

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 3RD DECEMBER 2025
POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Member Conduct

Since the May elections, there have been too many examples of comments made in social media, both political and personal in nature, attacking Members from both sides, resulting in complaints to the Monitoring Officer to deal with.

For my part, I apologise to all Members and staff of this Council.

In an attempt to draw a line and move on, I met with Mrs Taylor and Mr Smith, her deputy leader, on 28 October, along with my deputy, Kevin Crook, to try and agree a new protocol dealing with how our respective Groups would agree to end direct personal attacks on each other and keep political comment and discourse to policy, where it should be.

However, towards the end of our meeting on the 28 October, which I thought was a robust exchange of views, in front of witnesses, Mr Smith threatened me with physical violence and to “knock my block off if I hurt someone he cared for”.

Mr Crook had to intervene to calm the situation down but naturally I was frightened for my personal safety, and I remain wary of in person meetings with Mr Smith.

I have reported this matter to the Police, as I am not satisfied that the leadership of the Conservative Group has dealt effectively with Mr Smith’s conduct and behaviour, to which he has admitted in a subsequent email of apology I received.

I do not accept that apology and call on their Group to take whatever corrective action is necessary.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Business Case for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Leicestershire and Rutland was submitted to the Government last week, before the deadline of 28 November. Its submission marks a critical moment for the Council and will influence the future of local government in the area for decades to come. Our proposal reflects months of careful planning and engagement, aimed at creating a more efficient and resilient structure that meets the needs of our communities. I welcome the valuable input from Scrutiny, which has helped shape and strengthen the case and ensure transparency and accountability.

I want to put on record my personal thanks to all the officers of the County Council who worked extremely hard, often against tight timescales, to produce the final bid submitted to Government.

It is particularly encouraging to see the strong cross-party majority in Council supporting this proposal. This consensus demonstrates a shared commitment to delivering better outcomes for residents across Leicestershire and Rutland and ensuring that local government remains responsive and sustainable. By working together across political boundaries, we are laying the foundations for a modern, effective organisation that can rise to the challenges ahead.

The Government is expected to announce next year which proposals will move ahead to the consultation stage. We will be able to provide feedback on all proposals forming the Government's consultation for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. If the Government's timetable is met, a final decision on the preferred option is expected before the summer parliamentary recess.

Building Local and Regional Strategic Relationships

Building key working and productive relationships with local and regional leaders since the May County elections, is a very important area of work for my Administration.

Changes in political control are never easy to navigate, so it is important that new relationships are built and forged at every opportunity.

Developing good relationships with MPs is really important. I wrote to all of Leicestershire's MPs to get their views on LGR, and I had the opportunity to meet with Dr Luke Evans MP and Ed Argar MP, to seek their views and opinions on LGR, but also to discuss key issues facing the County Council, including future funding and the current MTFs, their support in lobbying Government for SEND policy reform, as well as local constituency issues.

I have also met with the new East Midlands Combined Authority mayor Claire Ward, to discuss LGR, the East Midlands Freeport and the opportunities for future working relationships between our respective local authorities.

Finally, I met with the Temporary Chief Constable of Leicestershire, David Sandell and am looking forward to my meeting with the Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow.

Villages Together

A key aspect of the County Council's Local Government Reorganisation proposal is Empowering Communities – giving more power to people to be involved in local decisions. This will build on collaborative work already taking place. At a recent meeting between the County Council and Villages Together – a coalition of parish councils – myself and Council officers discussed how town and parish councils could provide valuable local knowledge when Local Plans and planning applications were being developed and assessed, particularly around the impact of increased traffic on neighbourhoods.

The current planning system is complex and the ability for local communities to have a say in what happens in their local area can be challenging. Proposals such as the area committees under LGR provide a clear mechanism for local input into the

planning process and the delivery of other key services in local communities. These area committees will build on the positive dialogue we are already having with communities demonstrated by this recent meeting with Villages Together which will continue into the future.

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