

County Councillor's Report for the Sileby Annual Parish Meeting on 18th April, 2024

Madam Chairman,

First, please may I give my apologies for absence from the Meeting? Unfortunately, I am not allowed to drive for the foreseeable future for health reasons.

I should like to thank the Parish Council, the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Administration Assistant for their continued helpfulness in enabling me to work with them and keep in touch about matters concerning Sileby. Similarly, I should like to thank the three Borough Councillors for the Ward for their spirit of co-operation which has enabled us all to work together in the interests of those whom we have been elected to represent. And of course, my thanks go to the Parish Council for allowing me to have my Blog posted on the Council's website and to the Deputy Clerk for formatting and posting my Blog.

As I look back over the past year two issues in particular stand out: flooding, and the Government's announcement of Network North Funding Streams. The storms of recent months caused serious flood events, and Sileby was among the areas in which properties were internally flooded. Many people have suffered from both the physical consequences of flooding and the great anxiety which it can cause, and various authorities and organizations, including the County Council, responded but of course have had their resources very stretched. It seems that, regrettably, we shall all need to be "Flood Aware" and "Flood Prepared", and follow advice given.

In October 2023 the Prime Minister announced the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham and advised that the monies that had been due to be spent on HS2 in the North and the Midlands would be allocated for transport spend in those areas. Details are given in a Report discussed by the County Council's Cabinet at a Meeting on 26th March. The Cabinet's Lead Member for Highways and Transport commented before that Cabinet Meeting:

"While we hugely welcome the extra funding, it's not going to be an overnight fix of everything out there, so we do need to manage expectations.

First, we need detailed Government guidance on how much we'll get each year – and what we do know is that the allocations will be lower in the earlier years.

We have priorities all over the county where we might want to deliver schemes, but we need to work through this and make sure we are delivering the improvements that give the greatest benefit to our communities.”

On the subject of transport, it's also worth mentioning that greener and cleaner journeys on key bus routes in Leicestershire are now in the offing following a successful County Council and bus operators' bid for Government funding. The money will help buy electric buses and chargers, thus cutting carbon emissions. Kinchbus Service 2, serving Sileby, will be among the routes to have emission free buses.

Another noteworthy Report discussed at the County Council Cabinet Meeting on 26th March shows that Leicestershire remains one of the best performing County Councils in the country. A comparison against 31 upper-tier and county unitary areas places the Council second for adult social care delivery, second for highways and transport, and fourth for school quality and access, even though the Council is poorly funded. Details of the research undertaken is included in the Cabinet Report. Council officers carried out an analysis using 250 indicators from last year across 13 themes, including metrics used by the newly established Office for Local Government (Oflog). The data used was all obtained from nationally published sources.

There is much the County Council does which is not readily visible. Naturally, highways and transport enquires are the one most frequently received by Councillors, as those are matters which immediately affect us. I continue to circulate media releases and news items to Parish Councils and Borough Councillors in my Division, by way of information.

Items of particular interest to Sileby, as well those of general interest, are included in my Reports for Parish Council Meetings and recorded in the Minutes, and I assist with enquiries from the Parish Council and from individual residents.

I should be grateful to hear of any questions for me which arise at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Richard Shepherd
18th April, 2024