

Leader's Statement

19 November 2024

Armistice Day

A short service was held in the memorial garden outside the Council offices starting on Monday 11 November to mark Armistice Day. This is always a poignant moment and one which continues to remind us of the debt of gratitude we all owe to those who have served in His Majesty's armed forces. I am especially proud of the work that the Council does in supporting our veterans and wish to thank all of our staff and members who are involved in this. Having attended a few of the coffee mornings, as well as other events, which regularly take place at our offices and elsewhere it is fair to say that these occasions are very happy events enjoyed by all who attend.

Community Awards

In January we will once -again celebrate unsung heroes and community groups from across the District. Thank you to everyone who has made a nomination. I look forward to reading about all the nominees and seeing the finalists in January.

Cork Lane update

I have recently held discussions with residents regarding the Vistry development off of Cork Lane in Glen Parva, to hear for myself the impact of work to build 165 homes.

It must be remembered that the planning permission for this site was given by the Planning Inspectorate following its refusal by Planning Committee.

Nevertheless, Council officers have been working tirelessly with the developer to ensure that the site operates as effectively as possible with any disturbance being mitigated where possible.

I am also aware that ward councillors have also had meetings with officers and the developers to discuss what can be done to reduce disruption and to make sure works meet both planning, noise and air quality standards.

Officers will continue to monitor the site, and I understand that they have developed a good working relationship with the developer.

Braunstone Conservation Area adopted

Following the July meeting I am pleased to confirm that the Braunstone Conservation Area has been adopted by the Council.

The characterful centre of Braunstone has long been established, and is now quite rightly protected for future generations. Any new development within and surrounding the conservation area will need to be sensitive to the historic nature of the village, as other developments have been alongside the previously established conservation area within Leicester City.

A partnership approach with the City Council to this wider area of historic protection is ensuring the historic nature of Braunstone will be preserved.

Tourism Growth

I am delighted to announce that visitor spend across Blaby District has exceeded the target we set in 2017 as part of our work to make the area one of Leicestershire's leading and most welcoming tourism destinations.

Our current Tourism Growth Plan aimed to increase the value of tourism by £50 million on 2016's baseline level of £159 million. Latest figures for 2023 show this target has easily been surpassed with visitor spend at an impressive £217 million. The growth in tourism spend is proving to be a springboard for wider economic prosperity across the District.

Spend on accommodation, recreation and food and drink have seen the biggest rises. There has also been a significant increase in employment numbers despite difficulties faced by the sector.

The Tourism Growth Plan is currently being renewed with support from tourism partners. I will update members on all achievements from the plan in due course.

Transformation

2024 has seen us provide project management support for multiple strategic projects including transitioning to our in-house IT service and Depot Net Zero. Our corporate project management function has been successfully audited which provided a springboard to continue with the development of our project governance framework and alignment of projects to the Blaby District Plan.

Our transformation journey continues, and our network of Transformation Champions brings together officers across the organisation, raising the profile and enabling the cross pollination of ideas for transformation.

Our approach to IT provision is opening up process automation opportunities, reducing the time taken to produce reports for partners. We are embracing new

digital technologies to help our officers on the ground to capture data electronically, speeding up our processes and opening the door to trend analysis.

Member development update

It is important that the Council has a structured Member Development Programme that strengthens the knowledge and skills that Members need to fulfil their demanding roles; help contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities and respond to the changing needs of the District.

Members have recently been invited to complete a Councillor Development Review Form with their Group Whip, providing the opportunity for an open and reflective dialogue to identify training and development needs and a discussion on Members' interests and ambitions relative to their Council roles. These sessions also provide an opportunity to match Members for peer-to-peer mentoring and enable group whips to consider succession planning.

I'm happy to report that 30 Members (83%) have successfully completed the Councillor Development Review, resulting in a new robust Member Development Programme to be launched to Members soon.

The Member Development Steering Group, chaired by Cllr. Adrian Clifford will continue to champion and promote learning and development opportunities to all Councillors.

Local Government Association Conference

I attended the LGA conference in October and heard from ministers, councillors and officers about some of the fantastic work councils are doing up and down the Country. I was pleased to see Blaby District Council featuring on the Municipal Journal (MJ) stand focusing on work we are doing around IT. I also attended a seminar by Braunstone Town Council focusing on the work we have done in partnership to deliver walking and cycling routes in conjunction with the City Council.

Afghan Resettlement Property

I'm pleased to report that we have secured our final property under the Local Authority Housing Fund 2 scheme, which will complete our ambitious programme to offer support to those in need of accommodation in our District.

Blaby District Carbon Neutral by 2050

Solar panel progress at Depot

When it comes to supporting the District to become carbon neutral by 2050, we want to lead by example, which is why our goal as an authority is set for 2030.

We're well on our way to this, and I'm pleased to see plans to install solar panels at our vehicle depot took a step closer recently. Planning permission has been granted for the installation of permanent access structures around the depot buildings, ensuring the solar panels can be safely maintained in the long term.

We're looking to install 306 solar panels across our buildings there, reducing 25 tonnes of CO2 each year. In one-fell swoop we'll make an estimated annual electricity saving of £25,000 and cut our energy use at the depot by around 43%.