

# Leader's Statement

## 20 September 2022

### No upheld complaints with Ombudsman

We recently received a letter from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, telling us that no complaints against the Council were upheld in 21/22.

None of the three investigations carried out resulted in any upheld complaints. Our figure of 0% compares incredibly to the 51% average of upheld complaints for similar organisations.

This once again highlights the incredible work of our Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Planning, Housing and Environmental Health teams. Their diligent and thorough work will always put the residents at the heart of everything they do, and I want to thank them for the effort they give all year round.

### A Place to Grow hosts open day

The end of July saw the return of our annual A Place to Grow Open day for the first time in two years. More than 250 people from across the district and beyond came to visit the garden in Enderby, which supports positive mental health and wellbeing.

Visitors got the chance to explore the garden and see the great gardening skills of the volunteers, as well as enjoying the host of events on offer and watching the LE8 Brass Band and a fantastic live family performance.

£907 was raised from the open day, with all proceeds going straight back to the garden for its upkeep. We are incredibly proud of our sustainable community garden and the positive difference it has made to hundreds of volunteers over the years.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the garden, including volunteering, can visit [www.blaby.gov.uk/aptg](http://www.blaby.gov.uk/aptg).

### Footpath works set to begin

Major footpath works are set to make a huge difference in Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley in a new partnership project led by Leicester City Council.

The work will include the widening and creation of footpaths, reducing crossing distances and opening up a new route to make life much easier for pedestrians and cyclists travelling in the area.

Work includes the widening of the footpath in Braunstone Town Council's Mossdale Meadows park.

This will also feature an exciting new link between the Meadows and Meridian Leisure Park, a key tourism partner for the district. This will be the first formalised access between the park and the Meridian since it was opened in 1995.

We have been instrumental in securing funding for the project, including £500,000 from the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, using £100,000 from our Business Rates pool, as well as £450,000 from the Department for Transport's Paths for Everyone Funding.

## **Homes England make visit to New Lubbesthorpe**

Our Strategic Growth team were pleased to welcome Homes England, the Government body that works to fund new affordable housing and increase the number of new homes in the country, to New Lubbesthorpe back in July.

The delegation spent a morning with Councillors and members of the Council's Strategic Growth team looking around New Lubbesthorpe, which is nearing the end of its first phase of construction. Homes England's visit gave them the chance to learn more about what has made this award-winning development such a popular choice for new residents.

Alongside new dwellings, representatives also saw the infrastructure that has been put in place so far. A presentation by the Strategic Growth team explained the history and future of the site, as well as highlighting the key lessons that can be learnt for future strategic developments in the district.

We should all be incredibly proud of New Lubbesthorpe, and we are thrilled that an organisation such as Homes England wants to learn more about the development and explore best practice for new housing projects across the country.

## **Fox Connect launches in district**

We are delighted to see the new County Council-backed Fox Connect service launch in the south of the district.

Fox Connect serves Thurlaston, Huncote, Littlethorpe, Croft, Cosby, Stoney Stanton, Sapcote, Aston Flamville, Sharnford and Narborough, as well as other villages in Harborough District. It offers journeys between each village and to special destinations including Narborough Railway Station, Fosse Park and Enderby Park and Ride.

This new service is a vital addition to our southern villages and as has been proved by the demand-responsive service in New Lubbesthorpe, this type of public transport is the way forward. I'm pleased to see it spread to other areas of the district and benefit even more communities.

Residents can find out more by visiting [www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/public-transport/fox-connect](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/public-transport/fox-connect).

## **Novus era for transport in New Lubbesthorpe**

It has been fantastic to see the launch of a new, sustainable transport service in New Lubbesthorpe, as part of the next chapter in our award-winning community's story.

Vectare have taken over from Arriva Click, which served the area for more than three years. The Loughborough-based company have introduced Novus Flex, taking over from the Click service, as well as Novus Direct, a new bus service to the City Centre from New Lubbesthorpe via Thorpe Astley.

This is part of our proactive efforts with the landowners to ensure that our new community of New Lubbesthorpe has access to reliable public transport to popular locations in the district and to Leicester city centre.

I want to thank Arriva for their work over the last three years which innovated public transport in Blaby District.

## **Employment opportunities offered at Job Fair**

Once again our Work and Skills team hosted a successful Job Fair at Everards Meadows for local employers and jobseekers.

Hundreds of jobs were on offer at the event, which has now become a staple in our calendar of activities to help the local economy.

With Blaby District employers including Hilton Hotel, Marriott Hotel, Busy Bees Nurseries as well as Serco, in the run up to the opening of HMP Fosse Way.

I'd like to thank Everards for again being our host for the event at their wonderful Everards Meadows site. Job Fairs are an important way to bring employers and jobseekers face-to-face and we will be looking to host our next one soon.

## **Platinum Award for Litter Wombles**

On behalf of everyone at Blaby District Council I wanted to pass on our huge congratulations to those connected with the South Leicestershire Litter Wombles for their recent Platinum Jubilee Award.

The group has gone from strength to strength since starting up nearly four years ago, and now has members collecting thousands upon thousands of bags of litter, both in Blaby District and beyond.

Their dedicated work has been recognised with a Community and Business Award from the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Awards, where local residents were given the chance to nominate local groups who make a positive difference to the community.

We are grateful for the work they do in the district and remain proud to support them via free litter picking equipment and working with the group to take away and dispose of the bags of litter they collect.

Thank you to every volunteer litter picker in the district, and a big well done for the deserved recognition.

## Summer fun with Activity Days in the district

The Active Blaby team have had a successful summer hosting free activity days across the district for hundreds of local families.

Working with Leicestershire County Council's Children and Family Wellbeing Service, the team put on early afternoon activities through July and August in Cosby, Braunstone Town, Leicester Forest East, Blaby and Glenfield.

All events proved popular with parents and children alike, with archery, boccia, mini golf and football amongst the activities on offer. Active Blaby's work gave young children in our local communities access to an afternoon of practical activities to keep them active.

## Summer success for District events

This summer has seen a return of some of the district's biggest and best events, and new events have also been added to the calendar.

Events are a key part of our offering to visitors and residents and over half of all web views on the Visit Blaby website view the popular events listing page.

Our sold-out Theatre in the Park event in July was a huge success, with hundreds of happy families attending, as well as making a small profit for the Council.

Across the district, the Cosby Yarn Bomb made a much-anticipated return, there was even a Visit Blaby sponsored display at the Yarn Bomb, the "A-laska-salmon" installation. Another year of GlastonBlaby also showcased local talent and raised money for charity. There was also the ever-popular Victory Show, which draws visitors from across the country, and saw a rise in ticket sales.

You can find out about the events in the district at [www.visitblaby.org.uk/events](http://www.visitblaby.org.uk/events).

## Investment Plan for funding finalised

Our plan on what we'll be investing the £2.1 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been finalised.

This important funding is a real opportunity for us to undertake projects within our local communities within our three priority areas of community and place, supporting local business and people and skills.

Following approval by Council earlier this year, an Investment Plan was submitted to Government at the end of July. This sets out a range of priorities and interventions, based on local evidence and need for the District, to provide a framework within which the funding will be allocated.

Work is now underway to assess the many projects put forward to us and identified internally, and full consultation on these will be undertaken with stakeholders in due course. We are hopeful of the funds being paid to local authorities within the coming weeks.

## **Cost of Living Officer**

I am really pleased to let you know that we have secured external funding to be able to advertise a full time Cost of Living Officer. This individual will work closely with Leicestershire County Council to ensure that our residents are accessing all the support that they are entitled to in order to help them through these difficult times.

The officer will pull together a pack of information about the range of help that is available and this will be shared through various routes including our website.

Alongside this they will work closely with our Community Services Team to ensure our most vulnerable residents are accessing the range of help.

They will support our Community, Business, Work and Skills Team in working with our voluntary and community sector to not only get this information out to the widest audience possible but to also identify gaps in service provision and work with both our VCS and parishes to fill these gaps. An example of this is looking at the development of warm banks/warm rooms.

We'll be outlining a position statement at Council with more information about the actions we will be taking to support residents most impacted.

## **Glenfield Community Food Hub gets deserved recognition**

The continued hard work of volunteers in Glenfield has been recognised by a Platinum Jubilee Award awarded by the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, which was recently presented to the Glenfield Community Food Hub by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, David Lindsey.

First created at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Glenfield Community Food Hub has supported so many people in the village who have needed support. As well as delivering food parcels and medicines, the group also helped the elderly and vulnerable by setting up a phone line and running daily errands.

Whilst life has returned to relative normality since the pandemic, the dedicated group of volunteers have continued to run the Food Hub, working with ourselves, the Parish Council, local supermarket Morrisons and a number of other local community groups and businesses to arrange emergency food parcels for those who had no other way of accessing essential supplies.

I am delighted to see their work recognised and congratulate all of the volunteers for all of their efforts in helping to support the Glenfield community.

## Great Big Green Week

The last week in September marks Great Big Green Week, a national week to celebrate community action to tackle climate change and protect nature.

As part of the week we'll be giving away trees for the Queen's Green Canopy at Fosse Park on Wednesday 28 September. There will also be a chance for shoppers and residents to speak to the team about air quality, energy efficiency grants, solar together and electric vehicles, as well as checking in on how we are addressing climate change.

Officers will also be heading into primary schools during the week to deliver sessions to schoolchildren about air quality and climate change, as part of the Council's proactive work in schools to promote active travel and the green agenda.

## Youth Green Forum launches

With Blaby District Council committed to the Green Agenda and ensuring a carbon neutral district by 2050, I'm really pleased to see the launch of our new Youth Green Forum.

The group is for anyone up to the age of 19 and current members are already busy working on the agenda for the next year. Green Forum members meet monthly and give young people a voice to talk about and act on their concerns about climate change and our environment.

Interested in joining? Know someone who might want to be a part of our Youth Council or Youth Green Forum? Being part of the Forum gives valuable experience and will be a great addition for any CV.

Anyone interested in joining can email [vcshub@blaby.gov.uk](mailto:vcshub@blaby.gov.uk).