

## **Position Statement of Leader to Council – 21 March 2011.**

Madam Mayor, Fellow Councillors, Officers, members of the public and media.

This is my last position statement to the Council prior to the local elections in May and I would like to take the opportunity to summarise briefly the significant achievements of the Council over the last four years, despite the increasingly difficult circumstances in which we have been working.

Our regeneration projects, and those of our partners, have been delivered or are on track – and all are within budget: Greenfields, the Atkins Building, the Bus Station site and the Hinckley Hub. We have also assisted greatly in delivering the Hinckley Club for Young People. The Hinckley Hub will deliver a high quality workspace, at affordable cost, bringing together under one roof the services of the Borough Council, the Police, Probation and the Local Partnership Trust – which must result in improved integration of these services to the local community. It will indeed make us a Borough to be Proud of!

In addition, we have recently seen the exciting plans for the development of MIRA, with the prospect of an additional 2,000 jobs for the area, at a time when many others are facing significant job reductions; this is quite apart from the fact that the plans will make this area internationally renowned for the groundbreaking technology employed by MIRA. Even more immediately, next Monday sees the ‘topping out’ ceremony at the new College site, adjacent to the Atkins Building. The building will open for business at the end of the summer and will be a testament to effective partnership working between North Warwickshire and Hinckley College and this Council.

Our open air market continues to thrive and generate footfall for the rest of the town and we should not forget the contribution this Council makes to the rural areas. Earlier tonight, the Executive received a report from Cllr Crooks, the Lead Member for Rural activities. That report provided details of the many activities and investments led by this Council, which give the lie to those who suggest that the Council does not contribute to the rural life of the Borough. I have asked Officers to circulate this report to all Members so that you can see for yourselves what has been done and to remind you of the significant contribution the Parish and Communities Initiative Fund has made since its inception.

I have mentioned our partnership working, as I have on a number of previous occasions. Before us tonight is a recommendation regarding the sharing of our Section 151 Officer, Sanjiv Kohli, with Oadby and Wigston. That this is taking place is a recognition, not only of Sanjiv’s abilities, but also that we are a Council which can be trusted as a partner. It builds on our partnership work with North West Leicestershire and Harborough Councils on Revenues and Benefits, which formally starts next month; our lead on the Legal Services Partnership with Blaby, Oadby & Wigston and North Warwickshire; our lead on an IT partnership (through Steria) with Blaby and Oadby and Wigston; and our joint Community Safety Partnership with Blaby – a first in the county. Being a trusted partner also means letting go, as well as leading, and Blaby Council (with whom we are working ever more closely) has taken the lead on the Land Charges function. We can anticipate further partnership work of a more front

line nature with both Blaby and Oadby and Wigston over the coming months through Bill Cullen.

Which brings me to the performance of our front line services, all of which continue to perform at the highest levels, compared with other Districts across the country. Whilst comparisons are increasingly difficult to make, as Councils reduce the number of standard indicators, on those which we can compare, this Council continues the trend started in 2005 to achieve the highest possible performance, despite reductions in overall staff numbers over the period and increasing financial constraints. As examples (only examples, not an exhaustive list) can I cite: refuse collection and recycling, where high performance has been matched by reducing costs and significant efficiency savings for the Council; Planning, where the performance on development control has been matched by the adoption and implementation of our Local Development Framework Core Strategy, the latest instalment of which we will consider later; our level of 'Decent Homes' in our Council House stock; our effective anti-social behaviour work, in a strong local partnership with the Police; our Culture and Sports activities, where we support many community initiatives, leading to healthier lives and improved chances for young people; and the (largely unsung) work of the Environmental Health team in relation to food safety, noise and other nuisance and licensing.

Madam Mayor, none of this has been achieved without difficulty and I am aware that there have been issues to address along the way; but the Council, with the advice of our Officers and the active support of all our employees, has managed to overcome all these, as should be expected of an "Excellent" Council. Most recently, we have faced the worst financial settlement for local government in anyone's memory, but have tackled it head on, without compulsory redundancies and maintaining our front line services. That hasn't been secured by accident; it is based on sound forward-planning, both service and financial, and the joint work of Officers and Members to bring about the right outcomes for our communities. We are able to 'live within our means' and still deliver on what our taxpayers say are their priorities.

Madam Mayor, I am aware of the speculation amongst Members about the future of the Westfields Centre and the involvement of this Council. I am pleased to say that the Centre has now secured its future, without any input from the Council. We did stand ready to provide short term support, which has been generously acknowledged by Westfields, but has not proved necessary. I am sure that all Members will wish them continued success in delivering their vital and valuable services to our community.

Finally, Madam Mayor, I am sure that I speak for the whole Council in expressing appreciation for the way you have represented the Council over this last year, not least in your chairing of often difficult discussions at the Council meetings themselves. You have been courteous, but very firm and even-handed, which is a great credit to you and to the council as a whole. To those Members who are standing down, and to those who may not be re-elected, can I offer my best wishes for the future. And last, but by no means least, as this is Pat Pitt's last Council meeting before her retirement, can you all join me in thanking her for her quiet but efficient support to us all over the many years she has served the Council.

**COUNCIL**  
**21 MARCH 2011**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

Agenda Item 11(a) – Motion from Mr W J Crooks

The following amendment will be moved by Mr K Morrell and seconded by Mr R Ward:-

Reduction in pharmacy and GP dispensing service

" That the Borough Council, having concerns about reductions in the availability of pharmacy and GP dispensing services to the Borough residents, notes that the Primary Care Trust is obliged to use national criteria in defining "rurality" in its current consultation about the future service provision, the outcomes may have a detrimental effect on many rural areas.

Therefore, the Borough Council:

1. requests along with other Leicestershire councils', a meeting with the PCT separate from the consultation engagement events, as part of an approach to Government to ensure that any unintended consequences of the exercise can be avoided; and
2. that any unintended consequences are avoided in the Borough we support our local Member of Parliament to raise our concerns with Ministers."