

East Goscote Annual Report

2025

Flooding

On the 6th January East Goscote was hit by the worst flooding in the village's history. I would like to take this opportunity to send my sincere sympathies to all those affected, particularly those whose home suffered internal damage. I have been working with the Lead Local Flood Authority who will be conducting an investigation into the cause of the flooding with a view to establishing not only the reason the flooding happened, but what can be done to prevent where possible, or mitigate where necessary any future risk to the village. In February the County Council passed a budget which included £18.4 million for flood prevention work (including an extra million pounds included as a direct result of the 6th January floods), this money will fund the detailed investigation which will now take place. Following the floods both the County Council and Edward Argar MP lobbied the government hard to release Flood Recovery Framework funding, money which could be made available by national government to help people whose homes had been flooded. Unfortunately the government refused to release that money because they said not enough of the country had been affected by flooding, which I think is disgraceful given the need locally.

Local government re-organisation

Just before Christmas the Government stated they wanted to see greater devolution of powers in England and the end of two-tier local government with those areas instead having one unitary council (for us this would mean the scrapping of Leicestershire County Council and Charnwood Borough Council with one, new single council doing everything both councils currently do). The reasons for this include financial and operational efficiency, simplicity of local government structure as well as it being easier for people to access local council services. Local Councils had to submit their initial proposals for what this new unitary council could look like in Leicestershire by 21st March, the County's proposal is for one unitary council covering the whole of Leicestershire, not including the city and with the city boundaries remaining exactly as they are today. Bringing together the current eight councils across Leicestershire into one single body would:

- Save around £30 million, every year - through fewer managers, chief executives and councillors
- Enable savings - to be reinvested in front line services
- Make it easier to get support - by giving residents clear and simple access to all services, whether by phone, online, or through local area committees
- Future-proof services – protecting the support residents depend on at a time when local government is facing spiralling costs
- Improve support for vulnerable people – by joining up health, social care and housing services.
- Give communities a stronger voice – local area committees would have greater influence over decision-making.
- Boost accountability – reducing confusion over who is responsible for what.

More information on this can be found on the County Council's website:

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/popular-now/one-council-for-leicestershire>.

The borough and districts proposal would see the current county of Leicestershire split in two, with Charnwood joining North West Leicestershire, Melton and Rutland in one unitary authority (North Leicestershire), and Harborough, Oadby & Wigston, Blaby, and Hinckley & Bosworth forming another unitary authority (South Leicestershire).

Leicester City Council's proposal would see the city expanding out as far as Syston and Queniborough, taking in huge areas of the county into the city boundary. The government will make the final decision on which plan they wish to go for but I am firmly of the view there should be no expansion of Leicester. The city's proposal would take hundreds of thousands of people into the city without their consent or any kind of democratic mandate to do so, and it would seriously risk leaving what is left of Leicestershire unviable financially.

County Council finances

The financial situation at Leicestershire County Council remains the biggest challenge to the authority. Leicestershire remains the lowest funded County Council and the fourth lowest funded upper tier authority overall, and that has resulted in very difficult decisions having to be made to balance the books. The budget passed in February uses reserves to manage a small budget gap next year – by 2027, this gap is forecast to increase to £38m and rise to £91m by 2029. The budget includes:

- **£1m extra to support flood-hit communities** - following the devastating flooding in the New Year, plus £500k until April
- **£95m more to support vulnerable people** – in response to huge increase in demand
- **An increase on the current four-year capital programme of £28m to help fix potholes and repair roads** - taking the total spend on roads and related infrastructure, major schemes and tackling flooding to £156m
- **A Council Tax rise of 4.99% which came in this month** – generating an extra £20m, which covers only the National Living Wage and National Insurance rises before any increased service demand is taken into account
- **£33m of savings** – including redesigning services, reducing the cost of back-office support services by maximising digital technology and smarter procurement, plus £52m to bring spend on SEND more in line with Government funding
- **A £439m four-year capital pot** – to fund one-costs of building roads, social care accommodation and new school places needed to support new housing.

Thanks

I'd like to finish my report by thanking East Goscote Parish Council for all the work they do for the village. I'd especially like to thank Village Clerk Liz Pizer and Charlotte Turlington for everything they do for our community. Thanks also to Borough Councillor Laurie Needham and to Edward Argar MP, with whom I work closely for residents in East Goscote and across Syston Fosse Division.