

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 2ND JULY 2014**POSITION STATEMENT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****Leicester Cathedral Gardens**

I am delighted to announce that the development of the new Cathedral Gardens is now complete, and will open to the public with a day of activities and celebration this coming Saturday, 5th July, commencing at 11.30 a.m.

The County Council commissioned artwork, Towards Stillness, which is diagonally opposite the Richard III statue, will be formally handed over to the Cathedral during the event, where I will be joining Sir Peter Soulsby and the Bishop of Leicester for the formalities.

Now that the sculpture is in situ it looks stunning and I am sure will prove to be a popular feature with the many visitors to the Cathedral in the coming years. As part of Saturday's programme of events the sculptor, Juliet Quintero, will be talking about her creation at 1.00 p.m.

I am pleased that the County Council is contributing to the successful partnership which is overseeing the development of the Cathedral Quarter, and where the results speak for themselves. All of this will culminate in Spring next year with the re-interment of King Richard III in our Cathedral.

'Better Care Together' - Vision for the future shape of health and social care

Members will have received details of consultation proposals for the future of health and social care put forward by 'Better Care Together', a partnership of the NHS and the City, County and Rutland Councils. Briefly, the vision is for greater investment in the community to support independent living, closer and more joined up working between health and social care, and re-shaping of the services provided at the 3 hospital sites in Leicester.

Health and social services are facing a huge challenge – less resources with increasing demand from an ageing population and people with disabilities, who thankfully due to the tremendous advances in medicines are living longer.

The 'direction of travel' in this strategy will ask people to make choices and some will be difficult choices. The County Council is committed to work with the NHS to rise to the challenge posed. I would urge all members to engage positively in the consultation exercise and to work with Ernie White, the Cabinet Lead Member for Health, so that together we achieve the best outcomes for the people of Leicestershire.

Meeting with MPs

I recently met with Nicky Morgan MP to discuss issues of mutual concern which included in particular Charnwood's Core Strategy. As Nicky is also Financial Secretary to the Treasury, I used the occasion to raise with her our concerns regarding the funding situation for Adult Social Care, particularly the impact of the Dilnot proposals and the need to progress the Better Care Fund.

In relation to the Better Care Fund, which is the pooled budget of £38million and different to the Better Care Together Strategy referred to earlier in my statement, members will have seen that there have been discussions at Ministerial level. As a result all BCF bids will need to be recast and resubmitted by 1st August. I believe it is important that the BCF bids proceed if we are to deliver the key improvements necessary to deliver integrated care, a point I emphasised to Nicky.

Ernie White's Book

I would highly commend the book recently published by Ernie White 'The Leicestershire Story – People, Power and Politics in an English County' which gives some fascinating insights and his experience during his time as a County Councillor.