



Cllr Ben Taylor

Fosse Highcross Ward Blaby District Councillors Monthly Report

Villages: Aston Flamville, Elmesthorpe, Sapcote, Sharnford and Wigston Parva



Cllr Mike Shirley

May 2025

Our Month in Review

Because of Leicestershire County Council Elections on 1st May, we were unable to produce a report for April 2025. This is due to the pre-election period of sensitivity, more commonly known in the past as 'Purdah'. The general convention is that special care should be taken in the three weeks preceding the election which, in our case' is 10th April to 1st May. The Code says that council publicity should be issued with care so that they are not perceived to influence the outcome of elections.

The election is now over with the following overall results:

53 results with seats won by each party as follows:

CONSERVATIVE 15

LABOUR 2

LIB DEM 11

REFORM 25

GREEN 1

INDEPENDENT 1

The Reform Party are now the major political party in Leicestershire County Council but without overall control.

In our division of Stoney Stanton & Croft the Reform candidate, Carl Walter Abbot, was elected. Cllr Abbot replaces the previous incumbent Cllr Maggie Wright – Conservative, who did not stand at this election.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to Maggie, for the sterling work she has done over the last six years as our County Councillor, supporting your district councillors Ben and Mike, and the parishes that comprise the Division: Aston Flamville, Croft, Elmesthorpe, Huncote, Potters Marston, Sapcote, Stoney Stanton, Sharnford, and Wigston Parva. Collectively known as the "Fosse Villages". Maggie has attended as many Parish Council and Parish Meetings as possible in person and always provided a written monthly report. This is no mean feat and, hopefully, will be emulated by the new county councillor.

Maggie will continue as a District Councillor on Blaby District Council, and as a Thurlaston Parish Council member. Best wishes Maggie.

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Alberto Costa MP



No authority... Anywhere: Dealing with dysfunctional Parish and Town Councils

Most people first witnessed the chaotic underbelly of local government in 2021 when the now infamous phrase, “You have no authority here, Jackie Weaver,” echoed across the internet. That viral clip from a Handforth Parish Council Zoom meeting was a rare bit of comic relief during the pandemic. Zoom council meetings briefly exposed the reality that some local councils, far from being models of democracy, are battlegrounds for petty tyrants. Behind the laughter lies a grim reality: bullying, harassment, and misconduct are rife in town and parish councils, eroding trust in politics and driving good people away from public service.

Parish clerks and councillors, often unpaid volunteers, are subjected to relentless intimidation and bullying. The perpetrators face weak sanctions that lack any teeth. It’s hardly surprising, then, that in 2017, the Society of Local Council Clerks reported an average turnover rate for clerks ranging from 25% to 30% – a strikingly high figure compared to the UK’s typical employee turnover rate of 12% to 15%.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Nolan Principles, seven core values that should guide all public officeholders: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership. Yet, as Chair of the Standards Committee in the House of Commons, I see firsthand that elected representatives fall short. It is human to make mistakes and get frustrated. But severe misconduct and bullying ruins lives and is indefensible. Elected representatives are not immune to flaws, but they must be held to a higher bar. The current system, however, fails to enforce that standard at the grassroots of local government.

In my own constituency, parish councillors have endured months, even years, of verbal abuse and intimidation from their peers. In Leicestershire, a parish officer quit mid-meeting, broken by relentless harassment and vexatious complaints. These aren’t isolated tales. A 2017 report by the Society of Local Council Clerks found that 15% of

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parish councils have serious behavioural issues, with 5% rendered dysfunctional as a result. It's a minority of "bad apples," true, but they have a huge impact, and the system offers little recourse.

Where does it go wrong? Start with the Localism Act 2011. It lacks a clear definition of bullying or harassment, leaving Monitoring Officers to interpret vague Codes of Conduct. What is a crisis in one district is a shrug in another. Parish councils have no internal mechanism to investigate breaches, while principal authorities can't impose meaningful sanctions short of criminal referral. The 2018 Ledbury Town Council fiasco, where over £200,000 in legal fees were racked up trying to discipline a councillor, laid bare the absurdity: parishes can't act alone, and higher authorities are toothless. Accountability vanishes into a void.

The ballot box should be the ultimate check, but at this level, that's a myth. In the 2015 parish elections, only 20% of vacancies were contested. Not enough willing candidates, and not enough democracy. Rogue councillors often cling on, unchallenged.

As Labour pushes for unitary authorities – scrapping district councils and handing parishes more power – these flaws could get worse.

So, what's the fix?

1. Amend the Localism Act to clearly define "bullying." Give Monitoring Officers a clear line in the sand, separating robust debate from harassment.
2. Mandate Standards Committees in principal authorities, staffed with Independent Persons to investigate and sanction impartially. Consistency and credibility would replace the current postcode lottery where standards committees are optional.
3. Introduce real sanctions. Suspend councillors for up to six months for proven misconduct. At present, perpetrators of harassment get a weak slap on the wrist and can return to the next meeting and pick up where they left off. I've heard of entire councils resigning, powerless against one toxic individual. Suspension offers relief to victims and a message: actions have consequences.

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New plans must avoid bureaucratic overreach and weaponised complaints – understandable concerns of the previous government. But doing nothing is not an option.

Parish councils matter. They are the roots of our democracy. But when dysfunction reigns, trust withers. Thirty years after the Nolan Principles, it's time to ensure that these words are backed up by a robust framework.

During the pandemic, when meetings were held virtually and broadcast online, we glimpsed some of the issues facing parish councils. Perhaps it's time to keep the cameras rolling for greater transparency. Sunlight, after all, is the best disinfectant.

Alberto.costa.mp@parliament.uk

Councillor Activities

During March and April, your councillors have attended many meetings and training events. Because of the recent government proposals, the number of activities could increase:

March

- Sharnford Bacon Buttie – 1st
- Devolution Plan – online – 6th
- Grievance & Standards Committee – 6th
- Elmesthorpe Parish Council – 6th
- Sapcote Parish Council – 6th
- Training – Council Tax & Benefits – 10th
- Police Beat Surgery – 11th
- Blaby Parishes Group Meeting – 12th
- Planning Committee – 13th
- Youth Council Meeting – 17th
- Local Plan Development Group – 18th
- Training – Officer & Member Protocol
- Sharnford Parish Council – 20th
- Scrutiny Task & Finish – Recruitment – 25th
- Devolution Briefing – 26th
- Fosse Villages – Shaping our Future – 26th
- Sharnford Fete Committee – 26th
- Blaby Chairman's Coffee Morning – 27th

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- Joint Consultative Committee – 27th
- April**
- Audit & Corporate Governance meeting with SLT – 3rd
- District Council – 8th
- Planning Committee – 10th
- Sapcote Parish Council – 10th
- Sharnford Parish Council – 17th
- Sharnford Bacon Buttie – 26th
- Audit & Corporate Governance Committee – 28th
- Sharnford Fete Committee – 30th

During May, your councillors will attend many meetings and training events.

- Leicestershire County Council Election Day – 1st
- Land West of Stoney Stanton meeting with developers – 7th
- Planning Committee – 8th
- Fosse Villages – Shaping our Future – 14th
- Sharnford Fete Committee – 14th
- Sapcote Annual Parish Meeting – 15th
- Sharnford Annual Parish Meeting – 15th
- District Council – 20th
- Training – Planning Committee – 22nd
- Local Development Group – 27th

News Release

- New footpaths and nature zones at our green spaces
- Secretary of State for Transport rejects Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange
- Tourism Growth Plan aims to boost District economy
- Bold vision for future of local council structures submitted to Government
- Call for litter picking volunteers for Great British Spring Clean
- Go Green and save money in our energy auction
- Latest housing approved for New Lubbethorpe

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Minister Rejects Rail Freight Hub

Blaby District Council is delighted plans for the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI) have been rejected.

The Council received a letter today from the Secretary of State for Transport, Heidi Alexander MP, confirming the refusal.

The Council had opposed plans for the 662-acre hub, earmarked for a huge expanse of countryside between the M69

and the Birmingham to Leicester rail line. Lying southwest of Elmesthorpe and on the edge of Burbage Common, the rail hub was the brainchild of developers Tritax Symmetry. Council leaders repeatedly warned the rail hub and warehousing scheme would destroy vast swathes of the District and have far-reaching adverse highways, environmental and social impacts. Classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project, which initially began in 2018 the final say on the scheme lay with the Secretary of State for Transport. Following an in-depth, six-month examination by the Planning Inspectorate last year the Minister was recommended to reject the plans.

In September 2024 Ms Alexander's predecessor, Louise Haigh MP, agreed, saying she was 'minded to refuse' the project. However, she gave developers, Tritax Symmetry, more time to submit further evidence in support of their application. A new decision date of Monday 10 March was set. Reacting to the announcement, Councillor Terry Richardson, Leader of Blaby District Council, said: "I am delighted and relieved the Minister has listened to the overwhelming opposition from the Council and the public and rejected these proposals. Common sense has prevailed. At last we have clarity and residents can move forward without the threat of this monstrous development over their heads."

Councillor Ben Taylor, Portfolio Holder for Planning, said: "I'd like to thank our residents for the time and effort they put into voicing their concerns. I'd also like to thank our own officers and project team for the sterling work they have done to defend our District from this ill-considered scheme."

New Local Plan

We continue to work on our Local Plan which will guide growth across the District up to 2041, shaping where housing, employment and retail sites should be developed and where development should be restricted.

For the latest info on our new local plan, please see Blaby District Council's dedicated webpage:
<https://www.blaby.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plan/new-local-plan/>

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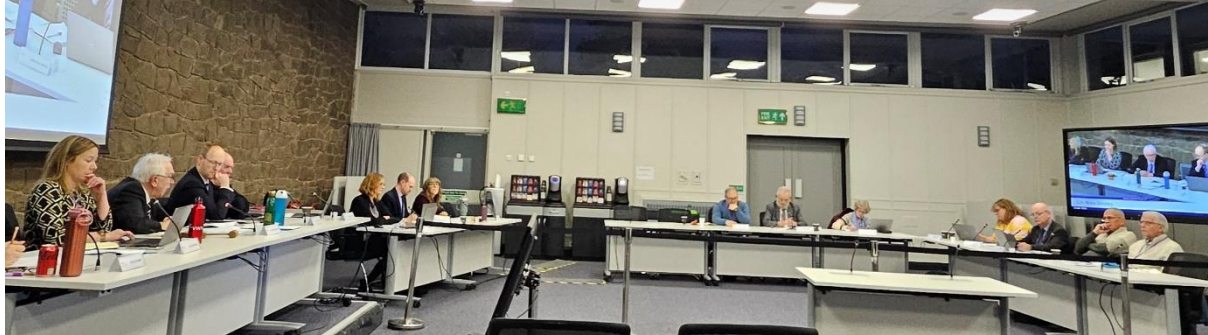
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Major Blaby District Planning Applications



24/0793/FUL – Land off Thurlaston Lane, Huncote
Installation and operation of an Energy Storage System
Application approved by Planning Committee on 13th March 2025

25/0030/FUL – Enderby Leisure Centre, Mill Lane, Enderby
Construction and operation of 200kW Energy Storage System
Application approved by Planning Committee on 13th March 2025

24/1091/RM – Parcel R9, Tweed Street, Lubbethorpe
Reserved Matters application for erection of 57 dwellings
Application approved by Planning Committee on 10th April 2025

24/0004/FUL – Land off Gillam Butts, Countesthorpe
Development of 41 dwellings
Application to be determined by Planning Committee on 8th May 2025

24/0105/FUL – Elms Farm Bungalow, Springwell Lane, Whetstone
Erection of 21 dwellings including demolition of existing bungalow
Application to be determined by Planning Committee on 8th May 2025

24/0117/VAR - Unit 3, Fosse Park Avenue, Grove Way, Enderby
Variation of conditions 2 and 4 of planning permission 15/0577/FUL to facilitate subdivision of unit to create 2 separate retail units.
Application to be determined by Planning Committee on 8th May 2025

24/0615/OUT – Off Hinckley Road, Leicester Forest East
Outline application for demolition of buildings and erection of up to 145 new dwellings.
Application to be determined by Planning Committee on 8th May 2025

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24/0976/OUT – 2 Spring Gardens, Sapcote
Outline application for 9 new dwellings and demolition of dwelling.
Application to be determined by Planning Committee on 8th May 2025

Local Minor Planning Applications

25/0181/HH – 3 Station Road, Elmesthorpe
Proposed porch extension and proposed driveway wall and gates

25/0159/HH – Stable Cottage, Lychgate Lane, Aston Flamville
Detached garage and new gate/entrance

25/0180/HH – 3 High Lees, Sharnford
Single storey rear extension

25/0220/HH – 1 Station Road, Elmesthorpe
Single storey front and rear extension and erection of a detached ancillary accommodation

25/0278/HH – 3 Calver Crescent, Sapcote
Garage extension to front and widening of existing dropped kerb

25/0305/HH – Woodmans Cottage, Lychgate Lane, Aston Flamville
Proposed single storey and two storey extensions. Proposed extension of existing garage to form an ancillary annexe and new access gates.

25/0253/HH – 1 Fox Hollies, Sharnford
Replacement of existing boundary hedge with new fencing.

25/0390/HH – 3 Fox Hollies, Sharnford
Dormer extension and single storey extension to form carport

Appeals

None for Fosse Highcross

Local Planning Enforcement

None for Fosse Highcross

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