

## **Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **Annual Report**

Mr G. W. Boulter CC

Following my appointment as Chairman of this committee I have sought to establish a functional and productive atmosphere that has targeted specific areas and sought to advise the executive, in doing so I have always utilised the positive contributions of members to formulate comments and ideas through consensus.

In making this report I must first mention the outstanding support that I and the committee have received from officers within the Democratic Services section. Ben Smith and Beverley Ireland have consistently demonstrated their skill and knowledge in the support they have offered to the committee and have been a delight to work with.

The committee has met 6 times this year with an interesting yet challenging range of subjects to consider. Some of the reports were feedback to the committee from previous decisions, such as the 'integrated passenger unit' and the 'highways efficiency review'. These seemed to work well and acted as a source of unique information in terms of the scrutiny as a long term process.

The long term treatment of waste has come before the committee several times. In September a 5 member's scrutiny panel was established to look at options and technologies in more depth. The panel received contributions from officers and consultants, Friends of the Earth was invited and members took the views presented by all parties into careful consideration. The subsequent report of the panel was accepted by the Cabinet.

Occasionally the committee received petitions that brought to light the need for all levels of local government to be ever vigilant to the needs and views of the people outside of the partisan machinations of elections. Of particular note was a petition concerning the National Forest Line, the petition once again raised the issue of how the modernisation and expansion of the line from freight to passenger could be funded. At present the development of the line seems to be conditional upon housing growth within the catchments area and if this development could be utilised to providing funding streams using 106 agreements.

The Committee also reviewed the final draft of the 'Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Development Framework' and this was agreed and submitted to cabinet recently. It is interesting to note that Leicestershire is one of the biggest suppliers of aggregates for road building in the country, and that the current amount re-use of materials, and the increasing use of recycled building waste is increasing. This could potentially have a greater impact upon future commercial waste policy should the trend continue.

All in all the committee has received many subjects and has undertaken to provide the best overview and (where necessary) scrutiny of the policy of the Conservative cabinet. There have been times when this committee has had to provide a gentle reminder. In all things I hope that the committee has done so in the spirit of co-operation and mutual support that a 'critical' friend can offer.

On the horizon the committee will face the following challenges:

- Waste
- The Transport Innovation Fund
- Efficiency savings in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy

The future holds many challenges for us and these will hopefully the committees' role and success will be communicated this time next year. The aim of the committee in my mind remains the review of policy to ensure the best service to the people of Leicestershire and the maintenance of the highest standards in policy formation.