

Leader's Statement

24 February 2026



Enabling our communities and supporting our vulnerable residents

Dallington House opening

It was with great pleasure that I, a number of fellow Councillors, officers and invited guests attended the official opening of our new temporary accommodation provision at Dallington House in Enderby. The building, with its 13 self-contained independent living units, is a vital step for us in our efforts to ensure people break free from a cycle of homelessness.

Having Dallington House means we can reduce reliance on unsuitable bed and breakfasts when people come to us because they have nowhere to live. The accommodation it offers and the tailored support we can provide will help people move forward, gain practical skills and experience stability. This is just one strand of work we have committed to this year as we face up to the increasing challenge of local individuals and families being priced out of an expensive private rental market and not being able to get on the property ladder.



Community Awards

I was delighted and honoured to attend and compere our recent Community Awards prize-giving evening, where unsung heroes from across the District were recognised for the amazing work they do within their neighbourhoods.

Being in the company of residents who are so dedicated to making a difference to the lives of others is a humbling experience. Everyone nominated was a winner in their own right and as always it was an immensely difficult job for any of our judges to choose between them all. I'm so very proud, we as a Council, get the chance to highlight and reward these remarkable people.



Love Blaby Lottery anniversary

This month our Love Blaby Lottery marks its eighth anniversary and celebrates raising almost £250,000 for good causes in the District. Last year saw bumper success with a record-breaking £40,585 amassed for clubs, charities and organisations. Launched in 2018 to complement our long-standing grant awards, the lottery has been a vital source of funds for local groups, in some cases ensuring they can continue to operate in the face of ever-rising costs.

Let's not forget though it is the people who play the lottery, choosing which good cause to support, who are really behind its success. Without their patronage we couldn't pass on the funds to all those groups in need. A reminder then for us all to encourage people to sign up – 60p from every £1 ticket goes to a good cause and there's weekly prizes of up to £25,000, it truly is a win-win.





Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment

Sharnford appeal success

It is pleasing to see a government planning inspector uphold our original decision to reject proposals for 134 new homes on the edge of Sharnford. In July last year we refused an application for the housing scheme to the north of Leicester Road, saying it was an unsuitable and unsustainable site.

The developer appealed our decision, taking their case to the Planning Inspectorate. The appeal was thrown out, however, with the planning inspector agreeing with us that the area did not have the services or facilities to support new housing. We are not against new homes and new communities but they must be in the right places, for the benefit of both existing and future residents.



Growing and supporting our economy

Boosting Local Business

We continue to work closely with local businesses to help them thrive. I'm delighted to announce over the last year, we delivered 59 one-to-one business action plans, supported companies to access more than £140,000 in grants and £224,900 in loans to expand, secure contracts and create jobs, boosting the local economy.



Keeping you safe and healthy

Your Health Journey

Obesity is a major challenge facing us in our District and we are continually looking at practical ways we can make a difference. One of our most recent initiatives has been a 12-week pilot programme focusing on healthy weight management called 'Your Health Journey'. It launched in October aimed at residents with a BMI over 40. Officers worked with Primary Care Network managers to identify people who might benefit and before starting the programme, candidates were assessed on their mental health, quality of life, health visits, self-esteem, psychosocial and physical activity levels. This meant we had a robust baseline on which to measure improvements.

Each week the programme offers face-to-face sessions on a different topic. For those unable to attend or to allow people to revisit the information, the sessions are recorded



and uploaded to YouTube. A six-week review has highlighted excellent retention rates with 13 people starting and only two dropping out for practical reasons but remaining on our waiting list. Outcomes also look very positive with 18% of participants saying they strongly agree and 82% saying they agree that they feel confident enough to continue with their health journey after the course. As well as this, 27% strongly agree and 73% agree that they feel more confident and motivated in managing their weight. The pilot will be fully reviewed and evaluated upon completion with a view to rolling out another programme later this year.

JUST Programme

A fantastic programme supporting women of all ages and abilities to get more active is celebrating its tenth anniversary in Blaby District. JUST provides a range of fun, no pressure sessions both in person and online with everything from Zumba to tennis.

I'm pleased to say we have had 609 people sign up this year, with 14 instructors delivering 60 classes on the timetable. It's great to see we have had 1,516 attendances so far on just week four of the programme.



Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

Progress on new Local Plan

We are continuing to work on our new Local Plan, which will guide future development and land use across Blaby District until 2042. It is hoped the Regulation 19 version, which is the final version we intend to consult on prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate, will come before us at Full Council in April.

In the meantime, officers have created a new set of webpages for the Local Plan, offering detail and further insight. There is also a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page. I'm sure I don't need to stress how important this document is in ensuring we can guide how our communities grow.

Youth Conference

We'll be seeing the Council Chamber taken over later this week by members of our Youth Council for their annual conference. It's always satisfying to see so many young people engaged in local democracy and tackling subjects which matter to them. It will be interesting to hear how they have fared over the last year in acting on their priorities - hate crime and discrimination, vaping and climate change.



Izzy's Legacy

At the end of January our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) participated in a sponsored spin bike challenge. The team worked to cover 60 miles across the week, the equivalent of cycling the circumference of Blaby District. The sponsorship is to support Izzy's Legacy, a fundraising platform set up by our colleague Izzy Darnes, who is currently battling cancer. While fighting her own cancer, Izzy is raising money for the Children and Young People's Cancer Association. SLT have raised more than £1,100 in Izzy's name, while the wider authority has also raised more than £450 for the charity. I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking everyone for their support of this important cause.

Local government reorganisation

The government has now launched a consultation on the proposals put forward for reshaping councils across Leicestershire and Rutland. They are asking for the public's views on the submissions put forward by ourselves, together with the other district and borough councils along with Rutland County Council, as well as those from Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council.

I would urge all my fellow Councillors to share the details of the consultation among your constituents and encourage them to take part. This is a chance for people to have a real say in how they are governed in the future.

