



Melton
Borough
Council

LEADER'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

MAY 2022





Introduction from Cllr Joe Orson, Leader of the Council

At our Annual Council Meeting on 12 May 2022, as Leader of the Council, it was my privilege to provide a review of the last year. The review provides an opportunity to reflect on all that has been achieved by Melton Borough Council and our partners,

as well as an opportunity to look ahead to the coming year and all that remains to be done.

We know our communities continue to face challenging times and we remain resolute and committed to doing all we can to help. I am extremely proud of the work this Council does and remain very grateful for the efforts of all councillors and officers who work tirelessly to serve our communities. I hope you find my summary of the year helpful and interesting.

All the best,

Cllr Joe Orson
Leader of the Council

As a council, despite the unprecedented challenge of the last couple of years, we continue to deliver a phenomenal amount for our residents, and we should all be proud of what we achieve.

Whilst the impact of the Covid restrictions is thankfully starting to recede, I must start by acknowledging that for at least half the year,

Covid was looming large over everything we did. 143 people have died from Covid in Melton and so it is fitting that next week we unveil our Covid Memorial in the Country park, which will be a tribute both to those who lost their lives and those who sacrificed so much to keep us safe and well. We cannot forget the fundamental role that this council played in both saving lives and protecting livelihoods, and the wave after wave of business grants and rate relief programmes that we have had to administer and distribute. Teams across the council have been under constant pressure and yet time and again they have risen to the challenge. I am sure all members will once again join with me in thanking them for their service, hard work and commitment throughout this period.



As we've emerged from the pandemic we have worked hard to support the economic recovery. The Discover Melton website launch last summer was a great success and through the Food Enterprise Centre, we've established a network of 65 small businesses, with access to direct technical support from our food technologist. The recent Stockyard launch at the Cattle Market, and associated private sector investment, is starting to realise Melton's investment potential. Projects like these reinforce our reputation as the Rural Capital of Food, and underpin our developing Town Centre Vision which we look forward to publishing for consultation shortly.

The last year has been huge for the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road. Just after our last Annual Meeting, you will recall the County Council published a report confirming their intention to hand back the £15m Housing Infrastructure Fund grant, seriously jeopardising the southern section of the road. Through the rapid and co-ordinated action of this council, alongside our MP and over 2,750 local people, the County Council listened and agreed to rethink. Following a significant amount of work over the following months, we had the fantastic news last November that the County Council had accepted the HIF grant and were committed to delivering the whole road. This was only possible because Melton Borough Council followed through on its commitments, and delivered key policy documents on time, including the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, 2 masterplans and a pioneering infrastructure funding agreement. We must not under-estimate what a fantastic achievement this was, with our reward seeing the first stages of construction starting just a few weeks ago.



The MMDR has not been our only focus in terms of infrastructure. Following a successful bid to the restoring our railways fund, last autumn we submitted the outline business case to the Department for Transport for improved rail connectivity between Melton and Nottingham – a project made even more important following the recent decision to withdraw the number 19 bus route. On our future cemetery provision, the commission for the specialist advice required is underway, and a transport study of Bottesford will provide an evidence base to support future infrastructure investment in our largest village.

Our Local Plan continues to deliver, with the most homes built in Melton for decades and an enviable 11.6 year housing land supply. The recently confirmed Local Plan review will enable us to reflect and ensure it continues to meet the needs of our communities for the next 5 years. In the last year we've also supported 5 Neighbourhood Plans to adoption, and earlier this year were able to support our Stathern community by correcting an error and successfully pursuing an appeal through the High Court.

Continuing to improve our planning function, and strengthening communication and engagement with key stakeholders, will remain a top priority for us and the recruitment of our new assistant director, and recent investment in planning enforcement will certainly help us on that journey. We have shown in housing management what we can achieve when we focus on improvement, and I was also delighted that our Land Charges service was shortlisted in the awards for excellence recently, having been under pressure a year ago.





Within our Corporate Strategy we made finding a sustainable future for our leisure services a key priority. With two dilapidating and outdated leisure centres, just continuing as we are is neither going to be affordable, or acceptable in terms of the service we offer. The pandemic has made things tougher, with the leisure sector only surviving because councils like ours provided huge subsidies during the various lockdowns. Through excellent negotiation, and the subsequent 2 year extension to our leisure contracts, we have bought ourselves time. But now we must plan for the future and find a way to secure Melton's leisure provision for the next generation.

Unlike some of our neighbouring councils, we do not have the reserves to simply self-finance a new leisure centre. Rather we will need to work closely with our partners to develop a broad funding package that enables us to proceed. We cannot underestimate the financial challenge associated with this - it will not be easy - but we will leave no stone unturned and I look forward to engaging with all members on this important issue throughout the coming year.

The work we have done with our Clinical Commissioning Group over the last year demonstrates the impact and benefit from effective partnership working. As members will know, securing a second GP surgery is a key priority, and I'm delighted that yesterday the CCG has started a consultation on the future of primary care services in our borough. The survey will be open until 19th June 2022 and I would encourage all members and residents to send a clear message about what we need for the future. Through our strong partnership, we are making good progress and I am confident we will soon hear positive news as we work to establish a destination health and leisure park in Melton.



Whilst on leisure, I should highlight the important work our Physical Activity and Health team did supporting Melton Town Football Club to deliver their new 3G pitch, as well as with Melton Mowbray Tennis Club, leveraging in 5 times our own contribution, and helping to install new tennis courts at the sports village.

Physical activity has huge benefits for wellbeing, and supporting our communities and the most vulnerable within them, has always been part of our DNA at Melton. Over the last year we have once again shown great leadership in this area. We were the first council in the County to make a public pledge to support Afghan refugees fleeing persecution and the first council to resettle an Afghan family. We continue to support both sponsor households and their Ukrainian guests, playing a key role in helping them resettle, and as you know, some of our members organised a fantastic race night, raising nearly £5,000 to support refugees in Poland. Working alongside our MP, Harborough and Rutland Councils, we look forward to joining a welcome event for our Ukrainian friends and their sponsors later this month.

Alicia Kearns

Ukrainian Community Event

We invite you to the first Ukrainian Community Event in Rutland and Melton
An opportunity to come together as hosts and guests in friendship and welcome

Tuesday 24th May 2022

For more details and to RSVP
email: alicia.kearns.mp@parliament.uk

With the support of
Melton Borough Council
Rutland County Council

We've made our modest community grants budget work really hard this year, with 12 organisations supported to deliver a range of initiatives including community mental health, a crisis café and inclusive sport. Our Jubilee Grants scheme will help 20 organisations deliver a range of activities including picnics, street parties, fun days, tree planting, and bunting, all to support the Queen's Jubilee in June. It has also been



fantastic to see our Sports and Neighbourhood Support teams able to restart their community outreach programmes, and the establishment of the Fairmead Football League demonstrates our continuing commitment to our priority neighbourhoods. During this year we will review our ageing CCTV system, and bring forward a business case for investing in a modern, cost effective system to replace it.

The Cost of Living Crisis is a huge concern, with the energy price cap rising by 54% in April 2022, and inflation expected to reach 10% by the end of the 2022. We must do all we can to help those who are going to struggle. Once again we have worked quickly and were one of the first councils to distribute the government's £150 energy payments with over 12,700 payments already made, totalling nearly £2m. More will follow shortly as part of our discretionary support scheme which is under development.

As a council one of our priorities is to increase engagement with our communities. The new Audio Visual system, used for the first time at our Annual Meeting last year, continues to enable more and more people to watch democracy in action. We have revamped our Parish Council liaison meetings and are having constructive conversations about important local issues, and later this year we will undertake our next boroughwide Residents Survey to help track our progress. Our elections team have run a number of elections, including the combined County Council and PCC election, navigating the covid restrictions in place at the time. Through by-elections, we've also had the pleasure to welcome a number of new members to the Council this year, saying goodbye to some long standing and respected colleagues in the process. At the end of this civic year, the council will once again prepare for the boroughwide elections in 2023.

We've continued to strengthen our organisational effectiveness, adopting a new finance system, moving to a new insourced ICT partnership model, and launching a new council website in September 2021, which now achieves a 100% score for accessibility and puts us on a par with the best performing councils in this area. We remain a Disability Confident Leader and have taken positive steps towards achieving the gold award as part of the Armed Forces Covenant. It has also been our pleasure to support 9 Kickstart placements - the government scheme to support young people into work - and it's fantastic to see a number of those colleagues now taking on alternative roles at the Council.



We also adopted a new Performance and Risk Framework which, along with our Project Management Framework, achieved good assurance from our auditors, as well as substantial assurance obtained for our covid response and recovery, the highest of all councils assessed. Our First State of Melton report and debate in October 2021 helped shape the budget development process and some excellent support and challenge through Scrutiny helped deliver another balanced budget, and one where we have been able to put substantial funds back into our reserves. We cannot be complacent though, particularly as funding pressures and inflation bear down on us, and through our Financial Sustainability Programme, must continue to maintain a sharp focus on making the best use of our resources and ensuring they are focussed on our priorities.

Learning from the pandemic, we adopted our new Way We Work Strategy, formalising our approach to hybrid working, and over the coming year we will reorganise our office space to support these new arrangements, as well as ensure both officers and members have the right IT equipment to support this new way of working.



We will also continue to strengthen our green credentials and are committed to supporting the fantastic Melton in Bloom volunteers go for the gold award this year. We have secured £1.2m in Green Homes grant funding which is helping numerous low income families to live in warmer and more comfortable homes and our recently launched Solar Together campaign will help residents bulk buy solar panels at the lowest possible cost. There is still much to do as we build our strategy to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Two years ago, when we established our housing directorate, we also established our corporate assets team, and they've made excellent progress, putting the building blocks in place for effective management of our assets and making preparations for future development. In the last year we've secured welcome capital receipts by disposing of redundant assets, and are investing in our hugely important asset development programme to ensure we maximise the value of key sites. I look forward to the options and business cases being considered by Scrutiny and Cabinet later in the year.



On Housing, the commitments we made 2 years ago continue to deliver significant progress. The investment in the Northgate system has given us far greater ability to manage the condition of our council homes and compliance responsibilities. Our new Allocations Policy provides far greater clarity on how to access affordable homes and our new choice based letting IT system will be going live soon. We continue to acknowledge the great work done by TFEC over the years and remain committed to building stronger ties with our tenants, particularly as we prepare for, and ensure compliance with, the new Consumer Standards and Regulatory Framework. Whilst there is still much more to do, the adoption of our new HRA Business Plan in July 2022 will be another significant step forward and our commitment to providing high quality council homes and landlord services remains absolute, as does as our desire to build and acquire new council homes for future tenants.

The coming year is likely to be significant for Leicestershire as discussions continue regarding a potential County Deal. This, alongside our submission of a second round Levelling Up fund bid, and the development of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, are important moments for Melton, with the potential to secure much needed investment in our County and Borough. I look forward to working with all members, and our partners on shaping these plans.





We must ensure that through any discussions, the rural voice is heard, and not marginalised by louder protestations of need from larger, more urban centres. If rural communities are to remain sustainable, they cannot be taken for granted and must have investment in homes, jobs and infrastructure in equal measure to larger towns and cities. Rural Leicestershire must receive its fair share, both from government funding and any future County Deal. Rural communities must speak with a clearer, stronger and more united voice and to support this aim we are already working closely with our rural neighbours in Harborough and Rutland with whom we share so much in common. As we develop our Levelling Up Fund Bids, we will establish a Joint Rural Investment Strategy and will continue to explore wider opportunities for collaboration which champion the rural economy and increase organisational resilience, building on examples like the building control partnership we have recently entered.

As we can see, there is a huge amount happening and I want to thank all members and officers for their hard work and commitment to the people of Melton. We can achieve so much by working together and with much more to do, I look forward to that continuing in the coming year.



Announcement of Cabinet

I am delighted to announce the membership of Melton Borough Council's Cabinet for the coming year. My Cabinet will continue to provide leadership and public accountability as we work to deliver our Corporate Strategy and respond to both the challenges and opportunities faced by our communities.

We will continue to maintain a 6 person Cabinet for the coming year, including myself as Leader. We will also retain one Cabinet Support Member.



I am delighted to confirm that Cllr Graham will continue in his role as Deputy Leader, also retaining the People and Communities Portfolio. He will continue to oversee our support to Ukrainian refugees, as well as playing a key role in responding to the Cost of Living Crisis. To assist with this, I have asked him to take on responsibility for the Lightbulb partnership, which utilises Disabled Facilities Grant to help residents to remain safe and well in their homes.

Having delivered balanced budgets for the last 3 years, Cllr De Burle continues to maintain an excellent grip on our resources. Alongside his financial responsibilities, he will also continue to oversee our governance processes and Chair our Constitutional Review Working Group.



Cllr Freer will continue to lead on Climate, Access and Engagement and will build on the great work she has done, providing so much value through our community and jubilee grants schemes. She will also continue building our response to climate change, as well as oversee the adoption of the new Waste and Resources Strategy.



Our tremendous housing improvement journey continues under Cllr Browne's leadership and I look forward to him bringing forward our new HRA Business Plan later this year. To reflect his wider responsibilities, which includes homelessness and housing options, I am renaming his portfolio Housing and Landlord Services.

With the recent successful Stockyard launch under his belt, and consultation shortly due to start on the Town Centre vision, Cllr Bindloss will continue driving the growth and prosperity agenda and will oversee the submission of our second Levelling Up Fund bid and the UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan later this year.



Cllr Smith will continue to support Cllr Bindloss as a Cabinet Support Member.

A copy of my executive scheme of delegation has been made available to all members this evening.



My Cabinet and I look forward to working with all members and officers over the coming year.



**Melton
Borough
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Helping people | Shaping places