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Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

Bill Cullen MBA (ISM), BA(Hons) MRTPI
Chief Executive

Date: 20 February 2025

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor,

Please see overleaf a supplementary agenda for the meeting of the **COUNCIL** on **THURSDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2025** at **6.30 pm**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Owen'.

Rebecca Owen
Democratic Services Manager

COUNCIL - 20 FEBRUARY 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

8. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT

Welcome to the annual budget Council meeting which forms the main business of tonight.

Because of the length of the agenda, I have kept my statement brief and would like to update on the following items.

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Since our last meeting of Council, the government has written to all leaders within two-tier areas, including Leicestershire, inviting initial proposals for LGR by 21 March 2025 with detailed proposals by 28 November 2025.

I would repeat what I have said publicly on a number of occasions since the publication of the Devolution White Paper in December, that local government isn't broken. We provide excellent services to our residents and businesses and are close to our communities, who are well represented by local councillors. Residents trust us to empty their bins on time, provide support when in most need and welcome the jobs that we are creating through attracting inward investment. They love the events we put on for everyone, which we know supports our town centres.

The government has made it clear they expect every area of England to be covered by unitary councils in this parliamentary term.

We know Leicestershire County Council wants one single council to cover the whole of the county, which we and our neighbouring Leicestershire districts consider would be far too remote to communities and therefore don't want.

The County Council had asked the government to postpone the County Council elections in May so they could fast-track the process but their request has, I am pleased to say, been denied.

Given we have no choice in the matter, all seven district and borough councils plus Rutland County Council are now working together to develop an alternative proposal. They are exploring options for small unitary authorities to serve the communities of Leicestershire.

I can report district leaders have sought to meet with the County Council to explore options around LGR but it is clear they want to plough ahead unilaterally which is extremely disappointing.

Before detailed proposals are submitted to government in November, I have made it clear that my intention is to consult with all the residents of the Borough. I and the Chief Executive will keep you informed of any progress over the coming weeks and months, in what is a fast-paced process that the government are forcing us to go through.

Hinckley town centre performance

I am pleased to inform Council that Hinckley town centre remains buoyant. Footfall is up on previous years – in December 2024 the footfall was 251,437, a 1.5% increase on the same period in 2023. The empty shop vacancy rate is just 9% which is below the national average which currently stands at 14.5%. We are proudly bucking national trends. Our dynamic events programme and investment into the town centre underpins these statistics and our town centre's success.

Hinckley Leisure Centre

The project to install 700 solar panels on the roof of Hinckley Leisure Centre is on time and on budget. Supported by a £120,000 grant from Sport England, works are due to be completed next week. This is another clear demonstration from our administration of addressing the challenges surrounding climate change – we lead by example.

Events

The festive events programme across the Borough was an incredible success this year, bringing in a total footfall across all the events of over 27,000. This represents a 396% increase on the average days/times compared to the events themselves. The family orientated events schedule remains the same for 2025. Feast Hinckley for August is already 70% booked for traders and applications are also coming in for the Festive Feast and Crafts market taking place in December.

The coordination for the first HBBC event of the year, the St George's Day celebration on 26 April, is in full swing.

In support of our work for rural communities across the borough I am pleased to confirm our tenth annual rural conference will be held next month. This will capture and celebrate the huge variety of positive work that is being undertaken across the Borough.

Tourism success

Some of my colleagues had the privilege and honour to support our tourism sector businesses at the recent Leicestershire Tourism Awards. I am pleased to announce that Hall Farm, Dadlington, won the best self-catering accommodation in Leicestershire, and Leonardo Hotel Hinckley Island secured the best business events venue. Both of these will now go forward to the national finals. We wish them the best of luck.

Sports Awards

I was delighted to join my colleagues at this year's annual sports awards which was an incredible success and supported by over 200 people attending the awards ceremony at Hinckley Rugby Club. My congratulations go to all entries and winners of awards.

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