

Leaders Statement

January 2020

Welcome to my first Leader's Statement of 2020. Can I take the opportunity to wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year.

With Christmas now over it is a good time to reflect on the positive community events that have taken place and to look forward to the year ahead.

Christmas Events

In the lead up to Christmas it was great to see over 200 people of all ages take part in the annual town centre festive run with the "Swag Box" winning the best dressed Christmas shop window competition held by the Hinckley BID. Once again our annual Christmas lights switch on in Hinckley and Market Bosworth and many other villages were a great success and well supported. The Christmas lights switch on is one of the most popular events of the year and the turnout was tremendous. I hope everyone enjoyed the fireworks which, as ever, were magnificent. This year saw over 14,000 people attending the event in Hinckley. The family of Isla Tansey switched on the lights and were able to announce "hot off the press" the record breaking Guinness World Record for most painted stones in one place.

Other festive events in December included Carols around the Tree, (the joint BID event) Festive Fun Run, Christmas Lights Car Trail and Festive Feast, Hinckley's Christmas market. The lure of the special Christmas market encouraged record breaking numbers of Sunday shoppers to brave the cold weather and come out to shop in the town, with around 10,000 people visiting the town during the event, the second largest footfall figures for a Sunday in 2019 and second only to Hinckley BID's Motorshow in September. My thanks to the Cultural Services Team for their hard work in organising these popular annual events and for our Streetscene Services for keeping the town clean and tidy during and after the events.

Against a national context of significant high street closures, the vacancy rate in Hinckley has shown a reduction to around 6% compared to 10.3% UK average.

Tourism Awards

Feast Hinckley event received a Highly Commended award at the recent Leicestershire Tourism Awards.

Visitor Events Guides

Working alongside Hinckley's BID, the second edition of the Essential Visitors Guide has been produced and 5,000 copies will be distributed and a borough-wide visitor events guide is under preparation for the borough as a whole. Look out for the up and coming events from February half term and Easter and there will be a comprehensive range of events planned over the summer with Proms in the Park returning to Hinckley in August.

Crime and Disorder Survey

Members of the public are being asked for their views on what they think are the most important types of crime for the Community Safety Partnership to focus on in the next three years.

Residents' views, alongside actual crime and disorder data, will help to determine priorities for the partnership for the next year, while the results of the survey will also be used to inform the Crime and Community Safety Priorities for the Hinckley & Bosworth and Blaby areas until 2023.

Residents of both areas can get involved by completing the survey on line at www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/communitysafetysurvey2020. Paper copies can be picked up from the Hinckley Hub and will also be available from a number of community buildings including the community houses in Earl Shilton, Barwell and Wykin. The consultation closes on 3 February 2020.

Leisure Centre

Hinckley Leisure Centre is reporting significant increase in attendees. There has been a 33% increase in footfall from the old centre to the new facility from 450,000 visitors in 2016 to over 808,000 in 2019.

Barwell SUE

Members will be aware of the recent press coverage on issues raised by LCC over their changed requirements for developer contributions. I must say I am surprised at the approach taken by the County on this matter in reporting this direct to its Cabinet and issuing a press release without proper dialogue or input by the borough council, particularly as we are the local planning authority. I understand senior officer meetings are taking place this week between HBBC and LCC with a view to securing an early meeting with the developer to resolve these new and late requests by LCC. I have committed to meet with the Leader of LCC to ensure we can help accelerate the sign off of the Agreement so that the developer can be in a position to commence delivery of the development in 2021 and deliver the comprehensive package of community infrastructure requirements like new health facilities, school improvements, affordable housing, public realm and transport enhancements.

PCC Safer Communities Awards

I am pleased to announce that the Council has been shortlisted in this year's annual PCC Safer Communities Awards and I will ask officers to update you when we have further news.

Free Parking in Hinckley

I am pleased to confirm we are currently out to consultation on the car parking orders to introduce free parking after 3pm in a number of our key town centre car parks in Hinckley. Subject to feedback received we expect to be in apposition to implement this before the end of February.

Dorothy Goodman School

Today marked the official opening of the Dorothy Goodman Secondary School in Barwell Lane, which was supported by the Mayor, local Members and some of my Executive colleagues. This multi-million pound facility is a special school for pupils aged up to 19 years old who have learning difficulties. It also hosts the very first special Cruyff Courts in the UK which is an accessible facility enabling children and young people to practice all kinds of sport and physical activities. I would also like to congratulate the Head Teacher and Trustee Board of the school for their magnificent achievement in delivering this state of the art school, which recently won an award at the prestigious Leicester Procon awards.

Financial Position

Given the almost unprecedented calling of the General Election in December it is clear that we will not be receiving our full financial settlement for the next three or four years before December this year. We are expecting a one year settlement to be received in the early part of this year. As a result this will have implications on the timing of our publication of the MTFS. We do, however, expect to be reporting and setting our annual budget as normal in February of this year.

Stuart Bray
Leader of the Council
14 January 2020