



## COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S COLUMN – DECEMBER 2020

I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well and I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all during these hard times of COVID. Keep safe everybody, keep following the COVID rules as at the time of writing the coronavirus cases locally is on the rise. The virus hasn't gone away. I have held a number of virtual meetings and also managed to visit residents to see problems they have and discuss with them at a safe distance. These can be as varied as flooding, anti social behaviour, speeding traffic, overgrown hedges.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody who has volunteered and has continued to volunteer in supporting our community through times of crisis, and who have been looking after your neighbours.

It is very important that we all take care and protect ourselves as well as safely carrying on the great work we are in supporting our communities.

### **Covid-19**

#### **Confirmed Covid-19 Cases in Leicestershire Schools**

As at 20<sup>th</sup> November the following cases in schools had been reported to the Local Authority.

Cases 1008, of these 663 were children, and 345 staff. Charnwood had 308 cases in 64 schools which had not been broken down into staff or children. Charnwood has 79 schools in the district. The above figures are a running total from week commencing 10<sup>th</sup> August.

There are still concerns regarding parents congregating outside of schools, in close contact and without face coverings.

Unfortunately, cases are still increasing in Charnwood during lock down and appear to be spreading within households.



## **Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> November**

Items discussed at the Cabinet meeting were:-

*Financial resilience* – The report went on to say that the financial position faced by County is extremely serious and challenging. The current MTFs anticipated a funding gap of £39m by 2023/24 but on-going service demand and the additional pressures from Covid-19 will increase that gap significantly. This is a particularly difficult situation for a low funded authority such as Leicestershire as room for further savings is limited.

*Free school meal provision during school holidays* – The purpose of the report was to advise the Cabinet on arrangements for the provision of vouchers for pupils who are eligible for free school meals over the school holiday for the rest of the current financial year, including the whole of the Easter Holidays in 2021 and to seek agreement for allocation of the necessary funding.

Cabinet agreed that they would also look at supporting families with preschool children and vulnerable families without children. A paper outlining this scheme will go to a future cabinet meeting.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of October the Leader of the County Council announced that the Authority would earmark funding to extend provision of free school meals over the school holidays. At the time of writing the report the Government has indicated it will be providing a package of support for children and families in poverty including a £170m ring-fenced fund to help with food and bills, to be distributed via local councils. Details as to how this might be allocated are still awaited.

*Annual delivery report and performance compendium 2020* – The significant and ongoing impact of the coronavirus pandemic on outcome delivery across a range of Council services from late February.

*Adult Social Care Target Operating Model* – The successful implementation of the Adult Social Care Target Operating Model (TOM) and the achievements and improved ways of working and enhanced outcomes for service users.

*Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities 2020 to 2050* – the report advised the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation on the draft Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities (LLSTP) document, which has been prepared in partnership with Leicester City Council, and to seek approval to adopt



the LLSTP . It also sets out how the outcome of Midlands Connects most recent A 46 study work affects the LLSTP.

*EU Exit Transition* – the report provided an update on the preparations of the Council and the Local Resilience Forum (LLR Prepared) for the end of the EU Exit Transition Period and to highlight risks and challenges which remain to be managed. The report refers to how EU exit planning is happening alongside and in conjunction with planning work to respond to COVID-19 and to prepare for other incidents such as severe winter weather.

*Melton North sustainable neighbourhood draft master plan* – the report advised the Cabinet of a response that was submitted by the Chief Executive to Melton BC on 27<sup>th</sup> October in response to its consultation on the Melton North Sustainable Neighbourhood Draft Master plan.

*Draft city of Leicester Local Plan 2020 to 2036* – the report advised the Cabinet on the content of the Plan and set out a suggested response to the draft Local Plan to be submitted to the City Council as the views of the County Council.

*Residual Waste Procurement* – The purpose of the report was to advise the Cabinet on progress with the procurement of a residual waste treatment, including the future key milestones.

### **Leicestershire County Council steps in to extend free school meals**

Half-a-million pounds was earmarked to extend free school meals during holidays for the rest of this academic year, Leicestershire County Council announced before the Government backed down and agreed to support free school meals.

The move is designed to ensure that children and young people won't go hungry during the Christmas, half-term and Easter breaks – and will benefit the 12,000 pupils across Leicestershire who are eligible for free school meals.

The Leader of the County Council “Welcomed the announcement from Government that they will support local authorities, such as County, with the new grant scheme. County has had to make a lot of tough choices recently and this helps to ease the pressure a little bit. Times are still tough, and we simply can't have children going hungry during the pandemic. So we're stepping up to plug the gap and help thousands of families who need support. Schools have already had their half-term



but we are committing funding for the rest of this school year. Not only is this the right thing to do, it underlines our commitment to providing the help and support our children and families need.”

During the pandemic, the council has also:

- Given over half-a-million- pounds of Government funding to food banks and community groups this autumn – Leicestershire’s slice of the £63m from Defra
- Launched a £1.5m fund to support communities – a hospice, a homelessness service and a charity supporting young, older and vulnerable people are just three of those awarded money
- Established a £750,000 fund supporting small businesses to get back on their feet – with around £400,000 awarded so far
- Set up a dedicated team to ensure the 25,000 people identified as ‘shielded’ by the NHS have support and care in place, if required – delivered hundreds of emergency food parcels and prescriptions.

At the time of going to press details of the scheme are being finalised. Criteria for free school meals are set by the Government.

### **Leicestershire to trial lateral flow tests.**

Test kits will be sent to Leicestershire after the county was added to the list of trial areas.

The move follows productive discussions between Leicestershire County Council and the Department of Health and Social Care.

It means that the Government will send the council up to 80,000 kits a week as part of its plan to expand asymptomatic testing across the country.

The council can draw down from the national supply as needed but is looking to have a stock of 10,000 kits at any one time to deploy rapidly.



## **Police**

### **Help us End Criminal Exploitation of Children in Leicestershire and Rutland**

Children as young as nine years old are being manipulated and coerced by criminals to commit crimes.

The police have recently launched a new film called "Are you listening " to help you spot the signs of criminals exploiting children.

The film is designed for adults such as parents, grandparents or other family members and other trusted adults including teachers and sports coaches. You can watch the film on the police website, or search "Leicestershire Police Are You Listening".

Children don't always see themselves as victims and often won't speak up if they're in trouble. Look out for changes in normal behaviour, increased messages or calls, having new belongings that can't be accounted for and regular absence from school, groups or clubs.

You can help protect children in Leicestershire, Rutland and beyond. Send this information to friends or family you think may need to know about this issue.

If you're concerned or have information about a child, please act immediately. You can phone the police on 101 or report on line on their website.

### **Are you or someone you know a domestic abuse survivor?**

Women's Aid Network: Many survivors will be feeling unsafe isolating in a house with an abusive person, and isolated from their support networks. Women's Aid have put together some advice and information about support available. See Women's Aid COVID-19 Resources Hub.

Safe Lives: Have put together some resources for people living with domestic abuse, and the professionals supporting them. They have also produced guidance for friends and family.

Refuge: They are there for you if you, or someone you care about, are experiencing domestic abuse. Phone the National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247.



They also have a range of digital resources available at [refuge.org.uk](https://refuge.org.uk) and [nationaldahelpline.org.uk](https://nationaldahelpline.org.uk)

Neighbourhood Watch: have a range of information on domestic abuse on their website including how to help, spotting the signs and more. See t more on their Domestic Abuse Toolkit.

### **Is someone close becoming a stranger**

It can be hard to know what to do if you are worried someone close is expressing extreme views or hatred, which could lead to them harming themselves or others. Working with other organisations, the police protect vulnerable people from being exploited by extremists through a Home Office programme called Prevent.

Act early and tell us your concerns in confidence. You won't be wasting their time and you won't ruin lives, but you might save them.

How we help, what you can do, share a concern, for further information please log on to the website: [ACTEARLY.UK](https://ACTEARLY.UK) or contact Virendra Patel Beat NL64.

### **Scams and Fraud**

Whatever you are doing, don't give fraudsters a Christmas or Black Friday treat.

This year more of us than ever will be buying presents and other seasonal goods on the internet. But with the Covid-19 pandemic still very much with us, we have more on our minds than usual making us easier gargets for online fraudsters.

So before you start your Christmas shopping in earnest, please take a few minutes to read Get Safe On line's expert, easy-to-follow tips to help save you from giving a fraudster an early Christmas present. Visit [www.getsafeonline.org/safechristmas](https://www.getsafeonline.org/safechristmas)

### **Crimestoppers COVID Fraud Hotline launched**

In an initiative between government and the independent charity Crimestoppers, the public can call the new Crimestoppers COVID Fraud Hotline anonymously and free of charge to report suspected fraudulent activity.



Over 150 COVID support schemes have been introduced by the government to help those struggling financially, but a minority of individuals have been abusing these schemes by claiming loan and grants illegally.

Fraud against the public purse denies access to vital funds that benefit us all. It is crucial that anyone who has information or knows of someone who has fraudulently claimed Government grants or loans to contact our charity completely anonymously and tell us what you know.

The Crimestoppers COVID Fraud Hotline is open 24/7, 365 days a year on 0800 587 5030 or fill in the simple and secure anonymous form at [covidfraudhotline.org](https://covidfraudhotline.org)

**Action Fraud is warning people selling items online to be on the lookout for criminals sending fake PayPal emails.**

Criminals have been targeting people selling items online, especially jewellery, by sending them emails purporting to be from PayPal.. The emails trick victims into believing they have received payment for the items they're selling on the platform.

Typically, after receiving these emails, victims will ship the item to the criminal. This leaves them at a further disadvantage having not received any payment for the item and also no longer being in possession of it.

How can you protect yourself?

- Sellers beware – If you are selling items on an online marketplace, be aware of the warning signs that your buyer is a scammer. Scammers may have negative feedback history, or may have recently set up a new account to avoid getting poor feedback. Don't be persuaded into sending anything until you can verify you've received the payment.
- Scam message – Don't click on the links or attachments in suspicious emails, and never respond to message that ask for your personal or financial details.
- How to spot the difference – a PayPal email will address you by your first and last name, or your business name, and will never ask you for your full password, bank account, or credit card details in a message.

If you think you've been a victim of fraud, report it to Action Fraud online at [www.actionfraud.police.uk](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk) or by call 0300 123 2040



## **Scam involving Green Home Grants**

Trading Standards have received information that companies are cold calling residents offering 'free surveys' in relation to the Green Homes Grant. There are concerns over the business practices and the transparency of the information provided to consumers.

Following the Government launch of the Green Homes Grant, Trading Standards reminds residents to exercise caution if they are looking to use the grant for improvements to their homes. The Green Homes Grant is an initiative to get homeowners to invest money in improving the energy-efficiency of their property whilst also giving the economy a much-needed boost. Homeowners and landlords can apply for a voucher to cover some of the costs for installing energy efficient improvements to their homes.

Consumers are able to obtain information about the process of obtaining the grant, how to apply and how to find a registered installer by searching on [www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk](http://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk) or calling 0800 444202

If you have any concerns about work that has been undertaken using the grant scheme, or if you have been approached by a suspicious trader operating in this field, you can report it to Trading Standards using the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133

## **New SEND (Special educational needs and disabilities, plans given the go-ahead**

The aim is to strengthen the support for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities in Leicestershire have been given the thumbs up.

Leicestershire County Council, East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and West Leicestershire CCG worked with schools, parents, carers and young people to draw up the plans, known as Written Statement Action (WSOA).

Improving SEND services in Leicestershire is one of LCC top priorities, which is reflected in the £30m County are making to build new schools and specialist SEND resourced bases in our schools.





There are nearly 203,000 children and young people aged 0-24 in Leicestershire. More than 11,000 have SEND support and 3,801 have an EHC Plan.

### **Winter is coming, is your home ready?**

The nights are drawing in and the days are getting shorter.

With colder weather arriving below are a few tips to make sure your home is winter ready. It is important to understand the impact the weather, particularly in winter, can have on your home. It is not just frozen pipes that can have you in a cold sweat – understanding potential damage and their causes is step one in ensuring your home stays safe and warm during the colder months.

Installation - It is key to ensure your home is well insulated, especially in the winter months. Getting your roof well insulated not only keeps essential heat in your home but can also help to keep your energy bills down.

Get your boiler checked - One way to make sure you're not caught out by a boiler on the brink during the winter is to make sure you have it serviced regularly by a qualified engineer. Although you may believe paying out for a service is an unnecessary cost, it ensures your boiler is working safely and efficiently. If you rent your property and part of your agreement is that your land lord pays for this service, then make sure it gets carried out.

Give your gutters a clean. Gutters cannot do their job effectively if they are clogged up with leaves and debris. Getting them cleaned also means any cracks are noticed and can be fixed.

Protect your pipes - A burst water pipe can be a disaster. The best way to protect them during the colder months is to shield them with a foam layer (lagging) which will prevent them from freezing and busting.

Stop the draft - A lot of heat can escape from your home from something as simple as an uncovered window. Covering windows with lined curtains or adding draft stoppers to your doors will help to stop any drafts and keep that essential warmth from escaping.



Compare your energy - it pays to compare energy providers to make sure you are on the best tariff. Compare prices to see how much you could save.

Get covered -Make sure your home is covered for any unexpected damage is important – especially during the winter months.

### **Charnwood Citizens Advice Bureau**

Following the new lockdown, the Bureau made the decision to revert to a telephone only generalist service. This was to minimise contact between staff, volunteers and clients to avoid spreading the virus, and to ensure the local telephone service, they will continue to have a skeleton staff presence in the office 3 days a week (Mon, Tues, and Thurs).

You can get advice by using their local enquiry line 01509 649605 (Mon & Thurs 9.30am – 3.00 pm and Tues 9.30 am – 12noon) by contacting Advice line 03444 111 444 (09.00 – 5.00 pm Mon – Fri) or their help to claim service (for universal Credit Claims ) 0800 144 8 444 ( 8.00 am – 6.00 pm Mon-Fri)

### **Online event to celebrate 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of the Hallaton Treasure**

One of the most important Iron Age archaeological finds – the Hallaton Treasure – was found just outside Market Harborough in November 2000.

The Hallaton Treasure was discovered in 2000 by metal detectorist, Ken Wallace, and other volunteers from the Hallaton Fieldwork Group, who uncovered items including Iron Age coins and Roman pottery.

Along with the Hallaton Fieldwork group, The University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) began excavating what turned out to be one of the most important Iron Age sites in Britain. They discovered more than 5,000 coins, mysterious offerings and beautiful and unique 1st century Roman cavalry helmet.

The riches of the Hallaton Treasure are displayed in the Treasure Gallery at Harborough Museum, (I was privileged to view this exhibit when I visited the museum as part of portfolio), supported by a series of partnerships and funding. The online Hallaton Treasure exhibition can be visited on [www.harboroughmuseum.ork.uk](http://www.harboroughmuseum.ork.uk).



Harborough Museum is operated by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with Harborough District and Market Harborough Historical Society.

### **Biffa Incinerator**

The web site for the Newhurst Biffa Incinerator is [https://info.convana.com/newhurst\(hash tag\)communityengagement](https://info.convana.com/newhurst(hash tag)communityengagement). The web site includes minutes and documents from previous meetings and also the presentations. You will also find two videos on the page which may be of interest – “what is energy from waste”, which is a run through of energy from waste generally and “construction progress update June and September”.

\*\*The web page has a Hash tag key in the middle and I do not have a hash key on my computer\*\*

### **M1 junction 23 and A512 road works**

For those who have not yet asked to be kept informed about the road works, when the roads are closed over night etc. You can find out more information about the scheme and how to you can keep up-to-date with the latest news by visiting [www.leicestershire.gov.uk/M1J23](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/M1J23), or you can call 07779 417695 or email [A512improvements@morgansindall.com](mailto:A512improvements@morgansindall.com).

### **Tickow Lane**

My emails always have residents contacting me regarding Tickow Lane and the speed of the traffic on the narrow section from Anson Road to the new section of road. The areas where K62 footpath crosses Tickow Lane and how this is situated at a blind bend. Also residents have concerns about the amount of HGV's travelling over the old railway bridge which might not be able to take such heavy traffic before it collapses.

I can assure you, I contact County on a regular basis regarding these issues but they cannot see that there is a problem. Let us hope nobody gets hurt or killed before something is done.



## **Looking after someone?**

The county council is encouraging unpaid carers to apply for a “carers’ passport” which ensures they receive the right support at the right time as they continue in such a valuable role.

The identity card has been developed as a response to the difficulties and challenges which carers face, often on a daily basis, as well as giving them important recognition, particularly during the pandemic.

The “passport” is recognised across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland and is proudly supported by VASL – Leicestershire Support for Carers and their partners in the city and Rutland.

During the first lockdown in the spring, Support for Carers worked tirelessly to support carers, with many of them not having the proof to show who they were and as a result, for example, being unable to access supermarkets at the time slots allocated to support the vulnerable.

They were also anxious about visiting the person they cared for to provide vital support so the rollout of this new passport is a testament to the dedication and determination of the carers’ support services across Leicestershire and Rutland as they continue to provide support in these difficult times.

Carers who are already registered with Support for Carers will automatically receive their wallet-sized passport by post, they can also email the team at [Maureen@supportforcarers.org](mailto:Maureen@supportforcarers.org) to request a downloadable version for a phone or a lanyard if preferred.

To apply for a carers passport, or for more information, please contact Support for Carers on 01858 468543 or visit [www.supportforcarers.org](http://www.supportforcarers.org)



### **Your help and support**

Again I would like to thank the residents who keep me informed regarding issues around Shepshed, such as overgrown hedges, litter, dog mess, inconsiderate parking (on pavements, yellow lines, outside of schools) etc., without your eyes and ears I could not get them reported and sorted.

If for some reason you do not receive your copy of the Eye. I now have my information posted on my web page at County. This will also help you to keep track on road closures etc.

For help and advice on County matters, I can be contacted on 01509 502974 or e mail [christine\\_radford@hotmail.com](mailto:christine_radford@hotmail.com) or [christine.radford@leics.gov.uk](mailto:christine.radford@leics.gov.uk) or due to the lock down I will not be able to have my regular monthly Surgery on the FIRST Saturday of the month in the Town Council Offices, 47a Charnwood Road.