

YOUR COUNCIL DELIVERING YOUR SERVICES

Work+ scheme set to boost skills

We've unveiled new plans to boost our local economy – and our focus is on upping skills and getting people into work.

A new initiative offering comprehensive support with job interviews, digital skills and much more launches online and in libraries this spring.

Work+ will also help people to explore volunteering opportunities and self-employment, improve interview techniques and access digital training and business support.

Our economy has taken a big hit during the pandemic and we've launched a series of initiatives to help reignite it. This includes supporting and extending the Government's Kickstart scheme by creating placements for 16-to-24-year-olds whose job prospects have been most impacted by the pandemic.

Extending superfast broadband to hard-to-reach rural areas, attracting visitors to the area and building a low-carbon and sustainable economy are also woven into our plans.

Council leader, Nick Rushton, said: "Local government has had a big role in managing the impact of this deadly virus. Since March, we've invested almost £4m supporting community groups, hundreds of small businesses and struggling rural

pubs and this has been widely welcomed.

"It's clear the damage to the economy will take some time to repair – and that's why it's important we go further.

"The impact on young people has been profound. And with many unsure about their future, I'm pleased our support will benefit them.

"By receiving practical assistance, we hope they will develop the skills and experience that will be of value to many local businesses.

"Broadband is as essential as other utilities and we remain committed to connecting the county. Although 96 per cent of the county has superfast, it's important everyone benefits from the roll out and we're exploring innovative ways of making this happen.

"We are a 'green' council and that extends to the economy too. Building a low-carbon industry and supporting sustainable companies are vital and we're committed to playing our part in shaping the county's future."



Nick
Rushton

Leading the economic recovery

£750,000
business support fund

Supported
over 100
businesses

94
jobs created

Almost £4 million
of support for communities

234
JOBS
safeguarded

130
rural pubs
each received
£1,000

£250,000
to food banks



Leicestershire Matters is sent to all residents in the county of Leicestershire.

It costs under 10p to print and deliver each copy. To help save money on the distribution, we work closely with Royal Mail. We're sorry if you receive Leicestershire Matters just over the border in a neighbouring county – but by using standard postal routes we actually save £750 per issue.

Contact us

leicestershire.gov.uk

Our website focuses on the most popular things that people want to do online. So next time you need to find or do something with the council, go online at leicestershire.gov.uk

Email

leics-matters@leics.gov.uk

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General enquiries

Mon - Thur: 8.30am - 5pm
Fri: 8.30am - 4.30pm
Telephone: 0116 232 3232

Post

Communications Team,
Room 400, County Hall,
Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8RA



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A message from
Councillor Nick Rushton,
Leader of the Council



March 2021

Dear resident,

When this edition of Leicestershire Matters lands on your doorstep we'll have been fighting coronavirus together for over a year. The first case in Leicestershire was detected on 6 March 2020 and the battle against this disease has been long and unforgiving.

Too many lives have been lost. This loss has been felt across the world, as well as here in our communities, hospitals and care homes. We have sadly lost some of our own members of staff at the county council.

This month, along with the City Mayor, I will open a memorial walk at Watermead Country Park. Funded partly through memorial pledges from city and county residents, it will be a place of remembrance. But it will also be a place where we say thank you to all the people of Leicestershire who have simply kept going through this terrible year.

I want to thank all those essential workers who have kept vital services going. The health and care workforce – looking after vulnerable people. Our emergency services – out day and night to keep us safe. But also the road workers, staff at recycling centres, supermarket staff, delivery drivers and the unseen army of back office staff who support all of this.

I want to thank the volunteers who've continued to step up to help people. The kindness we've witnessed this year has been tremendous.

Lockdown is tough and it has demanded all our resilience and determination. I thank the school staff, parents and carers for all they have done to keep our county's children learning, and most importantly, enjoying their young lives. It has been very hard and very disruptive for our young people.

It is not over yet. Our local testing continues to flush out cases and help people to isolate and protect others.

The NHS vaccine drive continues and I thank NHS staff and all the volunteers making it happen, plus each and every person who gets the jab. You are protecting yourself – but you're also protecting your family, your neighbour, your retired teacher, the list goes on.

In the meantime, stick to the rules. And follow those simple steps: hands, face, space.

Yours faithfully,

Nicholas Rushton

Budget protects frontline services

Weathering the coronavirus crisis and maintaining vital services are the drivers behind our newly-agreed budget.

From April, we will invest in children and family services, adult social care and environment and transport – ensuring services are protected and resourced to cope with the demands placed on them.

Although we can balance the books for two years, our plans show that the difference between income and expenditure will total £23m by 2025, despite £56m of savings having been identified.

And despite our ongoing campaign for fair funding, we remain the lowest funded county in the country.

A £450m capital pot to spend on new roads, school places, recycling initiatives and other infrastructure supporting new homes over the next four years is also in place. The community facilities and roads required over the next 15 years are set to cost many hundreds-of-millions-of-pounds which is likely to put pressure on this budget.

A 4.99 per cent Council Tax rise is included for 2021/22 – including a three per cent levy for adult social care. This equates

to £5.59 a month for a Band D house – or £1.40 a week.

Council Tax is the only significant lever available to us to raise extra money to fund vital services whilst balancing the budget.

Just under 300 people gave their views in a consultation over the winter. This showed broad support for the plan including the proposed growth and savings plans and that 55 per cent supported a Council Tax increase of three per cent or more.

At a glance:

- ▶ **Balanced budget** for next two years
- ▶ **£220m** savings since 2010
- ▶ **£450m** capital pot for new roads, schools and more
- ▶ **£255m** for children and family services and adult social care

Councillor Byron Rhodes, cabinet member for resources and finance, sets out our budget



These are increasingly tough times. And without local government funding reform, we will have even less room for manoeuvre.

But our prudent, long-term approach is paying off. And the difficult decisions we've taken over the last decade – saving £220m – have put us in a better position than many other councils who are floundering.

Asking residents to pay more is not where we want to be. But if this increase was not taken, service cuts would be the inevitable consequence. This isn't a decision we've taken lightly but we have to keep the show on the road. Reducing frontline services isn't an option and higher Council Tax increases were broadly supported by respondents to

our recent budget survey. Unfortunately, Government has pushed us in this direction by already assuming Council Tax is increased when calculating their latest assessments of councils' spending power.

Balancing the books when you're the lowest funded county in the country is difficult. But I believe the budget we've set out delivers the services residents depend on.

Against a backdrop of lack of reform, coronavirus and rising demand for services, there is a danger that we're pushed very close to the edge, but I am confident that the budget strikes the right balance of financial sustainability and service protection.



Choose how you move



A few small changes can make a BIG difference to your wellbeing, your wallet and the environment.

If you're thinking about leaving the car behind and making some of your

local journeys on foot, by bike or, post pandemic, on public transport, Choose How You Move can help you make the switch.

Choose How You Move is a partnership between ourselves and Leicester City Council, funded by the Department for Transport, that aims to increase walking and cycling, as well as reducing single occupancy car use and congestion.

Take a look at our website choosehowyoumove.co.uk where you can find

advice, help and information to support your switch to walking, cycling or public transport for more of your journeys.

We've got loads of information about travelling in and around the county, a journey planner to help you explore the different travel options that are available, free walking and cycling maps and guides to download, public transport routes and timetables, plus advice about e-bikes and much more.

You can also find out how we can help your business or school to reduce its carbon footprint and explore all the ways to travel smarter and greener.

Have your say

There are just a few days left to help shape our future plans for improving walking and cycling for everyone across the county.

We're drawing up a four-year strategy to support people to make more sustainable travel choices to help the environment and improve health and wellbeing.

We're asking for your help to put the blueprint together. And we want to find out how you usually travel, and what barriers you might face in making more of your journeys on foot, or by wheelchair, mobility scooter or bike.

Councillor Trevor Pendleton, cabinet member for highways and transport, said, "We are committed to supporting more people to make sustainable travel choices, which have huge benefits to both physical and mental health, as well as helping the environment by reducing carbon emissions."

"This is all part of our pledge to have net zero carbon emissions for Leicestershire by 2045."

"We're asking people – whether they currently cycle and walk or not – to share their experiences of travelling and tell us what is important to them. We have seen more people cycling and walking during the pandemic, so now is a great time to give us your views."

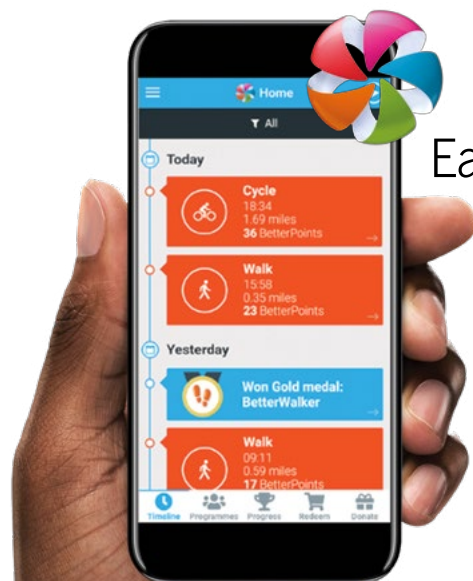
Your feedback will help to drive walking infrastructure for future generations.

Have your say at: leicestershire.gov.uk/cycling-and-walking-survey



BetterPoints

Earn vouchers with smarter travel



BetterPoints is a free app available to download. You can use it to track your cycling, walking and running and earn points as you go. Points can be exchanged for vouchers for retailers such as Tesco, Amazon and John Lewis or even donated to charity.

There are challenges you can join to keep you motivated and regular prize draws to win points. Download the app or visit choosehowyoumove.betterpoints.uk. Use the referral code HEALTHY to start off your account with some free points.

Wheely good roads

**YOUR
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We're making tracks in our bid to become cleaner and greener – by using recycled and carbon friendly products in our roads.

Work to boost three major bypasses in the county is well underway on the A426 in Blaby and the A6 in Market Harborough. Work on the A47 Dodwells Road /Normandy Way in Hinckley is expected to begin this summer.

The project includes resurfacing and strengthening parts of the road and 'green' materials have been used where possible.

On all three projects, 'warm mix' and lower energy materials are being used to lay the courses of asphalt, instead of the traditional hot materials, saving around 22 tonnes of carbon.

At Blaby, a rubber modified asphalt surface which contains 5,000 recycled tyres has been used. The special asphalt is supplied by Tarmac and using it is expected to reduce CO2 emissions and means fewer tyres going to landfill. The 'warm mix' nature of the product is expected to save 10 tonnes of carbon. In all, the three schemes will save 32

tonnes of carbon – the equivalent to the emissions generated by travelling over 165,000 miles in a standard car.

Also at Blaby, new environmentally friendly road markings are to be trialled. The new product, supplied by MEON, is being installed northbound on the bypass, while the southbound carriageway will be marked with traditional thermoplastic road markings, meaning that a direct comparison can be made on the wear-and-tear of both products.

The improvements include maintenance and have been carried out using some of the £5m cash from the 'challenge fund' allocated by the Department for Transport to assist with coronavirus recovery.

The trial is in line with our pledge to become a carbon neutral council by

2030 and to achieve net zero across the county by 2045 – five years sooner than the Government target.

It is not just the new products which are helping to cut emissions – all of the bituminous material removed from the carriageway construction will be recycled elsewhere. The base asphalt being used contains 25 per cent recycled asphalt and the surface layer 10 per cent.

The three projects will together generate over 21,000 tonnes of carriageway material available for recycling and the new materials used on the scheme will incorporate approximately 3,700 tonnes of recycled material.

Councillor Trevor Pendleton, cabinet member for highways and transport, said: "Using recycled and carbon friendly components for our road improvements emphasises our commitment to improving the environment.

"I am delighted to see this innovative scheme which will benefit three different parts of the county."

The wider improvements in the three areas are expected to be completed by late summer.

Aggregate Industries are the principal contractors on the Blaby scheme, with Hanson on the Market Harborough scheme.



We're here to help

Lockdown has been tough for many and this includes Leicestershire's children, young people and their families.

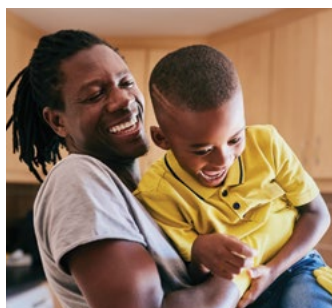
We've been working with our amazing volunteers, local businesses, partners and community-minded residents to try and ease the load and help young people and their families stay connected.

Last spring, more than 1,800 food parcels were distributed to families in need by our Children and Families Wellbeing Service and at Christmas, staff and volunteers led local community projects. None of this would have been possible without an army of generous businesses, individuals, schools and volunteers who contributed.

Councillor Deborah Taylor, cabinet member for children

and families, said: "Living through this pandemic has been tough, especially for many of our children and their families.

"But what shines through is the generosity and community spirit across the county. We are hugely grateful for the support from local businesses, people, groups and schools to help our families."



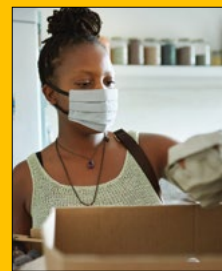
We have helped our children, young people and their families by:

► Keeping close contact with all our children in care and care leavers, particularly those care leavers who live alone. We've financed mental health support for young people who don't meet the threshold for children and adolescent mental health services.

► Distributing nearly 900 laptops to help with homeschooling for children identified as in need.

► Offering guidance and support to our schools as they offer homeschooling and education for key worker and vulnerable children in class – and to our early years providers.

► Running a click-and-collect service from our four 'community fridges' at our Children and Families Wellbeing Centres for local residents – thanks to generous donations from local businesses and time given by volunteers.



► Planning our holiday activities and food programme for the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays – available to families eligible for free school meals.

► Ensuring our foster carers are well supported – family activity hampers were sent to all fostering families as a thank you.

► Embracing technology to stay connected. Our Children in Care Council and the Children in Care Choir have been meeting virtually, we held a virtual ceremony for the Lord Lieutenant's Awards and hosted an online 'Leicestershire's Got Talent' competition for children in care.

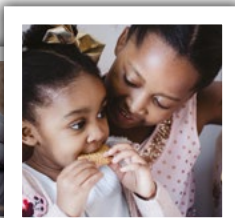
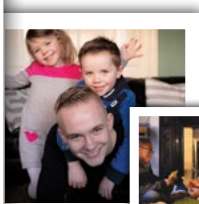




Hi there! We are the Heritage Youth Forum...

We're on a mission to find out what life has really been like for young people across Leicestershire during the past 12 months. The pandemic has affected everyone, it's part of our lives now and it will become a part of our history. That's why we've launched the project #The2020LeicsReview so that we can capture young people's experiences and share

them with future generations. If you or someone you know is aged 13 to 25 you can get involved. We're asking young people to share their experience by completing our survey or joining our Instagram campaign. For more information about how to get involved visit cultureleicestershire.co.uk/projects/youthforum



Could you open your heart and home to a child in care?

Anyone who wants to find out more about fostering or adoption is invited to attend our virtual information events.

The online events are held monthly via Microsoft Teams. You'll hear from the fostering and adoption team about the application process and from our foster carers and adopters about their experiences.

Councillor Deborah Taylor, cabinet member for children and families, said: "We hope that the virtual events will help people to get the information they need from the comfort and safety of their homes."



Deborah Taylor

"Our events are relaxed and informal and a great opportunity to find out more. Even if you're not ready to foster or adopt now, the team are here to provide the information for you to take things at your own pace."

The next fostering event will be on Tuesday, 6 April at 6.30pm, with an adoption event to follow on Thursday, 22 April at 6.30pm.

To see all 2021 dates or to book your place online, visit fosteringleicestershire.com or adoptionleicestershire.co.uk

If you'd like to speak to the team about fostering or adoption, call 0116 305 0505 or email fosteringandadoption@leics.gov.uk

Lockdown learning

Thousands of young people across the county have been enjoying free music lessons during the lockdown, thanks to Leicester-Shire Schools Music Service (LSMS).

Throughout February and beyond, the service is hosting an exciting programme of daily music-making sessions that young people can access for free.

Streaming live on their YouTube channel from 3.30pm onwards every weekday, the sessions aim to help young people continue to engage in music-making while learning at home.

Within the first few days, the videos had more than 1,750 views and as the programme went on, more parents and teachers got involved.

Zainab Patel, teacher at Charnwood Primary School, said: "A huge thank you to everyone working extremely hard to provide these wonderful music resources for our students. The students at Charnwood are engaging really well with the resources being provided by LSMS."

We're all aware of how lockdowns have affected mental health. Research suggests that music can stimulate the body's natural feelgood chemicals and can help energise our mood while providing an outlet to help take control of emotions.

To find out more about the free music sessions on offer, visit leicestershiremusicshub.org/daily-lockdown-youtube-sessions



Abanazar the Musical Wizard teaches the weekly Body Percussion session

Farndon Fields Primary School
in Market Harborough which
has been expanded
(Photo by YMD Boon)

**YOUR
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Open for business

Despite the pandemic, more and more companies are setting up shop at our business parks. As well as generating more than 320 jobs, the sites are energy-efficient – with Airfield scooping a coveted regional prize – and attracting companies with a green ethos, such as Thrift+, an eco-friendly firm selling unwanted clothes online. This is supporting our pledge to tackle climate change and build a low-carbon economy.

► **Airfield Business Park in Market Harborough** is nearly full with nine of the 12 units now let. One is under offer and the other two 14,000 sq ft units are available. Contact: Budworth Hardcastle on 01536 483400 and Reg Pollock at APB on 0116 254 0382.

**FOR
RENT**



► **Apollo Court in Coalville** is thriving with most units now occupied. Sixteen units are let with the final one now with solicitors.



Building for the future

Leicestershire is growing – and we're building strong communities, creating jobs and boosting skills.

We secured over £17m of housing developer cash last year to help fund new school places, road improvements and other important community facilities.

We also:

- Invested nearly £5.5m refurbishing or creating extra classrooms in 22 schools, buying new books and equipment at 25 libraries and wide-ranging road improvements.
- Negotiated another £10m.
- Secured £45m of contributions over the next five years – this is allocated to projects and includes over £30m for education.

This includes a £1.5m scheme to create new classrooms and more space at Dovebank Primary in Nailstone, a £3m project involving a new classroom block

at Hugglescote Primary and £1.7m improvements including extra classrooms at St Cuthbert's in Great Glen.

New homes are needed across Leicestershire – with the community facilities required costing many hundreds-of-millions-of-pounds over the next 15 years – and we work closely with developers to agree contributions from them known as section 106 agreements.

Councillor Trevor Pendleton, cabinet member, said: "Securing funds from housing developers is vital. Not only does it reduce the burden on the tax payer and the pressure on our budget, it ensures the developer delivers the right schools, roads and more.



**Trevor
Pendleton**

"This council is helping to shape where new homes are built, focusing on the environment and ensuring the right infrastructure is included. By supporting communities and generating employment, we're building for tomorrow."

JOB

We're recruiting!

Gain
NEW
skills

Boost your skills – and your horizons

Helping people secure jobs is a priority – and through our adult learning courses you can get the support you need to reach your job goals.

Offering a wide range of online adult learning courses, we can support you to improve your essential skills and qualifications from home. Many of our courses are free to all learners and if you receive certain benefits or are on a low income, you can also claim a 70 per cent reduction on fee-paying courses across the service.

We also offer a free and confidential advice service to help you decide your next steps in learning or work.

For more information on our full range of courses, visit us online at leicestershire.gov.uk/golearn or call us on FREEphone 0800 988 0308 today. Whatever your goals are, GoLearn Adult Learning Service is here to support you.

GoLearn!

Leicestershire Adult Learning Service

Adult social care and public health

There are long-term and temporary positions available, full time and part time. Dependent on the role, experience isn't always necessary. Often these roles come with on-the-job training, as well as other associated benefits of working for us.

Care support roles

Our staff in direct support roles help people to regain independence by giving them the opportunity, motivation and confidence to re-learn or regain daily living skills that have been lost as a result of illness, accident or disability.



New starter, Pip

MEET OUR STAFF:

Pip started her role as a social worker in August and believes the training and flexibility offered by the council has been brilliant. She said: "I must admit it's been really strange joining a team remotely, but with all the technology in place to stay connected I felt so supported through my induction.

"I'm lucky to have a supportive boss. And her flexibility – and the flexibility of the role – has been the best part because, let's face it, life isn't neatly packaged."

To Pip, seeing a positive outcome for our residents and knowing you have played a part in improving their lives is the most rewarding part and she would encourage anyone thinking of a challenging, yet rewarding role to look at what we have to offer.

KICKSTART SCHEME

We're helping young people get into work by supporting the Government's Kickstart scheme.

We're creating 12-month placements – six months more than the national initiative – for 16-to-24-year-olds. This age group has been most impacted by the pandemic and by teaming up with Leicester City Council, we're planning to create a range of posts.

Due to launch this spring, we're planning to recruit to roles which are suitable for different skill sets, including in adult social care and environment and transport, and are keen to encourage applications from care leavers and people with disabilities.

For more information on all our current job vacancies visit leicestershire.gov.uk/jobs

“We're committed to an inclusive workplace”



Supporting people and keeping communities safe

Enjoying independent lives

Over the past 15 months, we've secured eight properties across the county which will enable 56 adults with mental health needs and/or a learning disability to move from residential care into supported living.

And the support for independence doesn't stop there, with plans in place to purchase more properties – including £5.4m for the development of a specialist dementia care centre in Coalville.

A shining example is our £1m independent living scheme at Great Glen, known as Brookfield, where residents are settling in well to their new home.

Four new properties are also on track to welcome residents at New Ashby Court, Hollow Road and Forest Road in Charnwood, as well as Ashby Road in north west Leicestershire.

Councillor Richard Blunt, cabinet member for adult social care, said; “For a lot of the residents who have moved, or will move into these properties, it will be the first time they've lived out of residential care and the first time some have had more than

just a bedroom to themselves. I am so proud of the part we have played in this exciting next step in their lives. I wish everyone the very best in their new homes.

“Properties such as Brookfield, New Ashby Court, and Hollow Road represent a small part of our huge commitment to



investing in adult social care across the county. We are developing housing for older people, adults with learning

and physical disabilities and adults with mental health needs as a priority.

“We are committed to providing the best care that we can across the county. Wellbeing is at the heart of the work we do and living in suitable accommodation is a vital part of this.”

Schemes like these allow people to live with greater independence, to have choice and control over where they want to live,

and who they want to live with, whilst also reducing costs – all while receiving the support they need from the onsite care professionals.

Creating homes in our communities means that families can stay close to their loved ones as they work towards living more independently.

We'll also continue to look at other potential sites which may require capital investment in the future.



Richard Blunt



YOUR COUNCIL DELIVERING YOUR SERVICES

What we've done:

- ▶ Helped support over 2,400 people to be discharged from hospital between October 2020 and January 2021.
- ▶ We are supporting 7,300 adults aged over 18 with services such as home care, day services, direct payments and supported living – at the end of January 2021.
- ▶ Supported 12 people with a learning disability into independent living between October 2020 and January 2021 – with a further 20 predicted moves in the next three months.

What we are planning:

- ▶ Investing in property to support people with mental health needs and/or a learning disability to live independently – including £5.4m for a specialist dementia unit in Coalville.
- ▶ Investing in assistive technology to support residents to be able to stay at home safely.

TRADING STANDARDS

Make sure you buy safely online

Our Trading Standards team is advising people shopping online to stay safe by buying from reputable traders.

Online selling platforms may offer goods from sellers who have not carried out rigorous checks to make sure goods are safe – and some may be based overseas and unfamiliar or ignorant of UK laws.

We regularly check imports from the Far East arriving at East Midlands Airport and last year, stopped more than 260,000 unsafe items from being sold in the UK. This work is nationally funded by the Government and we work with Border Force to target unsafe imports.

Some extremely dangerous items have been found, including hair straighteners that set alight when tested, toys for young children with small parts that

could be a choking hazard, cosmetics containing dangerous chemicals, jewellery containing toxic heavy metals and small electrical appliance chargers that could cause electrocution or a fire as they are so badly made.

Many of these dangerous items are destined to be sold on large online platforms like Amazon and eBay.



Trading Standards advice at a glance:



Check reviews for online sellers – especially for items which are being sold much cheaper than elsewhere.



Check where the seller is based – some sellers are outside the UK and may not adhere to the UK safety rules. If you have concerns, it may be best to buy somewhere else.



You may have to pay more at high street shops – but buying there helps keep your high street alive and can ensure that your goods are safe.

In 2020

Leicestershire Trading Standards received over 500 reports about scams and doorstep crime

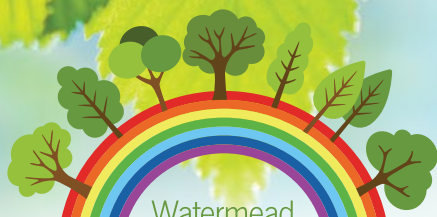
427

complaints about scam emails, letters and telephone calls

76

complaints regarding doorstep crime

Making a green county



Watermead Memorial WALK

In just two months, local people and businesses have helped raise the £60,000 needed to create a tree-lined memorial walk at Watermead Country Park.

More than 170 individuals and organisations stepped forward to support Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council's proposals for the project.

Council leader, Nick Rushton, said: "In December we set out to deliver a project that would bring the spirit of our communities even closer together – creating a memorial walk that would help acknowledge the impact coronavirus has had on everyone's lives.

"People have been truly tested by this pandemic, physically and mentally, and we are humbled to have witnessed so many people declaring their willingness to work together once again to make this project possible.

"The new environmentally-conscious walk will serve many across local communities, acting as a space to reflect on the past, while looking to the future.

"I would personally like to extend thanks to everyone who supported this project. It really does reflect the strength and positivity of our county and city during very difficult and challenging times."

Now that the funding has been secured, planting the 58 hornbeam, elm, oak, aspen and birch trees that will form the trail is underway.

We're planting a tree for every person in Leicestershire



Planting
700,000
new trees in
Leicestershire

We've pledged to plant the equivalent of a tree for every resident of Leicestershire – 700,000 trees in all. The initiative could create areas of new woodland across the county and see new trees planted in our towns and green spaces to help improve our landscapes.

Leicestershire has low woodland and canopy cover, which we want to increase throughout by working with partner organisations to plant trees in our streets and urban and rural green spaces – this will also help to replace trees lost to diseases such as ash dieback.

Ash dieback is damaging the UK's ash population and the long-term effect could see a loss of up to 90 per cent of ash trees across the county.

To counter any lasting impact on our woodland landscapes, biodiversity and wildlife, we are continuing to work with

the Woodland Trust to offer free trees to farmers and rural landowners. We're also committed to an ongoing partnership with the National Forest Company to develop a tree planting scheme on county farmland – and increasing the number of replacement trees within the highway to conserve Leicestershire's trees for future generations.

Councillor Blake Pain, deputy leader and cabinet



Blake Pain

member for environment, said: "We want to be ambitious in our plan

around trees – which are so vital for our existence. By planting a tree for every person, we can continue to conserve and enhance Leicestershire's landscapes for the enjoyment of our residents and visitors. We'll also protect important wildlife habitats and biodiversity and can lessen the effects of problems such as ash dieback."

Green grant sees project soar

Community groups and organisations are being urged to apply for a SHIRE Environment Grant of up to £3,000 to support the local environment and reduce household waste.

One project that has benefited from the scheme is Stanford Ringing Group, a group of volunteers based at Stanford Reservoir near South Kilworth. The group is licensed to ring wild birds but until recently, had limited data about the breeding numbers of endangered ground nesting species.

The group applied for a SHIRE Environment Grant of just over £1,100 to purchase a thermal imaging camera, which uses heat to form an image of birds and mammals in total darkness and has helped them to ring two new species.

David Neal, treasurer for Stanford Ringing Group, said: "With this new revolutionary method of obtaining nocturnal data of birds and wildlife, we will be able to support our local farmers and community by providing them with important data."

Councillor Blake Pain, deputy leader and cabinet member for action on climate change, added: "Leicestershire's collective mission is to reduce our overall greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of household waste we produce, while also increasing our biodiversity throughout the county.

"The SHIRE Environment Grant enables community groups and organisations to make fantastic environmental changes and helps Leicestershire towards its goal of becoming a net zero carbon emissions place to live by 2045. Everyone can play their part in achieving this and I would encourage more groups to apply for a grant."

The deadline for the next round of funding is Friday, 25 June. Find out more and apply at leicestershirecommunities.org.uk



With most of us spending much more time at home, and potentially creating more waste, it's really important that we get our recycling right. Here are our top tips so that you can do your bit:



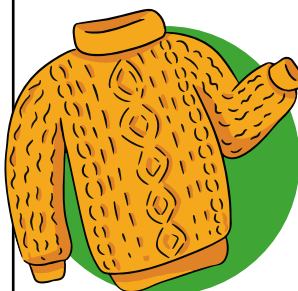
Rinse, dry, recycle

One of the main issues we see in recycling is food packaging that still contains drink or food residue. It's really important to rinse off pots, tubs, jars and bottles and let them dry before putting them in your recycling bin.



Keep cardboard dry

With an increase in home deliveries many of us have had more cardboard than usual to dispose of over the last few months. To ensure as much cardboard as possible is recycled, please keep it somewhere dry prior to collection. Flattened cardboard can be placed in or next to your recycling collection and will be collected if it is dry. Please check details with your local district council.



Don't bin your clothes

Clothing and textiles can't be recycled with other types of mixed recycling. If your district provides a separate bag for clothing and textile collections, please use it. If not, the best way to dispose of your unwanted clothing is by donating it to a local charity for reuse or recycling at textile banks. You can also take clothes to recycling and household waste sites in Leicestershire – details of all sites and how to book a slot can be found at leicestershire.gov.uk/waste

For more tips on how you can reduce, reuse and recycle right, visit lesswaste.org.uk

Turn your green waste into tasty crops
Compost bin

Available in two sizes:
220 litre: £12 | 330 litre: £13
Order today at getcomposting.com



from only
£12*

*Prices correct until 31 March 2021

It's down to us to control coronavirus

KEEP THE RATE DOWN IN LEICESTER LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND COVID-19

Covid testing

Getting tested and self-isolating are still essential in stopping the spread of coronavirus and protecting your friends, family and community. There are **two types** of test available to people who live and work in Leicestershire.

► **If you have any of these symptoms book a test at nhs.uk/coronavirus and self-isolate immediately:**



High temperature



Continuous new cough



A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

► **If you don't have symptoms**

Not everyone who has coronavirus will have symptoms. Tests for eligible people who don't have symptoms are available across Leicestershire. To see if you are eligible, and to book a test, visit leicestershire.gov.uk/covidtest

We've opened up a number of test centres offering quick results and enabling our key workers to continue their vital jobs.

Councillor Lee Breckon, cabinet member for health, said: "We're pleased that so many of our key workers are booking at the sites we have opened so far. The tests will help protect them and the wider community – and ultimately, help stop the spread of the virus."



Lee Breckon

The Covid-19 vaccine – are you ready?

Vaccinations are now being rolled out across Leicestershire. Having the vaccination is one of the best defences and our way out of the pandemic and current restrictions.

When it's your turn to be vaccinated you'll be contacted and invited to book an appointment at a local vaccination site – this could be a doctor's surgery, hospital, pharmacy, local community centre or council building. Please do not contact your GP practice or hospital to enquire about booking a vaccination before you are invited.

To help you prepare for the vaccine, take a look at these frequently asked questions:

Q: Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

Q: Does the vaccine affect fertility?

There is no evidence that the vaccine affects fertility.

Q: Should people who have already had Covid-19 get vaccinated?

Yes. The MHRA has looked at this and decided that getting vaccinated is just as important for those who have already had coronavirus as it is for those who haven't.

Q: Do the Covid-19 vaccines contain animal products?

The MHRA has confirmed that the AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine do not contain any components of animal origin.

Q: What are the side effects of the vaccine?

So far, millions of people have been given a vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very, very rare. No long-term complications have been reported. Most side effects of the vaccine are mild and

should not last longer than a week, such as a sore arm where the needle went in, feeling tired, a headache, feeling achy or feeling or being sick. You can take painkillers, such as paracetamol, if you need to.

Q: Can you catch coronavirus from the vaccine?

You cannot catch it from the vaccine because it does not contain any of the live virus.

Q: After I have had the vaccine will I still need to follow social distancing advice?

You will still need to follow the guidance to continue to protect yourself, your family, friends and colleagues. No vaccine is 100 per cent effective so you should follow the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about: practise social distancing, wear a face mask and wash your hands carefully and frequently. Follow the current guidance gov.uk/coronavirus

For more information about the vaccine and who is currently eligible visit nhs.uk/CovidVaccine



Key workers share their covid experience

Across Leicestershire, NHS staff continue to work under the pressures of coronavirus. But for two local health workers, Mel and Nyree, the effects of the virus have been personal too. They share their stories here.



"The day we called the ambulance, I felt that I was going to die," recalls **Nyree, 50, a registered nurse** from Syston. Within 60 minutes of being admitted to hospital with coronavirus, Nyree's oxygen levels plummeted – and she then developed sepsis.

Months on, Nyree's persistent tiredness and shortness of breath have meant that she can no longer work in a hospital: "I can't physically manage a 12.5 hour shift whilst wearing a face mask – so I'm now working as a nurse in the community."

Mel, 45, an ambulance care assistant

from Barrow upon Soar, was also hospitalised with severe coronavirus symptoms and put on oxygen. Over half-a-year later, her health and lifestyle remain affected: "My asthma has not settled back to what it was before. I don't mix with other people, and I restrict how much time I spend with my daughter.

"We need to stick to the rules," Mel urges. "Some people are saying it's not real, but it is. You know, I've seen people who have been in intensive care."



To protect yourself and others follow this guidance:



Hands



Face



Space

SPECIAL PROJECT



Conversations about Covid

Share your stories

The last year has been a really difficult time for everyone, with uncertainty, stressful change and time apart from those we love.

It has also been a time of discovery as we have had to find new ways of keeping happy and in touch with friends and family, and had time to try something new.

We want to hear about your experience of the last year – of the downs as well as the ups, the things that have made you laugh and the things that made you cry. So much is different, and still changing and we want to know what this has looked and felt like for you. Tell us your Covid story.

You might want to tell us about what has changed the most for you – for the better or for the worse, what you have discovered about yourself and your community

over the last year, or what you are looking forward to most about life after the pandemic.

We'd like you to share your stories with us – through video, writing, audio or by using #covidconversations on social media.

We hope to keep collecting stories and talking to people about their experience throughout 2021 so that we can really understand how the pandemic has affected Leicestershire residents and businesses. The stories will also be stored in the Record Office as an archive of this unique time.

Find out more about how to send us a submission at leicestershire.gov.uk/covidconversations

You can also email conversations@leics.gov.uk, or send submissions by post to the address on page 2.

**VOLUNTEER
Litter
Picking**

Supported by
Leicestershire
County Council

Boost for litter blitz

Local 'litter wombles' do a fantastic job keeping our county clean and tidy –

and a new scheme is providing practical help to support them.

Across Leicestershire, there are hundreds of groups of volunteers who collect litter from our streets, parks, verges and other public spaces.

Getting the right equipment is one of the challenges they face – and that's why we're offering groups road signs and hi-vis jackets to help keep them safe, and extra-long litter pickers to reach under bushes and hedgerows.

Our initiative will not only help to keep Leicestershire grot-free and boost our environment but also help increase recycling rates and raise money for important charities.

Councillor Louise Richardson, cabinet member for communities, said: "Litter wombles provide a vital community service. And the benefits are numerous – litter-picking keeps our public spaces clean, aids wildlife, promotes walking and increases recycling.

"That's why we want to support our local groups by giving them the

equipment they need. It's a great example of how we can support and empower our communities to make a difference in their area.

"I applaud the work of our wombles and hope that our support bolsters their brilliant work."

We can provide groups with six-foot litter pickers, hi-vis coats and easy-to-transport, lightweight fold-up signs – to keep people safe on roadside verges.

To find out how to get this equipment for your group, visit leicestershire.gov.uk/litter-picking or email community.litter@leics.gov.uk



Louise Richardson

Local Elections 2021



**Use your
vote on
Thursday
6 May**



Have your say this May!

By voting in the county council election on 6 May 2021 you can help shape Leicestershire's future and have your say on how the services the council provides are delivered during the next four years.

**To vote you must be on the electoral register.
Register to vote by Monday, 19 April to make your
vote count at gov.uk/register-to-vote**

If you want to vote by post this year, you can request a postal ballot by contacting your district council:
leicestershire.gov.uk/find-your-district-council

For registering or postal votes, you can also call your district council:

- Blaby District Council: 0116 275 0555
- Charnwood Borough Council: 01509 263151
- Harborough District Council: 01858 828282
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council: 01455 238141
- Melton Borough Council: 01664 502502
- North West Leicestershire District Council: 01530 454545
- Oadby and Wigston Borough Council: 0116 288 8961

For more details,
visit leicestershire.gov.uk/election2021

**Census Day is coming
Sunday 21 March 2021
Find out more at census.gov.uk**

**census
2021**

