

County Councillor Annual Report

This report summarises the activities of the following member of the County Council during 2019/20

Name of Councillor James Poland

1) Electoral Division activities

Main Activities and the impact during the past year:

The Syston Fosse Division includes the villages of Cossington, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Thrussington, Rearsby, East Goscote, Queniborough and part of the town of Syston. The most important part of my role as a Councillor is working for any residents who need my help. In the past 12 months I've been involved with a wide range of issues, these include:

Response to flooding

Last autumn flooding badly affected some of the villages in Syston Fosse (most notably Cossington where a number of houses were sadly damaged). Residents described to me the flooding coming like a tsunami off the fields which had not happened before. I therefore organised a public meeting which brought the County Council's flood team, Charnwood Borough Council, and Severn Trent water together so the residents could ask questions and get answers on what could be done to prevent this going forward. I also worked with the Environment Agency on this matter as well. As a result of this, Cossington is now subject to a Section 19 investigation – an in-depth study into what caused the flooding and how this can be prevented in the future.

Road quality and road safety issues

I regularly liaise with the Highways Department over matters of highway concern. In the past year these have included Main Street, Queniborough where work to repair previous flood damage has left the road in a poor state over the winter. Officers have been out to look at the site and I will be pushing to ensure the repairs are carried out as quickly as possible. Speeding is also an issue on a number of roads within Syston Fosse and I work with Police who are responsible for enforcement on tackling this.

Coronavirus response

As both a County and Borough Councillor I've worked with a range of people who've needed my help throughout the lock-down period. This has included residents who are self-isolating as well as businesses who needed to know what support is available to get them through.

Our environment

Last year Leicestershire County Council pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030, and there have been a number of projects I've been pleased to support locally which fit well with this goal. An example is the Thrussington Tree Project, which aims to make the routes into the village treelined by planting on the roadside verges. This will not only improve the look aesthetically, but will also contribute to air quality in the area.

Other matters

I've helped residents in numerous other areas as well, such as victims of anti-social behaviour, parents who are trying to get places for the children in local schools, as well as numerous social

care matters (including help for disabled residents). These matters are the kind of things which really affect the lives of those residents who need my help and getting results for them is probably the most rewarding part of the role.

As a Borough Councillor I've also been involved with helping residents with Council Tax issues, street cleaning and refuse/recycling collections, planning matters, protection of heritage assets as well as supporting local community groups through available grants.

In Syston Fosse there are 7 parish/town councils and I regularly report at all of them. My work with the parish/town councils is an important way I pick up casework and feedback on all the work I'm doing for the community.

Another important way I feedback my work is through writing monthly articles for both the Queniborough Gazette and the Rearsby Scene magazines. I would very much like to expand the number of community magazines I write for however and hope to do the same for magazines in other villages within Syston Fosse if I can. I've also set up a Facebook page to keep residents up to date with what I'm doing and important developments from both Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council (as well as items of interest to the community more generally. This page is called 'Cllr James Poland' and a link to it is here:

<https://www.facebook.com/Cllr-James-Poland-111083980585480/>

Community Leadership Role

The role of a Councillor is not just about speaking for the community, its very much about listening to the community and this is central to how I carry out my role. Every month I hold surgeries where residents can come and speak with me about any matter they wish (even if its not a County matter I can usually help put them in touch with whoever can help them with their issue). In addition to this, I speak with residents from every town/village in the Division every month who need my help, always keeping them up to date with my progress.

In addition to listening, a key part of my role is driving forward work with officers at County Hall. To this end I take issues raised with me by residents directly to the relevant officers to ensure the problems are addressed as speedily as possible. This includes holding officers to account for the work they do for the public.

Engagement with the Council, other statutory bodies and public utility companies (Water, Gas etc) about services in the area

I work have a close working relationship with the 7 Town/Parish councils with Syston Fosse, attending their meetings regularly.

I work closely with Ed Argar MP and the four Borough Councillors who also represent parts of the Division. I represent four villages in Syston Fosse on Charnwood Borough Council myself (Cossington, Ratcliffe on the Wreake, Thrussington and Rearsby).

As mentioned above, I work with the Police on a range of matters (including anti-social behaviour and speeding).

In the past year I have also worked with Severn Trent, the Environment Agency, Historic England, Age Concern and the West Leicester Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) which covers the Division amongst other organisations.

Priorities for the immediate future are:

The next year will be significantly dominated by the easing of restrictions over coronavirus. A key priority of mine is making sure the County Council does whatever it can to support local businesses affected by the lock-down to make sure they survive and return to being key parts of our community.

As the lowest funded County Council in the country, Leicestershire was in a difficult situation financially before coronavirus hit. Through supporting our county, and despite government help, the cost of coronavirus to the authority has left a gap of £28.2 million. We are lobbying for additional government support but this is still going to leave the Council with some incredibly difficult decisions to make to close the gap (which if we don't do would risk the financial viability of the entire authority). I will always keep the residents of Syston Fosse front and centre of my thinking when these decisions are being made.

Continue work with the Flood team at the County Council and the Environment Agency to investigate flooding in the Division and implement any flood protection measures that we can.

Road safety (particularly speeding) is a key issue for residents and I will continue to work with police to ensure speed checks are carried out in dangerous areas, and that funding opportunities are explored to invest in road safety measures.

2) Council Activities

Committees you serve on at County Hall

- Environment & Transport Scrutiny Committee - We are involved in scrutinising a wide range of matters, in the past year this has included the parking outside schools, subsidised bus services, road safety, road maintenance and a range of environmental issues (such as the environmental impact of the County Council's activities).

Local committees/Outside Bodies

- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority - this role we monitor performance, set policy and strategic direction for Leicestershire Fire and Rescue as well as holding Chief Officers to account. As part of this role, I also serve on the Corporate Governance Committee.
- Charnwood Borough Council – I have served as the Charnwood Borough Councillor for the Wreake Villages since 2013. I currently serve on the Cabinet as Charnwood's Lead Member for Strategic and Member Services & Equalities.

Brooksby Quarry Liaison Committee

Other bodies – School governors/community and charity organisations etc

- Intelligent Energy Charity Trust (which gives grants to projects in Charnwood)
- Outwoods Management Committee

Communications

Facebook: Cllr James Poland

<https://www.facebook.com/Cllr-James-Poland-111083980585480/>

Surgery: First Saturday of every month from 10-11am at Syston Community Centre. I also do quarterly surgeries in Queniborough (these are advertised in the Queniborough Gazette and on my Facebook page)

Signed by Councillor James Poland

Date 31/05/2020