

**Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council**  
**Annual Report of Council Leader**

The circumstances in which I present this report are vastly different from when this administration was formed in 2007 but I am pleased to be able to report that by adapting to changing circumstances and by care and diligence the Council and indeed this community are being steered through the recession.

The Council exists for the community and it is always foremost in the minds of all of us, staff and Members, to ensure that we serve that community to the best of our collective abilities. That challenge has never been greater than during this year when we have to respond to the deteriorating economic crisis in which so many previously held certainties have been put to the test.

We have risen to the challenge through handling the increase in benefits, working closely with the CAB, setting up a First Response Team with the CAB and the Job Centre Plus Office, providing information and advice on our Beating the Recession website, maintaining our momentum in the economic development of the area and the development of a complementary Anti-Poverty Strategy which came forward from the Scrutiny Commission together with plans for a Credit Union.

To underline these efforts we have maintained our position as continuing to deliver the lowest Council Tax in the County, maintaining high quality services and avoiding widespread redundancies, no small part as a result of the discipline and restraint shown by all staff and Members. This Council has readily agreed to pay its own invoices within 10 days as part of its contribution to the local economy and I would also like to mention that Council Taxpayers are playing their part by ensuring that there is a very high percentage of people who pay the Council Tax early or on time.

We have given additional support to our priority neighbourhoods by the emerging provision of local “touchdown” points which are part of the flexible working arrangements and by the introduction of a third

Community House in Barwell to add to the two existing houses in Wykin and at Peggs Close in Earl Shilton. The success of the community house network was underlined on July 30<sup>th</sup> when the Lord Lieutenant presented the Queens Award to the volunteers at Wykin.

In the rural areas the Parish and Community Initiative Fund is now fully established and now fully used to secure much needed local improvements. The recent extension of the Community Centre at Markfield, fully supported by this Council, has been an acknowledged success.

Despite the economic climate we continue to make progress with a number of specific projects. In the last few days the Development Agreement with the Tin Hat Partnership has been signed thus paving the way for a full planning application on the long awaited Bus Station redevelopment next spring. On the Atkins site planning permission has been secured for the new College and for the Atkins building itself which will be occupied, alongside ourselves, with Creative Hinckley from May next year. We are about to commence work on the building of the Hinckley Club for Young People a culmination of partnership working which resulted in a successful bid for £4.5 million which will help pay for an exciting new centre for young people and the wider community. Finally we have secured financial support for the revitalised Greenfields development, which at one point was under threat, to ensure both much needed additional employment prospects and a further revenue stream into the public coffers.

We have worked hard to ensure that local people have been able to retain local bus services which were under threat just a few weeks ago. These have now been secured until March 2011 and of course we will be working to ensure continuing services after that date as part of our ambitions to improve public transport in all its forms as well as our commitment to walking and cycling. Our work with the Tourism Partnership and with the County Sports Partnership have both been shown to be a great benefit to the physical and economic health and well-being of our local communities, securing investment and involvement well in excess of other parts of the county.

Our Market continues to buck the national trend by increasing its use and the footfall in the town, maintaining a strong basis for work we

strive to do in support of the of the Town Centre Partnership to secure the gains promised as a result of the BID, the Business Improvement District, which was never more important to the town and district than in the current economic circumstances.

All these developments have been pushed forward at the same time as we have secured a further Beacon Award, jointly with the Police, Street Pastors and Taxi Marshalls, for our work in ensuring a safe and vibrant night time economy, now given further support by the adoption of the Designated Public Places Order; a Silver Award from Cleaner Britain; and a Gold Communications/Reputation Award from the LGA for our recycling initiatives. These awards are for the work our staff do on the ground, achieved for work they do as part of their normal practice; not for something done specifically to win an award. For that reason, these awards are of even more importance and significance; they are for the high standards which are now the norm with this Council, not the exception!

This was emphasised most notably by our securing the rating of “Excellent” from the Audit Commission in 2008. That rating recognised the efforts we had invested over four years to embed a culture of success and achievement, based on our being a high-performing Authority; leading the way for Districts locally on issues such as: services for children, young people and their families (safeguarding and integrated services), supporting a thriving and vibrant Youth Council (both championed by Cllr Smith), encouraging the significant voluntary sector in the Borough, promoting and supporting local developments in the Arts (Cllr Bannister), progressing the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (despite the great difficulties faced in addressing this important issue), a newly-installed Member Champion (Cllr Inman) and Management Lead for Older People; and continuous improvement in our corporate performance, despite reductions in staff necessary to meet our ever-diminishing (in real terms) budget.

It is a great credit to our staff that they continue to meet the increasing expectations and demands placed on them, even to the extent that they have volunteered to take a temporary reduction in pay (at all levels in the organisation) to assist the immediate and anticipated longer term difficulties which we will face, in common with

most other (if not all) District Councils across the country in the next five or so years.

Our budget position for the next two years is secure. We have fully resolved the position on the HRA Capital programme and have ensured that our revenue finances are in good order. Nevertheless, all the indications from national commentators and politicians of all parties is that the position after April 2011 will be extremely difficult, particularly for District Councils, like ourselves. To that end preparation is rightly already underway for the period after 2011, with the aim of ensuring that the finances of this Council continue to be on a sound footing for the longer term, with cost-effective and efficient services a continuing priority, available for the local community. There is no doubt that we will have to make painful decisions along the way to 2011, but we shall do so in full knowledge of the priorities of our communities and the funding available to support whatever we choose to do. Our commitment is to make those decisions openly and transparently, so that everyone is aware of the limits under which we will be operating.

For the future, our priorities must be to achieve:

- completion of the Bus Station site development - 2014;
- delivery of Goddard Building development for the Council and completion of building work by the College - 2012;
- completion of new Hinckley Club for Young People facility (with My Place funding) - 2010;
- continued programme of parks and open spaces developments, in line with the Green Spaces Strategy;
- increase delivery from partnership/joint working with other councils, as well as building on our strong partnership base locally (LSP, Community Safety Partnership, Town Centre Partnership);
- further improvements in quality and performance of our own services, building on our already very high performance;
- support for the practical success of the Hinckley BID;
- completion of the work on the LDF Core Strategy and associated Site Allocations;

- ensuring that our housing remains “decent” (public and private) in the longer term;
- delivery of the Anti-Poverty and Economic Development Strategies.

None these tasks will be easy; indeed, they will now be harder than they would have been even twelve months ago. But, that only reinforces the reason why many of us entered local politics and local government in the first place: to make a positive difference and improve the quality of life for individuals and for our communities. If we retain that guiding ethos, as I am sure we will, we will secure those goals for the people of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough in the very difficult years to come.

Cllr David Bill  
Leader  
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council  
August 2009

**COUNCIL**  
**11 AUGUST 2009**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Agenda Item 7 (a) Question raised by Mr. A.J. Smith and addressed to Mr. S. L. Bray

“Can the Executive Member for Culture, Leisure and Regeneration please explain how the Council is supporting the local tourism industry in the current economic climate?”

Response from Mr. S. L. Bray

- “We have built strong relationships with the larger tourist attractions and accommodation providers who have formed the Board of the Tourism Partnership in order to assist the tourism offer generally – these include Twycross Zoo, Mallory Park, Bosworth Battlefield, Barcelo Hotels, Sketchley Grange and Premier Inn.
- A summer campaign called Holidays at Home was devised to reflect the current economic climate and the fact that many people are staying at home or visiting friends and family. This highlighted the diverse range of things to do and places to visit we are lucky enough to have in the borough
- The Tourism Partnership has developed a wider database of members and with their subscriptions has produced the Hinckley and Bosworth Visitor Guide, a copy of which you have all received.
- At a district level, Hinckley and Bosworth stands out as having relatively high proportions of employment in tourist based industries (10%) compared to 7% across the sub region.
- We are confident that we have the necessary infrastructure to cope with the current economic climate and that is demonstrated by the strong leadership shown by Steve Wegerif, the Chair of the Tourism Partnership, Council membership on the board and officer support.”

(b) Question raised by Mrs. S. Sprason and addressed to Mr. S.L. Bray

“The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for planning failed to make members aware of the 269-page appendix to the report No. C14, presented to the Council meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2009. It is also not referenced in that report, is this yet another example of this administration attempting to hide information from residents of this Borough and elected members?”

### Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

“In response to Councillor Sprason’s question, I can only refer her to the report which I presented at Council on 29 July 2009.

In the section headed ‘Purpose of Report’, there is the statement “The Core Strategy Submission Policy 15 revision on affordable housing is attached to this report as Appendix A, the Sustainability Appraisal and the Affordable Housing Viability Assessment Report by Three Dragons are available on the Council’s website and in the Members’ Room”.

It has been the practice of this Council for some time to place large documents, such as the Sustainability Appraisal, on the website and in the Members’ Room and to make reference to them in the report as was done on this occasion.”

### (c) Question raised by Mrs. S. Sprason and addressed to Mr. S.L. Bray

“Can the Executive Member for planning give assurances that the Three Dragons viability assessment report commissioned by his administration, the report quotes ‘to seek developer contributions to fund community schemes, examples: - educational provision, leisure provision, public transport improvements, etc, is deliverable, as it states that the infrastructure to accommodate housing in the rural settlements will only be delivered with developer contributions?’”

### Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

“Before specifically answering Councillor Mrs Sprason’s question, I thought it would be useful to refer to the Concise Oxford Dictionary which contains the following definitions:-

‘Contribute’ 1. to give for a common purpose or fund 3. to be partly responsible for

‘Contribution’ 1. the act of contributing

Thus, the Three Dragons’ Report is not implying that developers will pay in full for the necessary infrastructure improvements but that they will be required to make an appropriate contribution.

Indeed, if Councillor Mrs Sprason had taken the trouble to read the Infrastructure Plan contained in the Core Strategy before composing her questions, she would have seen that each of the required infrastructure improvements to support new developments will need to be funded by several agencies working in partnership.

Members need to realise that the current process is looking to plan for the long-term to 2026 and I do believe that the plans are deliverable in the longer-term.”

Agenda Item 9(c)

Proposed Revisions to the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Development Scheme

Following discussions with the Group Leaders it has been agreed that this report be withdrawn from this evening's agenda. It is intended to take a more detailed report, including the proposed Local Development Scheme timetable, to the Local Development Framework Working Group in August and subsequently to Council in September.