

East Goscote Parish Council

Borough Councillors' Annual Report

2024 – 2025

Introduction

This past year has been one of major challenges, but also of steady progress in many areas important to East Goscote residents. From dealing with the impact of major planning applications, to managing flooding emergencies, and responding to national proposals for local government reorganisation, we have continued to work on issues important to local people.

Planning and Development

Planning matters have, once again, been a major focus. The Reserved Matters application for the Redrow development off Melton Road was refused, with concerns about the housing mix – specifically, the lack of smaller homes. To date there has been formal resubmission from Redrow.

Elsewhere, the permissions granted at Three Ways Farm and Queniborough Lodge were disappointing, given the concerns raised about infrastructure and drainage. Despite councillor representations at multiple Plans Committee meetings, the developments were approved. A curious situation developed when Hallam Homes lodged an appeal for a smaller 100-house scheme at Three Ways Farm, despite having secured permission for 160 homes. This was later withdrawn.

The land off Melton Road remains under scrutiny following Highways' request for further assessment work, delaying any final decision.

We have continued to monitor the situation at Merchants Common in East Goscote, which was purchased by a private owner. There is currently no immediate threat to businesses operating there, which has provided some reassurance to residents however, rents have been raised. EGPC has applied for the pub and car park to be a Community Asset.

Neighbourhood Plans remain a key tool for local influence over planning decisions. We continue to encourage the updating of these plans across the area, wherever possible to maintain protection against speculative development.

Flood Management and Environmental Work

Flooding has been a major concern again this year. East Goscote, along with many surrounding areas, experienced severe flooding events. Councillors worked alongside flood wardens and residents to distribute sandbags, arrange emergency waste collections, and liaise with agencies to push for better preventative measures.

We are pleased that funding has been secured for flood equipment to be held locally for the worst affected areas, helping communities to be better prepared in the future. These should be available by the Summer.

Investigations by Severn Trent and planning enforcement officers are ongoing into the maintenance of SUDS systems and drainage ponds across new developments.

The Barkby Brook flood alert system has now gone live, providing much more accurate flood warnings for Syston. Meanwhile, clearance and desilting works have been carried out along parts of the brook and its surroundings.

Work has also been ongoing to challenge drainage plans submitted by developers, arguing that historic flood data is no longer adequate when 'once in a lifetime' events are now occurring almost annually. We continue to press for updated, robust flood mitigation in all planning decisions.

Local Governance and Devolution

Plans for the reorganisation of local councils have gathered pace over the past year. Proposals being considered would see the abolition of Charnwood Borough and Leicestershire County Councils, replaced with one or more unitary authorities under a directly elected Mayor.

Councillors have made it clear that they do not support the current approach, raising concerns that bigger councils will be more remote from local communities, harder to influence, and could lead to increased council tax without solving fundamental funding issues. Despite requests for greater public consultation, the Government's plans are progressing quickly, with formal proposals expected later in 2025.

The submission from Leicester City includes taking in areas of Charnwood as far as Syston and Queniborough. We view this as an over reach and are very much against this proposal and will oppose it at all levels.

Local Plan and Developer Contributions

The Charnwood Local Plan remains close to adoption, although delays have been caused by the need to introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to replace strategic transport funding that was ruled unsound at County level.

CIL could offer significant benefits to parishes like East Goscote, helping to fund local infrastructure projects. Parishes with up-to-date Neighbourhood Plans are likely to receive enhanced funding, so keeping these plans refreshed remains a priority.

We are pleased that following councillor pressure, CBC has now committed to proactively informing parishes about major changes to national planning rules.

Community Support and Grants

We have continued to push for more support for residents facing cost of living pressures. The Council maintained a Community Grants fund this year, including specific support for Citizens Advice Bureau services, which have helped hundreds of local people access vital support.

The funding for small community projects remains open, and we encourage local groups to apply.

Special grant schemes were also activated to help households affected by flooding in January 2024. We continue to press for these to be extended where possible, recognising the huge disruption flooding causes to residents' lives. It is disappointing that the Government did not continue this scheme for 2025 and we have written to Ministers in that fashion.

Environment

The Borough's refuse fleet will transition to using HVO (sustainably sourced vegetable oil) fuel from April 2025. This will cut the fleet's carbon emissions by up to 90% and improve air quality.

Thousands of free trees were distributed to residents and parishes through CBC's winter giveaway, supporting the Borough's environmental goals.

A new Air Quality Strategy is currently being developed.

Other Updates

Charnwood Borough Council avoided intervention from central government over its historic planning appeal performance, following improvements to internal processes.

Full Council meetings are now recorded and available for the public to watch online, improving transparency.

Councillors have worked to ensure improvements to weed spraying, litter clearance, and maintenance along Melton Road and other local routes.

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