

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 1ST JULY 2026**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Growth and Supporting Businesses****(a) Breakfast Briefings**

The county council remains firmly committed to working positively with local businesses, helping to create jobs, drive growth, and open up opportunities across Leicestershire. We are proud to promote Leicestershire as open for business, and our ongoing engagement is central to this. Recently, we have held two very successful Breakfast Briefing events, bringing together a diverse range of local businesses and employer organisations. These sessions have provided a valuable platform for the administration to listen directly to employers and business stakeholders, strengthening our understanding of their needs and priorities. During these briefings, we discussed key topics such as the Local Growth Plan, Enterprise Zones, access to funding and grants, infrastructure requirements, skills development, and tailored business advice. The insights gained from these conversations have been instrumental in identifying the challenges faced by local businesses, and our officers are now working up proposals to address these concerns and support ongoing growth.

(b) Bardon Warehousing Unit

In May I had the pleasure of attending a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of a new warehousing unit at Bardon. The development represents another positive step forward in strengthening our local economy. Once operational, it will generate jobs, support supply chains, and help create the conditions for further business growth across the area. That matters because good-quality employment is at the heart of thriving communities, giving people the opportunity to build skills, progress in their careers, and contribute to the prosperity of the County. I was delighted that a developer new to Leicestershire has chosen to invest here. This is a clear signal of confidence in the County, of the work of our Officers, and in our workforce and in the opportunities that Leicestershire has to offer.

(c) Broadnook School

Last week I took part in a special turf-cutting ceremony in Broadnook to mark the start of work on a new, 420-place school which is due to open next September. It has been funded by Davidsons Homes and Cora Homes as part of their contribution towards the roads, care homes and community facilities required to support a new village.

The new primary academy will help meet demand for places and give local families greater choice. It shows how house builders can help fund the infrastructure communities need as Leicestershire grows.

(d) Beef Expo

Beef Expo is a flagship agricultural event, and this year was held in Melton Mowbray. I was invited to be on a Panel for a seminar about what the Government's commitment to Food Security looks like.

The County Council is actively investing in and expanding our rural estate and own more farmland today than we did a decade ago. We are supporting the 'farm to fork' journey through public health initiatives that make fresh, locally produced food more accessible for everyone. Our environment leads are working hard to provide help, advice and support on challenges like flooding, drainage and biodiversity, making sure our rural communities are resilient and sustainable.

Leicestershire's farmers are the backbone of our countryside, economy and food chain and I'm proud to back them.

(e) Zouch Bridge Development

On 2nd July, I will have the pleasure of attending an event to open the new £19.6m Zouch bridge.

The bridge forms part of the A6006 which 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. It links Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire by crossing the River Soar between the villages of Hathern in Charnwood, and Zouch in the Rushcliffe Borough. Loughborough is about 4 miles to the south.

This replacement bridge is a significant investment to replace the previous bridge along this route that was built in 1930. This bridge is about something very practical keeping Leicestershire moving. The route matters and it connects communities, supports local businesses and helps people get where they need to go every day.

The replacement is taking a long-term approach. Back in 2023, an 18T weight restriction was imposed on the bridge to enable it to stay open safely enabling as many vehicles as possible to continue using this route whilst the long-term replacement was procured and constructed.

As part of the project, we've made sure the benefits stay local:

- Local businesses have been part of delivering this project
- New jobs have been created
- Hundreds of young people have had the chance to see how a major project like this works.

I also want to recognise the work behind the scenes to keep things running during construction. Managing roads, closures and traffic is never easy, especially with other nearby works happening at the same time. A lot of effort has gone into making that work as smoothly as possible.

What we have here now is simple in one way – it's a bridge. But it's also something bigger. It's a sign of planning ahead, investing in our infrastructure, and making sure Leicestershire continues to grow in the best.

Local Government Reorganisation Update

We continue with our work with colleagues in councils across Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland on preliminary work for local government reorganisation, ensuring that our information and data on our assets is in the best possible position. We are awaiting the decision of the government minister which we anticipate receiving in mid-July.

Melton Mowbray Distributor Road Successes

In June each year, the East Midlands region of the Institution of Civil Engineers celebrates the region's best civil engineering projects and teams. The Large Project Award specifically recognises outstanding infrastructures and engineering achievements valued over £3m.

Following the opening of the North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road, known as Pork Pie Way, in May 2026, the project was submitted for several awards and won the Large Project and Social Value awards. The project was recognised for delivering real change for local communities and showing innovative and sustainable construction. The social value award recognises the team's meaningful commitment to the community during construction.

The awards reflect the collaboration and teamwork evolved through the project and I would like to congratulate all the staff and wider supply chain that has made this award winning project a success.

MTFS and Better Leicestershire Update

The outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year was a £7m underspend, which was delivered without needing to use £4.6m of reserves originally expected when the budget was set in February 2025. The £7m underspend will be redirected into priority areas, including £2.5m to reduce the Council's debt, £2.5m towards delivering the savings from the Better Leicestershire Programme and £2.5m for road repairs following severe winter damage. The outturn reports to Cabinet and Scrutiny in May and June reflected that finances are stable despite rising service pressures, with the Council's external debt now the lowest it has ever been.

The focus is now on refreshing the Medium Term Financial Strategy and ensuring that Better Leicestershire savings are delivered in line with expectations. Cabinet and Scrutiny will receive an MTFS update in September.

Celebrating Carers Week

The Council celebrated National Carers Week with the hosting of an event at County Hall on Tuesday 9th June for carers and professionals. The theme of the week was Building Carer Friendly Communities with discussions and workshops focussed on the new Leicestershire Carers Strategy and the Council's plans for supporting carers moving forward. Mr Squires attended the event as Cabinet Lead Member and outlined his commitment to supporting carers in Leicestershire.