**County Councillors Report June 2014.**

**Libraries**
The consultation on the future use of libraries is running until 7th July and has seen some 2,500 individual responses on the county council's proposals to run up to 36 libraries. There have also been 500 attendees at the county road shows and a further 500 people attending drop-in sessions with library-staff to discuss our plans for the future. It is important to understand that LCC is still committing £4.8 million to the service (£800k savings requirement) and the 16 most popular libraries, accounting for the vast majority of visits, are being kept open, but with reduced opening hours. Like every other department, libraries have to change in response to changing demand- more people are using E books than borrowing and libraries are also being used for a host of community activities. LCC will support communities to run their local library, but if none come forward, some may unfortunately have to close. This is why we are proposing to cover any closure with a weekly mobile service.
I look forward to working with the Parish Councils working group when I resume in July. Beverley you are most welcome to contact me with regards to availability for me to attend your next group meeting.

Consultation is taking place till July 7th and full details are on the link below they include dates and venues of evening public meetings during June. We want as many people as possible to have their say and I urge you to do it. [www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay/futurelibraries](http://www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay/futurelibraries),

**Roads and Infrastructure**

LCC is part of the Midlands Highways Alliance (MHA) - a group of 21 local authorities who collaborate and pool their resources in awarding contracts for medium to large scale projects. LCC is proud to be at the forefront of innovative thinking and a pioneer of collaboration between local councils across the Midlands and beyond delivering around £250 million of projects and saving an estimated £15 million. These are the sorts of partnerships LCC will have to become increasingly involved with as we undergo a radical transformation of the way we do business and deliver our services.

**Budget & Finance**

It is easy to forget we have made some noticeable achievements since agreeing the Budget back in March. Freezing the county-element of council tax for the fourth year running. Winning £55 million Government funding to invest in more school places. Committed £25 million of extra spending on adult social care and waste disposal. Will commit £188 million on capital projects and supporting jobs and growth. Supported nearly 400 families to own their first home through our Local Authority Mortgages scheme. Invested £18.6 million to deliver Superfast broadband in Leicestershire with our partners BT, the district councils and the EU. All this has been achieved and none of it will be funded by borrowing. However, we still must continue to reduce our spending by £110 million by 2018 because of reduced Government grant. George Osborne's Budget announced an extension to the current austerity period facing local government- and we must continue to plan ahead to ensure the County Council plays its part in rebalancing the country's finances.

**The Transformation Programme**

In May, the Cabinet committed the County Council to a radical new pathway on how we deliver and commission our services. We call it the 'Transformation Programme' and Cabinet's decision implements a key plank of the 2013 manifesto. In future, the County Council will be smaller and many of its services delivered in different ways- such as community groups running libraries. But we will still be in the business of caring for vulnerable people and keeping our highways safe. As your County Councillor, I will never take my eye off the ball in focusing on our key priorities, despite the dire financial situation we face.
These changes are reflected in the numerous consultations the County Council is currently undertaking with residents- such as new to home to school transport proposals; the future of libraries; reduced funding to voluntary groups and changes to community meals. All these and more are available in greater detail via the County Council website www.leics.gov.uk/haveyoursay . It is very important we get as many people as possible to air their views to guide our thinking.

**Grants Schemes**
The County Council recently reformed the community grants schemes and abolished the Community Forums. We did this via feedback from residents that the previous structure was overly complicated and bureaucratic. The return to the SHIRE grants schemes enables local community groups to bid for support. Some of these include the new LeicesterSHIRE grants scheme and the Village shops support scheme (see <http://www.kerchingretail.com/vss>) . For more information on the range of grant funding available please log on to <http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/community/community_grants.htm>

**Experimental Order Stephenson Way Groby**

The lining works will be carried out on Stephenson Way and the adjacent side roads towards the end of June, after the experimental order is made.

**Recycling Performance Update.**

Recycling and composting performance covering the period January to December 2013 and predicted performance for 2013/14.

The Leicestershire Waste Partnership has achieved an unconfirmed combined recycling, reuse and composting performance of 53.32% from January to December 2013, compared to a performance of 55.46% in 2012/13.  Early indications show that Leicestershire is currently in the top five waste disposal authorities (WDAs) in the country. It is anticipated that there will be a further drop in predicted performance to 51% by the end of the 2013/14 financial year. This drop can primarily be attributed to a change in Environment Agency (EA) guidance which has prohibited the composting of mixed wood collected at the Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS).

Analysis of the figures shows that if wood had been removed from the composting figures in 2012/13, performance in this year would have been 51.04%.  This shows that levels of recycling by the public through kerbside collections, bring sites and RHWS have remained consistent. Draft year end performance figures for 2013/14 will be available in July 2014 and will be confirmed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in November 2014.It is anticipated that a new method of calculating recycling performance will be released by Defra in the summer of 2014.  It has been reported that initially this indicator will be used to report on how the UK as a whole is performing against the EU target to recycle 50% of waste from households by 2020 and will eventually be rolled out more widely to report on the performance of individual authorities.

Finally I would like to thank you for all your kind words and good wishes over the past 3 weeks. I hope to be back fully fit the week commencing 23rd June. Please accept my apologies for not attending tonight but I am under doctors orders.

**Ozzy O’shea**