

## **COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 13<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2026**

### **POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

#### **Review of the 2025-26 Municipal Year**

During 2025–26, the Council delivered a balanced and sustainable budget, agreeing a below inflation 2.99 per cent Council Tax increase for 2026/27 — there has been no lower increase in over a decade. For the first time in ten years, the Council did not set Council Tax at the maximum permitted level, while financial monitoring indicates a projected underspend for the 2025/26 financial year and without the use of any reserves, as originally expected when the budget was set in February 2025.

We have established a comprehensive Efficiency Review, undertaking a root-and-branch examination of services, spending and procurement to address long-term financial pressures. The outcome of the review, which scrutiny considered earlier this week shows savings of £27 million over the MTFs period, with the potential to stretch that figure to almost £60m.

This month is a watershed moment for the County Council and the residents we support. The Review demonstrates our commitment to the people of Leicestershire financially and through improving the services they receive.

The Review has identified enough improvements for us to transition into implementation; this will be known as the Better Leicestershire Programme.

Better Leicestershire will make every pound work harder for taxpayers whilst improving lives.

This pioneering project has identified up to £60 million in extra savings, including expanding social care teams to boost independence, intervening to prevent people reaching crisis point and creating more residential care places. That's on top of £44 million already identified in the Budget, without compromising quality public services.

We will see these savings banked not just once, but every year, creating a Better Leicestershire for everyone.

I set out with a bold vision to close the budget gap we inherited, and the experts, working alongside our officers, have brought me a confident plan to get on with it.

Significant progress has been made in highways and infrastructure. Just over 100,000 pothole repairs have been completed since May last year, alongside the clearance of just over 80,000 drains and gullies to reduce flood risk. The Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, the largest scheme ever delivered by the council, is ready for its opening ceremony, marking a major infrastructure milestone for the county. This will significantly relieve traffic congestion in the town centre and open up land for more much needed homes.

We have refocused environmental activity towards practical priorities affecting residents, particularly flooding and resilience. Substantial investment has been committed to local flood risk schemes, community preparedness and the development of the Flood Wardens service. Alongside this, we have confirmed our ambition to plant one million trees by 2032.

Additional investment in adult and children's social care was agreed to support vulnerable residents, and we strengthened our sector engagement by rejoining the Local Government Association and the County Councils Network.

### **Priorities for 2026-27**

In 2026/27 our priorities will be to:

- Maintain financial stability while protecting essential services, including delivering a balanced budget, continuing strong in-year financial management.
- Implement the service and financial improvements contained within the Better Leicestershire Programme
- Deliver Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This is one of the most significant changes for Leicestershire in a generation. We believe that our business case is the strongest of the three presented to central government. We await the decision which is expected from the minister in July. Regardless of the decision, we are committed to making LGR work. Our Chief Executive and officers are working constructively with their counterparts from across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, to ensure that we are well placed to support whatever the future of Local Government is in Leicestershire.
- Deliver the new Rural Estate Strategy over the next 10 years, demonstrating our firm commitment to the farming community, protecting Leicestershire's rural heritage, and keeping the estate financially sustainable for tenants and the Council.
- Continue to make great progress towards our One million trees target.
- Support the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to make Leicestershire greener while protecting biodiversity and nature.
- Work with communities to tackle flood risks and build resilience.
- Build on the success of FoxConnect, which has already seen nearly 88,000 journeys since its launch in January 2025, and supporting connectivity for our communities through continued investment in local bus services.

- Start on site with the A511 Growth Corridor scheme and complete the new Zouch bridge replacing the existing life expired and weight restricted 1930 structure.

### **Additional Investment**

Additional funding of £30m for adult social care will enable more people to access care and support year on year. We know the population is increasing, people are living longer and living longer with ill health and will require additional support over the next few years. In 2026 /27 we will spend over £1m per week on delivering home care services, over £1m per week on supporting people with disabilities to live independently and over £3m per week funding residential care for local residents

In addition, we are investing in workforce capacity and commissioned services to address the required improvements highlighted by the Care Quality Commission when they assessed the Council in 2025. As a result, we are moving forward at pace to reduce the number of people waiting for social care assessment and the time people wait has halved

Children and Family Services will receive additional funding of £13m for SEND transport, £56m for Children's Social Care, £87m for school investment and improvement, including £27m for SEND provision. We are focused on delivering the National reforms for how social care is designed and delivered, via the Family First Partnership Programme with key partners and the SEND reforms. Many key principles are within the new Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act.

There are many challenges with raising demand on services and pressures particularly around placement sufficiency for homes for children in care, but we are confident that we are focused on service developments that place Leicestershire in a strong position to meet the aforementioned challenges.

### **Road Improvement**

We are investing £270m over the MTFS into highways and transport with around £72m of that in 2026/27 financial year. Around half of that (£38m) will go to maintaining our carriageways, footpaths, street lighting, drainage and other assets and crucially just over £25m will go into preventative maintenance treatments such as surface dressing. It is these treatments we need to be implementing to stop potholes forming in the first place.

Alongside this we will also be investing in safety schemes, walking and cycling improvements, flood risk schemes and the council's vehicle fleet to support our frontline delivery.

### **Foster Care Fortnight 2026**

I am proud to join the nationwide celebration of Foster Care Fortnight 2026, that runs from Monday 11 May to Sunday 24 May 2026. The fortnight celebrates and

recognises the extraordinary commitment, compassion and resilience of foster carers across our communities. Foster carers provide stable, nurturing homes for some of our most vulnerable children and young people, often in challenging circumstances, and their contribution cannot be overstated.

On behalf of our organisation, we extend our sincere thanks to every foster carer for the vital role you play in transforming lives. Your dedication, patience and advocacy make a lasting difference, offering hope, security and opportunity where it is needed most.

We also acknowledge the wider network of families, professionals and services who support fostering. Together, we remain committed to strengthening this essential system—ensuring all children have the safe, caring environment they deserve. We thank you for all that you do, this week, next week, and every day.