

## **SUMMARY PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **STRONG ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

#### **Economy**

Supported the creation of a new Business Board to shape economic strategy in Leicester and Leicestershire and a key part of the new Leicester and Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership, which oversees functions such as the Business Gateway Growth Hub and the Careers Hub. The Freeport has secured £25m in seed capital to drive growth in the region by unlocking tax sites. This includes over £5m for a £17m net zero carbon innovation centre for clean energy research with Loughborough and Nottingham Universities, over £2m to support new low-carbon industries, and more than £2m for the Future Energy Skills Hub. We continue to be a key partner in the Enterprise Zone Programme which supports Research and Development businesses on 3 sites in the County. New plans to unlock benefits of the 550-acre Lutterworth East site on a phased basis including creating business spaces, unlocking a prime 30-acre development site on the M1, and investing in infrastructure. The next phase of the Airfield Business Park development was approved, with 11 more business units and 2 drive-thru units via sustainable construction methods. Our Investing in Leicestershire Programme (IILP) continues to invest in property and other indirect holdings to generate income and contribute to economic wellbeing.

Our Economic Growth Team facilitated collaborative UK Shared Prosperity Fund programmes with the City and district councils to maximise the impact of funding. These included procurement of a Leicestershire Business Advisory Service and creation of a series of promotional videos and trails to support the County-wide food and drink campaign 'Taste the Place'. 31.2 million visitors generated £2.39bn for the local economy and supported 22,922 local jobs. Invest in Leicester, working in partnership with the public and private sector, showcased major Leicestershire development sites at a key investment event and secured sponsorship to deliver events and promotional activities. Applied successfully with the City Council to become a Local Visitor Economy Partnership with Visit England which will provide tourism businesses with opportunities to reach more visitors. Successful marketing campaigns also increased the profile for tourism businesses.

Supported the Create Growth East Midlands Consortium to benefit 12 creative businesses, getting them to an investment ready stage. Our Libraries and Heritage Services were recognised as a National Portfolio Organisation by Arts Council England and secured £780,000 of funding over three years. Culture Leicestershire also created 20 paid opportunities for free-lance creative practitioners to develop co-created projects with our audiences. Through Project Gigahubs we collaborated with Building Digital UK to bring gigabit-capable broadband to 43 rural public sector sites, supported Openreach to gain community backing, and subsequent Government funding, to bring full fibre broadband to approximately 30 rural Leicestershire villages and are rolling out Gigabit-capable broadband to 14,400 homes and businesses in the County with the potential for more premises to be included the project.

**Skills** - We have been successful in gaining £1.7m in 'Wave 5' Skills Bootcamp funding, to deliver a wide range of courses. We also continue to operate the Multiply Programme, through gaining £3m of government funding to help adults improve their

numeracy skills. 32 Numeracy Champions have been trained across Leicestershire to promote the importance of numeracy skills for work and home. Our Work and Skills Leicestershire project offers comprehensive information and access to support for anyone actively seeking paid employment, training, or volunteering. The Freeport will be investing more than £2m to train students for careers in advanced manufacturing and clean energy. The Freeport is investing in the Future Skills Hub. The social value commitment via Project Gigahub is a collaboration with the BT Group to offer free 'Work Ready Webinars' to Leicestershire residents. Our Adult Learning Service 'have a go' month offered more than 50 free taster sessions for people to learn a new skill, as well as offering a 'Skills for Life Roadshow'. We also supported a range of apprenticeships in adult care, trading standards and other service roles.

## **Transport**

Major construction work continued on the north and east Melton Mowbray distributor road to reduce congestion and support new homes and employment growth in the town. The new road is expected to open in early 2026. Completing a package of road improvements around Rugby Road, Hinckley in 2023. Securing £887k Active Travel England funding to deliver the County's first cyclops junction at the A6/The Parade junction in Oadby in 2025. Design work on the Desford Crossroads junction and works progressing on the Zouch bridge replacement. Investing £23m in highways maintenance in 2023/24 including a £2.7m summer surface dressing programme. Our 23 gritters were available to grit 1,300 miles of highway with 18,500 tonnes of salt stored in grit barns across the county.

In October 2023, we achieved an additional £4.05m revenue funding for 2024/25 to support local bus transport. Refreshed our Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy to align with the Government's National Bus Strategy and approved a new Leicestershire Bus Service Improvement Plan aiming to achieve a high-quality efficient bus network with greater coordination of timetables and use of lower and zero emission vehicles. A successful Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas scheme with 46 new electric buses on the Leicestershire network by June 2026. The FoxConnect digital Demand Responsive Transport service continues to enable residents from south-west Leicestershire to connect to key destinations, with over 24,000 passenger journeys during 2023/24.

Work with Active Travel England to further our commitment to active travel in Leicestershire, with associated walking and cycling facilities and behaviour change programmes. Our Cycling and Walking Strategy and plans aim to create local cycling and walking infrastructure across the county. The 'Betterpoints' programme continues to run successfully with a total of 4915 users. We refreshed our Road Safety Strategy and continued to deliver a programme of targeted road safety initiatives across the area. Delivered Bikeability cycle training to 3,000 primary school children and National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme courses to 35,000 clients. Worked with 18 communities/parishes and c200 volunteers to deliver the 2023 Community Speed Watch programme, delivered pre-driver training to 16/17-year-olds, managed c70 school crossing patrols across the county and introduced new 'school streets' safety schemes.

## **CLEAN AND GREEN**

### **Climate Change and Net Zero**

Supported the 'Great Big Green' week to encourage residents to take part in community action to tackle climate change. Climate Change Awareness sessions were delivered in collaboration with our Net Zero Team. We worked with Solar Together to provide residents with the opportunity to reduce energy costs by investing in solar panels and battery storage. Developed a Net Zero toolkit to support communities achieve net zero. Supported work of our Environmental Action volunteers and established electric vehicle car clubs. Focussed neighbourhood planning on net zero and biodiversity gain. Our Adult Learning Service introduced 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD) into the curriculum and now include activities to raise awareness about environmental protection and climate change. Launching a new Cultural Youth Forum and Animating Leicestershire Towns project raising awareness of climate change and material reuse. Scored well for implementing measures to reduce emissions and awareness of climate change risks.

Continue to deliver our Net Zero Council Action Plan to tackle emissions across our operations, with emissions reduced by over 70% since 2008-09. Recently our Energy Team's work has focused on completing a Heat Decarbonisation Plan for the authority and continued work with properties to reduce their gas and electricity consumption. Examples include monitoring the biomass system at County Hall to ensure it is running as efficiently as possible and work at Beaumanor Hall to reduce electricity consumption. In November 2023, we secured £2.56m from Innovate UK to deliver a demonstrator project alongside a consortium of partners. This will deliver several actions within the Net Zero Leicestershire 2050 Action Plan, including development of a Local Area Energy Plan. Developed an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy (EVCS) and secured £222k towards delivery of a Pilot Project and an additional £3.15m towards further charge-point delivery. Running our larger vehicles such as those used in waste haulage operations on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel. Implemented an 18-month trial to dim County streetlights to 30% intensity to reduce carbon emissions and light pollution and reduce energy consumption and costs. Strengthened our supplier obligations in relation to environmental, social and governance matters. The new 'Greenstone Primary' forest school in North-West Leicestershire, set to open in autumn 2025 will also feature green technology such as solar panels and air source heat pumps.

### **Biodiversity**

Led on the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester, and Rutland. Our partnership with local wildlife charity, Nature Spot, continues to boost biodiversity and wildlife by leaving wildflowers on urban roadside verges across the County. Awarded grants to local projects that will improve biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions in Leicestershire. As of July 2024, over 437,000 trees have been planted as part of the Council's Tree for Every Person scheme. Offered free trees and hedges to landowners and farmers in a bid to encourage more planting across Leicestershire. In 2023 alone, we gave away 50,000 trees. Secured £77,000 from Natural England for Swift conservation across the county. Put in place a Countryside Stewardship Woodland Improvement agreement with Defra for woodlands within the Council's parks, promoting excellence in the care and cultivation of woodlands, whilst increasing biodiversity. Secured almost £17,000 in

funding from Natural England and DEFRA for recording and controlling invasive and non-native species. Undertook wildflower meadow restoration in Watermead Park and Broughton Astley and produced a conservation grazing plan for land that is managed by tenants along the River Soar. Gave community groups, parish councils and schools free packs of fruit trees to create new orchards around the county. Implemented our Ash Dieback Action Plan and supported 130 tree wardens. Refreshed our highway design requirements for green infrastructure.

## **Waste Management**

Implemented pledges in the Leicestershire Resources and Waste Strategy including delivering a fly-tipping campaign and action to reduce waste to landfill to less than 5% by 2025. Promoted campaigns to reduce food waste, such as “Love Food, Hate Waste” and several national campaigns by Material Focus, “Bincident” and “Hidden batteries”. Delivered a campaign to reduce contamination in recycling during 2023/24, the national Recycle week and reusable nappy campaigns. Supported Keep Britain Tidy’s “Buy Nothing New Month”. Supported volunteers with litter picking campaigns. Awarded grants to Hinckley Fixers and Coalville CAN, to enable both groups to hold repair events for residents. We resurfaced the Loughborough Waste Transfer Station shed, prolonging the life of an asset that supports efficient disposal of non-recyclable waste. A further three Household Waste and Recycling Sites were fitted with a Rehome Zone to enable residents to reuse unwanted belongings. Nine Household Waste and Recycling Sites were converted to LED lighting to increase safety and to the reduce environmental impact.

## **IMPROVED OPPORTUNITIES**

Over 700 mums/pregnant women joined the Active Mum’s Club (the majority of whom had been inactive). Over 60% of engaged women increased their physical activity levels, which creates a positive start in life for babies. Provided advice, knowledge and understanding of communication and language skills to parents to support their child’s development. Oral health eLearning was launched and Healthy Eating in the Really Young (HENRY) completed its 1<sup>st</sup> year of delivery. Healthy Start continued to provide support to eligible families including vouchers and vitamins. 2250 ‘Bookstart’ packs were delivered to preschool children. Delivered an early year’s fundamental movement programme to support children aged 2 to 5 to develop foundation skills. Produced Leicestershire’s first Maternity and Early Years Strategy and published a Start for Life offer. Delivered family learning programmes in collaboration with schools and Family Hubs targeted areas of deprivation. The introduction of school readiness courses has also supported families during the transition into school.

Selected in the East Midlands region to pilot a range of changes, set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan. 94.8% primary applications secured their first choice and 91.2% secured their first choice of secondary school. The Leicestershire Virtual School became one of the first virtual schools in the country to be granted a platinum ‘Artsmark’ award. A new school, to open in 2025, will offer education based on a Scandinavian idea which promotes learning through contact with nature. Nearly two thousand more children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge than last year, reading 252,035 books and reading or listening to 2,644 e-books. Our Creative Learning Service provided learning opportunities for thousands of young people

across all key stages. Charnwood Museum developed a bespoke offer for children and families with additional and special educational needs – a monthly quiet opening.

Our Children and Family Services were rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Inspectors praised work which led to many families achieving positive changes in their lives. Good progress was made on the development of Leicestershire's Family Hubs programme, following the award of just under £1 million in grant funding. The Family Hubs team has also supported the production of an updated Early Help Strategy. Inspectors praised the work undertaken to re-shape services for children and their families through the development of the new Family Help Service that brings together targeted early help and work with children in need. Our Whole Family Relationship Service continued to provide wrap around early help preventative support to families to become resilient, addressing issues of conflict in families. Our Supporting Families Programme continued to provide high quality, intensive family support to Leicestershire families. Our Adult Learning Service, Family Learning Team has delivered an increased number of programmes to support parents and carers including the introduction of a Resilience Programme. Creative Leicestershire has delivered a programme to provide Family Friendly Spaces in Libraries, which encourage all children to fulfil their potential.

Our Inclusion Service continued to provide advice and signposting for NEET young people in Leicestershire. The service also carried out preventative work with Year 11 pupils who are at risk of becoming NEET when they leave school. We have boosted 'supported living' options – with over 100 new placements created since 2020, enabling people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health needs to learn life skills and live independently. Adult education activities were delivered targeted towards supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups including basic skills, vocational skills and mental health and wellbeing. Also, a discrete programme to support learners with learning difficulties and disabilities supporting approximately 350 learners per annum. We also committed to making being a Care Leaver a protected characteristic.

## **SAFE AND WELL**

### **Community and Consumer Safety and Safeguarding**

Worked with partners through the Community Safety Partnership to ensure that Leicestershire is a safe place to live, visit and work in. Procured a new Anti-Social Behaviour Case Management System, enabling communities to report concerns more easily. 173,617 products, excluding vapes, were removed from or prevented from entering the supply chain via our Trading Standards airport team. Provided advice and guidance surrounding allergens and keeping customers safe. Continued work to raise awareness of scams and supporting vulnerable victims including fitting call blockers. Worked jointly with the police to address doorstep rogue traders. Seizing 10,340 vapes, 3633 cigarettes and 322 packets of hand rolling tobacco.

Our Safeguarding Children Partnership has delivered work on safeguarding babies, child head trauma, mental health and wellbeing, keeping adolescents safe from youth violence and exploitation, diversity, independent and out of school settings, and transitions to adult services. There has been continued positive feedback from the national Child Safeguarding Panel. Our Safeguarding work at the front door to

children's services was praised by Ofsted inspectors for responding quickly and according to the level of need and risk. Provided tiered trauma informed practice training to staff working across Leicestershire. Developed our Harm Outside the Home Strategy in response to escalating concerns around child exploitation. The Vulnerability Hub has continued work with children impacted by child exploitation with 173 referrals where Child Criminal Exploitation was a concern and 118 related to Child Sexual Exploitation. Performance remained strong in maintaining low numbers of first-time entrants to youth justice services.

Handled 1,732 Safeguarding Adults Alerts, from which 796 Safeguarding Enquiries were completed, and 95% out of people spoken to advised that their safeguarding outcomes were met. Progressed priorities on self-neglect, Mental Capacity Act, and domestic abuse through case audits and sharing best practice with staff. Supported the Suicide Audit and Prevention Group (SAPG) and High-Risk Groups. Contributed to the Combating Drugs and Alcohol Partnership to ensure that protection is provided to those most at risk of harm from drug and/or alcohol misuse. The Community Infection Prevention and Control Service also conducted a comprehensive IPC audit in County care homes.

## **Public Health**

We increased organisational awareness around the wider influences on health across services through a training programme for staff as part of our 'Health in All Policies' approach. Were successfully awarded funding for a Health Determinants Research Collaboration to find out more to help tackle the health differences in the county. Local Area Coordinators and our Health Inequalities Team supported engagement with vaccination programmes and work around homelessness prevention. Developed a new innovative adolescent public health service. Our Warm Homes Team continued to provide preventative support and advice to those at risk of struggling with fuel poverty and emergency heating and warm packs to those in crisis. An online sexual health service commenced, offering sexual health testing, treatment and contraception to residents to support good sexual health. Worked closely with the ICB on the development and delivery of Women's Health Hubs, with a pilot hub established in Northwest Leicestershire.

We agreed a new service model for physical activity including specialist evidence-based programmes to support inactive people with existing health conditions to be more active. £2,330,445 was invested in 2023/24 through the Leicestershire Sports Partnership to get people more physically active. £1.43m was invested into 106 local clubs, groups, and organisations across LLR. The Let's Get Moving programme has aimed to motivate every resident to participate in more physical activity. £15,857 has been invested into 40 community groups to support this with 51 Let's Get Moving Champions. Our Weight Management Service has received and triaged over 3500 referrals, and over 500 residents have completed our Level 3 12-week programme. Our Good Food Leicestershire initiative, which works to tackle issues from reducing food poverty to diet related ill-health, was given a silver award from Sustainable Food Places.

In September 2023 we launched a new project to help mental wellbeing. Mental Health Friendly Places trains local organisations and groups to become a mental health friendly place and encourages people to start or support conversations about mental

health. Healthy Workplaces has continued to provide support to the working age population by providing Mental Health First Aid training to staff. Our 'Start a Conversation' approach has broadened to include mental health by developing an eLearning offer, as well as encouraging people to pledge and become champions. Offered 1,000 spaces on courses to support resilience and people's recovery from poor mental health. Agreed a gambling harm needs assessment to explore the populations vulnerable to the harms from gambling.

## **Adult Social Care**

Continued to maintain adult care services to ensure flow through hospitals and provision for new community requests, with a recent reduction in assessment waiting lists. The number of people awaiting a home care service remained very low due to good capacity in the market. Our in-house HART service continued to deliver increased reablement to people, supporting increasing numbers of people in the community and to facilitate hospital discharges. The service now undertakes visits to University Hospitals of Leicester and community hospital wards. Rolled out 'care technology' - over 2,600 pieces of equipment, including falls detectors and GPS location trackers - over the last year, benefiting over 1,000 people. Our initiative to improve healthcare for residents in care homes was shortlisted for a 2024 Digital Award and Health Service Journal award. Agreed a new Living Well with Dementia Strategy to 2028 to support people living with or caring for those with dementia. Our Learning Disabilities Service has focused not only on the number of patients accessing health checks, but also targeted those who had not had a health check for the last two years. There has been a 15% reduction in emergency admissions for falls when compared to the same point last winter, largely due to a newly launched falls assessment service across the County.

A hospital discharge grant for carers was set up to support carers to facilitate the cared for person's discharge from hospital. Between 1 August 2023 to 31 March 2024, 283 successful grant applications were processed totalling £108,301. Our Local Area Coordinator and Health Inequalities teams have continued to engage with communities and helped establish informal carers support groups and helped carers access local support. An initiative to give unpaid carers across Leicestershire all-year-round free entry to two top county attractions. Improvements to make on-line information easier to find, the navigation from our website has a specific section to find all information on "Looking After Someone".

## **GREAT COMMUNITIES**

We agreed a new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to 2028 building on the Council's already strong reputation and work programme around equalities issues. We were shortlisted for Local Authority of the Year for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion by the Local Government Chronicle. Explored the benefits of Asset Based Approaches to make a positive impact in the community. Delivered 27 British Sign Language and Deaf Awareness classes at venues across the county.

Participated in the LLR Hate Strategic Group and created a partnership Hate Crime Hub to reach communities who have been impacted by crime. Launched our own new internal system for recording and acting on hate crime against employees. A Face-to-Face Training Resource Platform was launched from October 2024, and we are

currently taking part in the Wave 3 Pilot. A successful Radicalisation Project Fund bid which is focused on online workshops to raise awareness for parents/carers of teenage boys with neurodiverse conditions. Helped with community issues such as around the use of a local hotel for Asylum Seekers. Promoted greater understanding of different values and customs. Worked closely with partners to support the Homes for Ukraine and Hong Kong Nationals programmes and the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme with language training. Welcomed 543 new citizens of the United Kingdom in Leicestershire.

Implemented a new casework software solution to support elected members to better manage constituents' issues and queries. Supported with engaging communities around Council decisions. Support was given to accessible versions of the Homelessness Prevention Consultation, the Equality, Diversion and Inclusion (EDI) consultation and work around carers and we shared consultation information over social media channels. Worked through our Adults and Communities Engagement Panel and Childrens and Families Voice and Influence Strategy. Established the Community Connectors Network which sees local people working with the service to overcome the challenges of under-representation. Several Parish Councils and Local Groups are taking part in a pilot initiative with the aim of supporting parishes and towns and community organisations to carry out small-scale improvements to their local areas.

Our museum and heritage sites were recognised through the Visit England Visitor Attractions Quality Assurance Scheme. All five sites improved their scores in 2023/24 and three have now reached the gold standard. The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland retained its Accredited Archive Service status awarded by The National Archives. Harborough Museum revealed new displays making the first century, silver gilt Roman Cavalry Helmet the centrepiece of the Hallaton Treasure gallery. The Record Office continued to host the permanent home of the Thomas Cook archive.

Increased the number of active Community Response Plans to 62. Delivered a series of webinars as part of the Building Resilience Together Project. Supported emergency situations, such as the gas outage in Ratby and Kirby Muxloe. This included delivering emergency food parcels and welfare checks. Agreed a new Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and website to support work with communities to prevent and respond to flooding events. Worked together to support communities to get back to normal after unprecedented rainfall across the County. Around 350 properties flooded, and work included setting up rest centres, visiting flooded homes to support and signpost and pumping water from flooded areas. The Warm Homes Team facilitated warm packs to help address those experiencing a fuel crisis. Our Animal Health team continued to assist with information, guidance, signage, and foot patrols to assist with outbreak containment.

Successfully procured a new volunteer management system to improve the way we manage and support our volunteers and volunteer managers. Established a Time-banking approach to offer a skills exchange opportunity, which is currently live across Melton and Charnwood as a pilot. Supported Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations in increasing their visibility, accessing funding and sharing their offers. Supported the network of 34 Community Managed Libraries, with the majority entirely volunteer run. In November 2023, 6 outstanding voluntary groups



in Leicestershire were honoured with The King's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.

Eligible Leicestershire residents who needed help with food or energy costs were able to apply for support following the Council being awarded £7.2m to help people struggling. Our Household Support Fund has given out more than £22m to help residents cope. During October half term a £15 food voucher was given to more than 14,000 children receiving free school meals. Hundreds of Leicestershire families have been supporting Ukrainians who have had to leave Ukraine due to the war with Russia. We supported the refugee hosting process. We secured £1.5m from the national Holiday Activities and Food Programme to support easter holiday clubs for children and young people as part of Leicestershire Holidays Together. In September 2024 our 5<sup>th</sup> community fridge opened, in Lutterworth, to help reduce food waste and support the local community. We began consultation on a new Customer Experience Strategy setting out our vision for our customers experience and commitment to continuously improve, with people able to communicate with our services quicker and easier through modern and accessible ways.