



## County Councillor Annual Report

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

### Name of Councillor Mr Nicholas Rushton

#### 1) Electoral Division activities

##### **Main Activities and the impact during the past year:**

As well as being Leader of the Council representing the strategic interests of all the residents in Leicestershire, I try to attend all my parish councils of Ashby-de-la Zouch, Belton, Breedon on the Hill, Coleorton, Isley cum Langley, Long Whatton, Normanton le Heath, Osgathorpe, Packington, Staunton Harold, Swannington and Worthington, on a regular basis. This has continued recently via virtual conferencing because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without doubt, the pandemic has transformed the way we work and will do well into the future. We have committed many millions of extra funding to help and sustain our communities and protect vulnerable people. I'm glad to say there's been no political rivalry during this crisis. I'm proud of the way elected members and staff have pulled together putting residents' outcomes first.

I'm glad to say that Brexit has finally happened, with us leaving the EU officially on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

This followed the election of the Conservative government led by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in December 2019 and I want to ensure that his main manifesto commitment of levelling-up the UK economy will mean Leicestershire, as part of the East Midlands, will be a leading member.

The Devolution White paper expected to be published in autumn 2020, represents a huge opportunity for the County Council to agree a new framework and secure powers and funding directly from Whitehall. We have already compiled our comprehensive Strategic Business Case for our preferred option of a single unitary authority for Leicestershire, so this means we are prime position to act quickly once the Government has published its proposals.

I have had and will continue to hold regular meetings with our local MP Andrew Bridgen. We work closely together to try and resolve the issues and casework raised.

The County Council that I lead has a good working relationship with our strategic partners, including the LLEP and Northwest Leicestershire District Council. Working together for positive outcomes for the residents we serve remains my number one priority.

## Community Leadership Role

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and lockdown began, I was determined to see the Council step up to the plate and protect people and communities as best we could.

We quickly established a Communities Fund worth £1.5M which enabled community groups and organisations to bid for up to £25k to support their frontline work supporting people.

I'm very proud that the Council played a leading role working with the NHS, public health, social care, keyworkers and carers, to enable them to do their jobs.

Earlier in the year I worked with the residents and parish councils of Long Whatton, Diseworth, Breedon and Packington to address some issues of serious local flooding they raised with me with the relevant stakeholders including the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and the lead local flood authority the County Council.

### Priorities for the immediate future are:

- Work with colleagues on a cross-party basis to ensure a full recovery for the County Council and continue to support vulnerable people and communities affected most by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Prepare the County Council to fully engage with the forthcoming Devolution White paper from Government, which is widely expected to devolve powers and funding from Government to local councils to best deliver services for their residents. My preferred option is for a single unitary council for Leicestershire as the best way to achieve this. This is set out and explained in our Strategic Business Case, so we are already in a strong position.
- Keep Leicestershire's finances on a secure footing, making prudent use of Council taxes and reserves to support services, investing wisely to provide income to support services and boost investment for the future.
- Support significant investment in the County's infrastructure requirements to support housing and development. Over the last year, we have embarked upon the largest ever capital infrastructure programme worth some £600M. We will continue to work with our stakeholders and partners to try and achieve this, recognising the significant risks and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic has had upon the Council's finances.
- Leicestershire County Council has been rated as the best performing and productive council in England for the last 3 years by the independent IMPOWER national survey of 150 upper tier councils. This is testament to the hard work of staff and elected members of the work that they do to make the County Council what it is.
- Continue to prioritise early help and prevention services, protecting investment in adult and children's social care, promote better public health and wellbeing, particularly mental health services.
- Keep Leicestershire's roads and environment in top condition and we are investing £16M in carbon reduction measures aiming to be a carbon neutral organisation by 2030.

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## **2) Council Activities**

### **Committees you serve on at County Hall**

Leader of the County Council.

Cabinet- Chairman.

Cabinet Briefing- Chairman.

Cabinet Strategy & Co-ordination Group- Chairman.

Constitution Committee- Chairman.

### **Local committees/Outside Bodies**

Local Government Association General Assembly- member.

Local Government Association- Executive Board member (East Midlands.)

Local Government Association Conservative Group Executive Board- County Councils representative.

Conservative Councillors Association- Member.

County Councils Network- Executive Council.

County Councils Network- Vice-Chairman.

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Combined Fire Authority- Chairman.

Midlands Engine- Steering group member.

Midlands Connect- Executive Board member.

Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership- Director.

East Midlands Councils- member.

Bradgate Park & Swithland Woods Committee of Management- Chairman.

Northwest Leicestershire District Council- elected member.

Northwest Leicestershire District Council- Cabinet member.

Ashby Town Council- parish councillor.

### **3) Learning and Development**

You are never too old to learn new things and I always look at ways to better my understanding and appreciation of issues and the people affected by the decisions we take at County Council.

In particular, during the COVID-19 pandemic, I've had to learn to be proficient in the use of Skype and Microsoft Teams to communicate virtually with colleagues and conduct my duties as an elected member.

This will continue into the future and I'm sure it will be the new way elected members conduct their business and will make a significant contribution to lowering our carbon footprint and save money on meetings and conferences.

### **4) Other Matters:**

The number one priority for the County Council is to ensure a full recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented times called for unprecedented measures. We committed an extra £56M supporting frontline services with only a £27M Government contribution, we still need to find savings in our budget but there is a lot of uncertainty over the long-term effects of the pandemic on the local economy, affecting our council tax receipts and income from services and investments.

We will continue with our fight for Fair Funding for Local Government and we look forward to the Government White paper on Devolution, which will hopefully provide for a real opportunity to place local government on a proper financial footing and an opportunity for radical and meaningful reform of local government services away from Whitehall.

### **Communications**

[www.facebook.com/LeicsConservatives](https://www.facebook.com/LeicsConservatives)

Twitter- @LeicsCC\_Cons and @nrushton

[www.leicestershireconservatives.org.uk](https://www.leicestershireconservatives.org.uk)

Skype, Teams and Zoom meetings with local parish councils.

**Signed by Councillor Nick Rushton CC**

**Date 18<sup>th</sup> June 2020**