

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, GLENFIELD ON WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER
2024**

PRESENT

Mr. J. T. Orson CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC, Mr. R. Ashman CC, Mr. T. Barkley CC, Mr. G. A. Boulter CC, Mr. S. L. Bray CC, Mr. L. Breckon JP CC, Mrs. L. Broadley CC, Mr. B. Champion CC, Mr. N. Chapman CC, Mr. M. H. Charlesworth CC, Mr. J. G. Coxon CC, Dr. R. K. A. Feltham CC, Mr. M. Frisby CC, Mr. S. J. Galton CC, Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC, Mr. T. Gillard CC, Mr. D. J. Grimley CC, Mr. L. Hadji-Nikolaou CC, Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC, Mr. D. Harrison CC, Mr. M. Hunt CC, Mrs. S. Jordan CC, Mr. P. King CC, Mr. B. Lovegrove CC, Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC, Mr. J. Miah CC, Mr. J. Morgan CC, Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC, Ms. Betty Newton CC, Mr. O. O'Shea JP CC, Mrs. R. Page CC, Mr. B. L. Pain CC, Mr T. Parton CC, Mr. T. J. Pendleton CC, Mr. L. Phillimore CC, Mr J. Poland CC, Mrs. P. Posnett MBE CC, Mrs. C. M. Radford CC, Mr. T. J. Richardson CC, Mrs H. L. Richardson CC, Mrs B. Seaton CC, Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC, Mr. C. A. Smith CC, Mrs D. Taylor CC and Mrs. M. Wright CC

26. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Former County Councillors

The Chairman reported with sadness the deaths of former County Councillors Mr Ronnie Adams and Mr Roger Blackmore.

Mr Adams was a member of the County Council from 1989 – 1997. He represented the Castle electoral division in Leicester City.

Mr Adams mainly served on the Arts, Libraries and Museums Committee, the Environment Committee and the Highways and Transportation Committee, where he was a spokesperson for a number of years.

Mr Blackmore was a member of the County Council from 1993 – 1997. He represented the Western Park electoral division in Leicester City.

Mr Blackmore mainly served on the Arts, Libraries and Museums Committee, the Education Committee, a number of its subcommittees and the Police Committee.

Claire Lomas MBE

The Chairman conveyed his sincere condolences to the family of Claire Lomas who tragically died last month in Jordan. Claire was paralysed from the chest down following a riding accident in 2007. However, she went on to raise over £1 million for charity. Claire made headlines around the world after completing the London Marathon in a robotic suit.

The Chairman had a close connection with the Claire's family, as both

families had farmed in Melton Mowbray for many generations.

There would be a special service to celebrate Claire's life on Wednesday 2nd October which the Chairman would be attending to represent the County Council.

The Council stood in silent tribute to the memory of former County Councillors Mr Adams and Mr Blackmore, and of Claire Lomas.

County Service

The Chairman reminded members he would be hosting the County Service on Sunday 6th October at 3.00 pm at St. Mary's Church Melton Mowbray. All members had been invited.

Remembrance

On Monday 11th November, the Chairman would be leading the County Council's tributes at the annual Remembrance Service at Stand Easy. He hoped that members would be able to join him.

Leicestershire Three Peaks Challenge

The Chairman advised members that his role also made him patron of Charity Link. He had the great pleasure of taking part in Charity Link's Leicestershire Three Peaks challenge to raise some money for them. The route was revised due to the weather, to a 10 mile walk taking in Old John in Bradgate Park and Beacon Hill twice. The Chairman completed the challenge and raised £775 for Charity Link. He thanked those Members who had sponsored him.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester's Visit to Bosworth Battlefield and Heritage Centre.

Last Tuesday, Mrs. Radford and the Chairman welcomed the Duke of Gloucester to Bosworth Battlefield to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the centre's opening by the Duke in 1974. It was only fitting that the Duke came back in 2024 and marked the occasion with the unveiling of a plaque.

27. MINUTES.

It was moved by the Chairman, seconded by Mr Shepherd and carried:

"That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 10 July 2024, copies of which have been circulated to members, be taken as read, confirmed and signed."

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to make declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

It was acknowledged that most members would have a relative or close

associate who was affected by the Notice of Motion on Winter Fuel Payments (minute 35(a) refers). However, the following members declared a non-registrable interest in the Notice of Motion due to them or someone they lived with having previously being in receipt of a Winter Fuel Payment or due to receive a payment this winter:

Mr Barkley, Mr Bill, Mr Boulter, Mrs Broadley, Mr Champion, Mr Charlesworth, Mr Coxon, Dr Feltham, Mr Ghattoraya, Mr Harrison, Mr Hunt, Mr King, Mrs Newton, Mr Orson, Mr O'Shea, Mrs Page, Mr Pendleton, Mr Phillimore, Mrs Posnett, Mrs Radford, Mr Richardson, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Seaton, Mr Shepherd, Mrs Taylor.

29. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(1)(2) AND (5).

(A) Mr Bray asked the following question of the Acting Leader or her nominee:

"I have reported on numerous occasions the problem of surface water flooding on Rugby Road, Hinckley opposite Domino's Pizza. This floods every time there is heavy rainfall, blocking the road in a busy part of the town centre. Could the Leader please give me a timetable for when work will be undertaken to resolve this long-standing issue?"

Mr O'Shea replied as follows:

"The County Council is aware of the drainage issue on Rugby Road in Hinckley. The highways teams have carried out cleansing and jetting of the highway gully and the drain connection that is understood to connect to the combined Severn Trent Water Sewer, but these works have not resolved the issues at this location.

An excavation on the drain connection was also undertaken to try and understand the cause of the flooding and performance issues with the drainage system.

The County Council is now investigating an alternative solution and is engaging with Severn Trent Water seeking authorisation to connect the highway gullies to a different surface water sewer on Rugby Road. The solution being investigated will need a road closure on Rugby Road and co-ordination with the affected businesses, the car park entrance, and the bus stops in Waterloo Road.

As soon as permission is granted to divert the highway drainage into an alternative sewer, co-ordination of the work will take place. This will include a planned road closure which requires 3-month notice period. In addition, the need to engage with a third party means a timescale for a permanent resolution cannot be given at this point in time, however it is likely to be in the early part of 2025."

(B) Mr Bray asked the following question of the Acting Leader or her nominee:

“Thank you to officers for looking into the situation around access to Westfield Schools. I understand the need for surveys to be done to update data, however there is a real concern locally that more urgent action is needed. There have been a number of incidents including a person being knocked off a bike and other near misses that I have passed through to highways officers and I have spoken to the police to raise similar concerns. Would the Leader look at what immediate action can be taken, with partners, to ensure no injuries occur?”

Mr O’Shea replied as follows:

“On-street parking issues around the many schools in Leicestershire are not uncommon. These issues are often highlighted at the start of the new school term, particularly in the autumn/winter when temperatures decrease, and weather conditions worsen. Poor parking habits and behaviour at arrival and dispersal times, to some extent, occurs outside most schools across the Country.

Often, there is no easy solution to the parking problems being experienced with no one highway/traffic management solution yet to be found that entirely removes the parking issues that arise during school term times. There are ways to try and reduce parking pressures around schools which are developed through a partnership approach with the school. These solutions often lie within the local community through parents, school governors and school staff, together with Leicestershire County Council providing advice and support. These partnerships are particularly important to develop as the parking problems outside schools are localised, and the best solutions lie with the local community in reducing the number of vehicles attending the schools.

It is recommended that the school contacts the Sustainable Travel team, who may be able to provide further assistance with active travel to and from the school, which may reduce the number of cars accessing Ashford Road each day. The Sustainable Travel team may be contacted on the following email: ChooseHowYouMove@leics.gov.uk.

As Ashford Road (Hays Lane could be included) is an existing ‘no through road’ and not subject to through traffic, the school could request to take part in ‘School Streets’, which is a scheme where the road outside of a school is closed to vehicular access during drop off and pick up times. Marshalls stand at the end of the road closure to restrict access to certain vehicles i.e. those who live or work on the street, who will have to adhere to safety protocols, such as reduced speeds. This allows parents and children to travel to the school with a reduced chance of interaction with moving vehicles. With appropriate permissions park and stride sites could be established at Clarendon Park or at the Hinckley Hub.

As Hays Lane is not publicly maintained highway, residents would need to seek legal advice on how they could close this route to traffic. It is appreciated that the community centre has closed on Rosemary Way, which has removed the access for walking to the school using that route (additionally, parents used to park in the community centre’s car park thus reducing vehicular traffic on the mentioned roads).

It is acknowledged that the reintroduction of pedestrian access previously provided through the community centre site could be replaced and this would provide some improvement to the situation. Both the Council's Children and Family Services and officers in Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) are looking for ways to achieve this.

The 'School Keep Clear' marking on Westfield Road has not been put forward by the school to be included in the School Keep Clear project which makes advisory markings mandatory giving the opportunity for enforcement. The Westfield Road markings therefore remain advisory (the marking on Ashford Road is mandatory and is included on the enforcement route).

Given the concerns raised and the various roles and responsibilities involved, there is a multi-agency meeting proposed on 26th September with officers from the Council, HBBC, the Police, the Fire Service and both schools. Interested parties will be advised of the actions taken forward from this meeting."

30. POSITION STATEMENTS UNDER STANDING ORDER 8.

The Acting Leader gave a position statement on the following matters:

- Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services
- Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange
- Murder in Franklin Park, Braunstone
- VAT Charge on Private School fees
- Offender Early Release Scheme
- Devolution.

The Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding gave a position statement on the recent flooding in Leicestershire.

A copy of the position statements is filed with these minutes.

31. REPORT OF THE CABINET.

(a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

It was moved by Mrs Posnett, seconded by Mrs Richardson and carried unanimously:

"That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 and associated Action Plan, set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved."

32. REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE.

(a) Appointment of Independent Persons.

(Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC – in the Chair)

It was moved by Mrs Taylor, seconded by Mr Poland and carried unanimously:

- “(a) That Richard Gough, Gordon Grimes, Surinder Sharma, Pamela Roberts, John Pilgrim and Kimberley Kingsley be appointed to serve as Independent Persons for a term of four years ending on 30 September 2028;
- (b) That Ms T Herring and Ms H Kotecha be thanked for their valuable work in supporting the Monitoring Officer in the operation of the Members’ Code of Conduct complaints process over the last four years.”

33. REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE.

(a) Changes to the Financial Procedure Rules.

It was moved by Mr Barkley, seconded by Mr Richardson and carried unanimously:

“That the proposed amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules, set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.”

34. APPOINTMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITEM 11 OF STANDING ORDER 4:

(a) To appoint such Cabinet Support Members as the Council considers appropriate.

It was moved by Mrs Taylor, seconded by Mr Poland and carried:

“That Mr B Champion CC be appointed as Cabinet Support Member until the next Annual Meeting of the County Council, as provided for in Article 7 of the Council’s Constitution.”

35 members voted for the motion and 7 members voted against.

35. NOTICE OF MOTION:

(a) Winter Fuel Payments.

It was moved by Mr Mullaney and seconded by Mrs Taylor:

- “(a) That this Council notes the recent announcement by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.
- (b) That, though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, this Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower and middle incomes will now not receive the payments, and that across England and Wales the number of people eligible for winter

fuel payments will fall by 10 million (from 11.4 million to only 1.5 million).

- (c) That, in Leicestershire the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 129,537, which means that 92.5% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.
- (d) That this Council believes that the Labour Government has set the threshold at which pensioners do not qualify for Winter Fuel Payments far too low. Only those receiving a pension of less than £218.15 a week (or £332.95 a week for couples) are eligible for pension credits. This is significantly lower than the living wage rate.
- (e) That this Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them – and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so. This Council recognises the role it has to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.
- (f) That this Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.
- (g) That this Council supports the criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this abrupt policy change and believes that decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our most vulnerable older residents.
- (h) That, given the expected impact the withdrawal of the Winter Fuel Payment will have on vulnerable older people, and the analysis carried out by charities that 71% of disabled people will lose their entitlement, despite their greater dependence on heating their homes, this Council is deeply concerned that the Government did not carry out an impact assessment before putting the matter to a vote.
- (i) That this Council is also concerned that the government is suggesting the use of the Household Support Grant to fill the gap, diverting much-needed funding away from children receiving Free School Meals.
- (j) That this Council therefore resolves to:
 - (i) Request that the Chief Executive of Leicestershire County Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
 - (ii) Commit this Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment

for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.

- (iii) Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Leicestershire are supported in claiming their entitlement.”

On the motion being put and before the vote was taken, five members rose asking that a named vote be recorded.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For the motion

Mr Allen, Mr Ashman, Mr Barkley, Mr Boulter, Mr Bray, Mr Breckon, Mrs Broadley, Mr Champion, Mr Chapman, Mr Charlesworth, Mr Coxon, Dr Feltham, Mr Frisby, Mr Galton, Mr Ghattoraya, Mr Gillard, Mr Grimley, Mr Hadji-Nikolaou, Mr Harrison, Mr Harrison-Rushton, Mrs Jordan, Mr King, Mr Lovegrove, Mr Merrie, Mr Morgan, Mr Mullaney, Mrs Page, Mr Pain, Mr Parton, Mr Pendleton, Mr Phillimore, Mr Poland, Mrs Posnett, Mrs Radford, Mr Richardson, Mrs Richardson, Mrs Seaton, Mr Shepherd, Mr Smith, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Wright.

Abstentions

Mr Hunt, Mr Miah, Mrs Newton,

The motion was carried with 41 members voting for the motion and 3 members abstaining.

2.00 pm – 4.08 pm
25 September 2024

CHAIRMAN