicestershire has also benefitted from over 16,000 hours of volunteering across a wide range of volunteer roles. These include House Guides, Event Assistants and Collections Conservation Volunteers.
- Our Children and Family Services continue to deliver a range of services through volunteer programmes well embedded in Targeted Family Help (including Youth and Justice) Services and in the Fostering Service for children in care, including the Independent Visitors Scheme. The offers have gone from strength to strength, offering support to children and families from 340 volunteers.
- The Home Library Service continues to deliver books to adults in their own homes who are otherwise unable to go to their local library. Although primarily focused on older residents, it is available to any adult who is temporarily or permanently housebound. Clients are matched with a regular volunteer who can provide a selection of library materials based on the customer's needs and interests. The service is growing steadily and sustainably and has a strong befriending element.
- The Council has seen the number of volunteers within Country Parks increasing – with a large active Park Conservation Group in every park.
- We have worked with the Midlands Highway Alliance+ Social Value Working Group to develop social value metrics to co-ordinate activity across our supply chains for highway infrastructure design and construction, and to assist in the development of a Social Value portal.

- In February 2024, residents were invited to join a Community Network Session on 'Community Volunteering'. The session focussed on how to engage volunteers and keep volunteers.
- In November 2023, 6 outstanding voluntary groups in Leicestershire were honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK. The award recognises outstanding work by volunteer groups to benefit their local communities.
- In October 2023, the Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire Mike Kapur OBE presented the MBE, BEM and Coronation Champion awards to six people who were honoured for their service to their local communities.
- The Chairman of the County Council also hosted a reception for Volunteers in May 2024.

### **Supporting Communities**

- In October 2023 eligible Leicestershire residents who needed help with food or energy costs were encouraged to apply for support following the Council being awarded £7.2m to help people struggling. Our Household Support Fund will have given out more than £22m to help residents cope. During October half term a £15 food voucher was given to more than 14,000 children receiving free school meals.
- Hundreds of Leicestershire families have been supporting Ukrainians who have had to leave Ukraine due to the war with Russia. The Council has been supporting the refugee hosting process.
- In January 2024, we supported a major multi-agency response to a significant gas outage affecting residents in Ratby and Kirby Muxloe. Staff and volunteers from all agencies visited the most vulnerable residents, to ensure that those who needed extra help received it. Help centres in Ratby and Kirby Muxloe were opened, and volunteers mobilised to visit households and give advice. In addition, a range of warm spaces opened to welcome people, including Ratby library, some shops, and local pubs. Several road closures also took place so that repair works could be progressed.
- We secured £1.5m from the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme to support easter holiday clubs for children and young people as part of Leicestershire Holidays Together. Free holiday clubs were also held over the Christmas break.
- In September 2024 our 5<sup>th</sup> community fridge opened, in Lutterworth, to help reduce food waste and support the local community. The fridges have been used by more than 11,000 people across the county and saved around 42 tonnes of waste going to landfill.
- We have participated in 10 Parish Council Liaison Events with the following organisations, Community Safety Partnership, Coalville Fire Station Community Event, Cost of Living Event, Community Open day, Broughton Astley, Hinckley and Bosworth Social Prescribing Link Workers Wellbeing Connect Event, Money Advice and Welling being Event, Carers Event and Dementia Awareness.
- In March 2024, residents and groups in Leicestershire were given the opportunity to join a Communities Network Summit at County Hall and find out about the importance of health and wellbeing. The health and wellbeing

summit, organised by the Council, had a range of expert speakers sharing demonstrations and discussing topics including the importance of social engagement, physical health, and mental health.

- The 1620s House and Garden has supported 'The Friends Welcome' initiative that provides weekly activities, games and crafting and making sessions alongside socialising and soup, tea and coffee – all free of charge. Participants say *"It has given me purpose. I am less isolated it has given me confidence to engage further with people outside of the group."*; *"Getting out of the house and mixing with people. It helps my mental health as I have anxiety."*
- In September 2024 we began consultation on a new Customer Experience Strategy setting out our vision for our customers experience and commitment to continuously improve, with people able to communicate with our services quicker and easier through modern and accessible ways. Our Customer Programme has trialled a variety of new service approaches including on Blue Badges, School Admissions and Adult Social Care.

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