

## **Council 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 - Position Statement of Leader of the Council**

Mr Mayor, Fellow Councillors, Officers, Members of the public and of the media.

Can I begin my position statement tonight by making reference to the tragedy which befell the inhabitants of Haiti earlier this month. We have all seen the horrendous scenes on the television and in the newspapers, but we have seen also the joyous pictures of people still being rescued from the rubble. For those who think that there is little Local Authorities can do to assist, I can tell you that Search and Rescue experts and other volunteers from Fire and Rescue Services across England and Wales have already been directly involved in the success of the rescue missions. Money is being raised at local levels can be channelled via the Disasters Emergency Committee, which is an umbrella body for thirteen of the largest UK based humanitarian organisations. Details have been published on the Council's website.

The details of the new Executive Leads and their responsibilities have been circulated and are available on the website and the intranet, so that Members, staff and the public can be aware of who carries the relevant responsibilities. A copy has been attached to the minutes of the last meeting of the Council also.

Last week the Executive gave support for the development of a consultation on a Strategy and associated Action Plan for local Services for Older People; an obligation which this Council takes seriously and which has been promoted strongly by our Member Champion for Older People, Cllr David Inman. I am sure that this will get full support from the Council when it comes before us for final approval and adoption. Even before then, we must have a serious debate later in this meeting about local residential services and their longer term future in this Borough.

The Executive also gave consideration to the final draft of the budget for 2010/11. This will come to Council on 25 February, having been given preliminary consideration by Scrutiny Commission (to which all members will be invited) on 23 February. The budget will be based on the assumptions we made last year, which have proved to be accurate, and will form the first year of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which we will debate later this evening. Can I just say that, by effective working between officers and the relevant Lead Members, allied to sound operational management during this last year, the position for the next year and beyond remains positive. This is not something which can be said by all Councils! Our Council Tax will continue to be the lowest in the county!

The Executive was able to make a very positive decision on the purchase of Grounds Maintenance equipment, based on the speedy and effective response of Caroline Roffey, her team and officers in Finance. As a result of their work, the Council will save some £124,000 over the next five years, without any diminution of level or quality of service.

The Annual Meeting of the Council will soon be upon us; the meeting at which the new Mayor and Deputy will be agreed. Both positions are strictly non-political and nominations from Conservative or Labour Members for the position of Deputy Mayor would be warmly welcomed, showing that this Council can put aside party politics in making decisions on our main civic representatives.

I must now comment on the recent severe weather conditions and the excellent response of our staff. Can I, on behalf of you all, offer my thanks to our Refuse Collection employees, who continued to do their utmost to maintain a collection service and were largely successful. Those areas in which collections were simply not possible were cleared within the following week. In addition, other staff from the depot deserve our thanks for taking the extra step to secure the safety of shoppers in the town centre, by gritting the footpaths in Castle Street and the surrounding area. Although I have referred to this earlier in response to the question from Mrs Sprason, can I reemphasise that this is a responsibility of the County Council. This Council reacted to the situation and requested Grit from the County Council. I am pleased that this supply was forthcoming after the request, which enabled our staff to work on behalf of the County Council in support of our residents.

Mr Mayor, it is unfortunate that other people outside of this Council saw fit to draw attention to alleged “failings” of this Council, when in fact it was a good example of how the two-tier system can work together for the public good.

I should refer also to the recent local media attention to Anti-Social Behaviour in general and to the Pilkington case in particular. In relation to the latter, the letter from the Inquest Coroner and our response had taken place in October November last year, not in the last few days. Moreover, the Coroner’s concerns related to the situation over two years ago, not 2010. The response from the Chief Executive made it very clear that the systems and processes had very much improved in the intervening period. As regards the former, can I make it clear that over the Christmas period in 2009/10, Anti Social Behaviour reduced by 25% compared with a year earlier and the number of incidents over 2009 as a whole fell by 253. The levels of Anti Social Behaviour in this Borough are well below other comparable areas and are being managed effectively, despite what some people would have everyone believe! As stated earlier, the Council has been entirely transparent in relation to the Pilkington Case. We will continue to be transparent, both through our internal Scrutiny process in March and in working with external partners and national agencies to support and protect vulnerable people in our community.

I will finish on a positive note. Last Wednesday evening saw the 2009 Leicester Mercury Sports Awards in which six Hinckley and Bosworth or Hinckley-related bodies were nominated, with four actually winning awards: Peter Altenhoffen (Active 4 Life); Sophie Smith (Young Sportswoman of the Year); Hinckley Colts RFC (Under 19 Team of the Year); and Nicky Shaw (Sportswoman of the Year). We will be honouring these people as a Council later in the year, but I am sure you will wish me to send them our congratulations now, having just received their awards last week. It does show what sporting talent we do have in this area.

Mr Mayor, these are difficult times for everyone and we are experiencing difficulties of our own. However, despite differences in political views, if Members work together, with our officers, as we have done in recent years, these difficulties will be overcome and this Council will carry on working for the people of the Borough, so that they can continue to be proud of the Borough in which they live and work.

Thank you Mr Mayor.

**COUNCIL**  
**26 JANUARY 2010**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Agenda Item 7

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

“In a response to a question put to Cllr Bray on the 15th September 2009 I was assured that the traveller community did not receive preferential planning treatment. The unauthorised site at Copt Oak Road in Markfield was raised as an example, following a meeting with officers no action is being taken proving that in fact this authority does have a policy of positive discrimination towards the traveller community. Why was Cllr Bray unaware of this?”

Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

“I am somewhat puzzled by Councillor Sprason’s question. I thought that my answer on 15 September 2009 was clear.

I am aware that Councillor Sprason met with the Director of Community and Planning Services, who, I understand, explained in some detail this authority’s approach to enforcement generally and the specific issues in relation to travellers. To say that no action is being taken is quite clearly wrong and other Members will be aware of the enforcement action which has been taken in respect of several sites in the Borough.”

(b) Question raised by Mr. R. Ward and addressed to Mr. S.L. Bray

“Given public concern about the issue of what seems to be the ever increasing number of powers allowing various local authority workers to enter people’s homes without a warrant or police escort, would the Leader of the Council inform members how many employees of this council are authorised to enter private addresses in this manner and will he assure councillors that proper vetting and supervision is in place in respect of any employee of Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council who discharges any powers of this type?”

“Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

“As of 2 October 2009 there were 32 Council officers granted the power to enter private premises (not necessarily dwellings) without a warrant. The powers were not exercised between April 2008 and March 2009.

The powers would most likely be used by Environmental Health Officers although Planning Officers, Licensing Officers and Housing Officers also have powers under certain Acts.

All officers of the Council participate in Personal Development Appraisals on a regular basis, where their performance and training needs are discussed. Through this process, any concerns around the discharge of any enforcement duties are discussed and appropriate training organised.”

(c) Question raised by Mr. R. Ward and addressed to Mr. R. Mayne

“With nearly every senior planning officer either having left or soon to be leaving the employment of the authority would the Chairman of the Planning Committee agree that to lose one senior planning officer may be regarded as unfortunate but losing four is careless to say the least?”

What assurances is the Chairman able to give that the Council’s vital planning service is able to overcome the loss of so much invaluable experience and expertise particularly given the importance of the work currently being undertaken in respect of the Core Strategy and delivering the Local Development Framework?”

Response from Mr. R. Mayne

“Councillor Ward is fully aware of the current economic crisis facing the whole country and the reduced levels of development.

As a consequence, this authority has received less planning applications recently. I can confirm that one voluntary redundancy has been accepted from a Senior Planning Officer in response to this downturn in demand for the service.

Councillor Ward is also fully aware that the Council has approved a Senior Management Review which will be implemented from April 2010. That Review has resulted in one member of the Strategic Leadership Board leaving the authority with effect from 31 March 2010. At that point, the Planning Service will come under the management of one of the Deputy Chief Executives who is a qualified Town Planner.

It is also correct that two other Senior Planning Officers will have left the authority by the end of February 2010 to take up posts with other authorities. One of these posts has already been filled and the other will be recruited to in the near future.

In summary, I am satisfied that the steps already taken to manage the finances of this authority and, at the same time, provide the “vital planning service” are appropriate and that the officers appointed to the senior roles will prove to be worthy successors to those who they replace and will be supported by the excellent staff within the planning service.

Finally, I have to question Councillor Ward’s motive for bringing this item to Council. He is fully conversant with the position in this Council and must be aware of the pressures and uncertainty currently faced by officers. I do not consider that his question is conducive to maintaining the morale of our existing staff or building up the morale of incoming staff, who are, of course, vital to maintaining and improving on the excellent standards we have set for ourselves.”

(d) Question raised by Mrs. S. Sprason and addressed to Mr. D.C. Bill

"With regard to Anti-Social Behaviour being the responsibility of the Community Safety Team to tackle, would the leader inform this Council how many officers in the Community Safety Team have had training in Safeguarding Adults, Hate Crime, Case File Management, Evidence Gathering and How to complete forms in the years 2006, 2007, 2008 & 2009"?

Response from Mr. D.C. Bill

"May I thank Councillor Sprason for her question. A report into this issue and Community Safety as a whole is in the process of being prepared for a future Scrutiny Commission, of which Councillor Sprason is a member. I would not wish to pre-empt the Commission's deliberations by issuing a response regarding an area which is a limited, but important part of the reports scope."

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

"The Leader of the Council was quoted in the local press saying "it is appalling that the main shopping street has been left untreated" Will the Leader inform this Council where the 10 tonnes of salt and the further 6 tonnes of grit given to this Authority free of charge by the County Council to keep the town centre, including Castle Street, clear of snow and ice was used?"

Response from Mr. S.L. Bray

"Castle Street is part of the public Highway and as such responsibility for gritting and maintenance is Leicestershire County Council and not Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council so I suggest that Mrs Sprason directs her concerns to County Hall.

HBBC contacted LCC for additional salt for gritting purposes on receipt of complaints from residents. When this was (eventually) agreed to, HBBC provided its own frontline staff (free of charge) to provide gritting support in Hinckley Town Centre. This resource could have been used to deliver other critical frontline services (refuse / recycling collections) but because of the precarious weather conditions prioritised gritting of the Town Centre."

Agenda item 13(a)

Attached is a Statement from David Sprason CC, LCC Cabinet Lead Member, Adult Social Care and Health re: Consultation on Elderly Persons Homes

**Statement from David Sprason CC  
Cabinet Lead Member Adult Social Care & Health**

**Consultation on Elderly Persons Homes (EPHs) including The Limes at  
Hinckley and Harvey House at Barwell**

In June 2009, an attempt to transfer 6 of the County Council's 10 EPHs stalled after the consortium purchasing them had to withdraw due to the impact of the recession, particularly in relation to the borrowing requirement to fund the multi-million pound investment in proposed new developments.

Previously four EPHs (including the Limes and Harvey House) were excluded from the transfer option as it was decided to retain them and explore opportunities for development of specialist services in partnership with NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland (NHS LCR). Since that time the National Dementia Strategy has been published. The County Council's plans locally remain under development at this stage, but will include the development of a wider range of flexible support services across the County. It is felt that concentrating these services in four locations would not be advantageous, a more dispersed approach being preferred. Should additional dementia services be commissioned in the future all care home providers would have the opportunity to bid, whether the homes transferred or not.

Operating costs of keeping the EPHs "in house" is on average 25% higher than the independent sector due to staffing, overheads and administrative costs.

84% of all care homes in Leicestershire are rated as either excellent or good by the Care Quality Commission.

Within the Hinckley and Bosworth district there are 15 independent care homes for older people, 561 beds. The two EPHs have 80 beds which would transfer. The over 75 population (2009) for the district 8,600.

The future of all 10 EPHs in the county will be out to public consultation, from 25<sup>th</sup> January to 19<sup>th</sup> April. There will be two open consultation events held at County Hall on 9<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February plus consultation events in the two homes for residents/relatives and staff affected.

The transfer option will enable the County Council to secure the future of the homes currently under its ownership. Given the financial constraints on local authorities in the current economic climate and the £6 billion national shortfall in adult social care funding, continued "in house" operations cannot be guaranteed or afforded.

**Statement from David Sprason CC  
Cabinet Lead Member Adult Social Care & Health**

It must be noted that there will be an option for closure for one or more of the EPHs if there is not sufficient market interest or a successful transfer to the independent sector cannot be concluded.

The County Council agreed that any capital receipts from the transfer (“as going concern”) or sale of the asset (“vacant possession”) will be ring-fenced for Extra Care development. These will be delivered through partnership working with the various district/borough councils and the Homes and Communities Agency.

For information, there are currently five housing schemes in Leicestershire that are badged as Extra Care that between them provide a total of 166 tenancies. They are:

Gretton Court – Melton Mowbray  
Clover Court – Market Harborough  
St Mary’s House – Lutterworth  
Birch Court – Blaby  
Connaught House – Loughborough

The outcomes of the consultation will be kept fully accessible to the public and will be considered by the Cabinet in May 2010 with the Council’s Adult Social Care and Health Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee playing its full part in the process.

The County Council’s primary aim is to continue to provide and commission quality care. In the event of any closures, the transition to accommodation in the independent sector will be managed and arranged by the County Council as seamlessly as possible.