

Madam Chairman,

First, please may I give my apologies for absence from the Meeting?

I should like to thank the Parish Council and the Clerk and Deputy Clerk for the spirit in which you all allow me to work with you and maintain communication, sometimes about difficult issues. I am grateful for the opportunity to communicate by means of a Blog posted on your website and as always for the Deputy Clerk's kind assistance in formatting and posting my Blogs.

Highways issues of course feature highly in our regular discussions. However, this Meeting is perhaps an opportunity to reflect on some of the other work of the County Council. The Trading Standards service, for instance, has an important role in protecting the public from fake goods, which can sometimes be dangerous. Fake and faulty electrical items are an example. The service also issues warnings about scams to beware of.

The County Council's Country Parks deserve mention, as they give great pleasure to many people. The Council is ambitious to increase the provision of trees, developing a nursery in partnership with the National Forest Company. The Net Zero campaign is designed to reduce carbon emissions. The wildflower verges initiative is helping transform some roadside verges into wildflower areas.

I should also like to mention the importance of the Council's work seeking foster parents to benefit young people in need of such care, and challenging some of the myths about fostering.

All these activities and more are recorded in the Council's newsletter for residents, "Leicestershire Matters"

I think it is recognized that caring for vulnerable adults and children, some with highly complex needs, is a heavy demand on the Council's budget. The latest information I have is that approximately three quarters of the budget is spent in that way. By contrast, less than 5% is spent on what can be defined as highways maintenance, including things like street lighting and gritting.

It is also well known that we are the lowest funded County Council. If we ever get the Fair Funding we seek much of the credit should go to Chris Tambini, the Council's Director of Corporate Resources who is to retire soon, who is the author of an excellent published paper which demonstrates the issue.

Issues concerning Sileby in particular are documented in my Reports to Parish Council Meetings, and discussions arising therefrom, throughout the past year. Highway repair matters and the number 2 Kinchbus service stand out.

I will conclude by mentioning that as well as being the County Councillor for the Sileby and The Wolds Division I have a role to play as a Member of the County Council's Cabinet and some other bodies.

Please let me know of any questions for me which might arise.

Richard Shepherd
April, 2023