



MEETING: COUNCIL

MEETING DATE: 10 JULY 2023

ITEM: 3 – ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Leader's Statement to Council July 2023

Rural Services Network

Like other councillors from Rutland I attended the induction zoom meeting offered by the Rural Services Network. In addition, I also attended a zoom call with Michael Gove organised by Chris Loder MP with support from the Rural Services Network. The topic was the funding gap between urban and rural authorities and whilst the funding formula and cap on funding will not change before the General Election Government is looking for mechanisms to channel more funding to rural areas. I was able to ask Mr Gove to consider rural economies; specifically the low GDP in many rural areas linked, in part, by inadequate transport.

Transport for the East Midlands (TfEM): Board Meeting

Transport for the East Midlands has been established by East Midlands Councils to provide collective leadership on strategic transport issues for the East Midlands. It liaises with Midlands Connect <https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/> the Department of Transport and the National Infrastructure Commission <https://nic.org.uk/> Compared with other regions the East Midlands has been badly invested in with regards to transport infrastructure; hence the need for this body.

The main points discussed this time were the plans for the further electrification of rail in the region, local developments such as a possible passenger rail link between Melton and Nottingham and some research undertaken by TfEM on attitudes to the A1. The most important is that in the section which runs through Rutland people avoid using it because of repeated delays and this, in turn, puts more pressure on local roads leading to local delays and increased repair costs; a point I made!

East Midlands Council's Executive Board

The Board were told a little more about Oflog (Office for Local Government) whose purpose is to benchmark and drive performance improvement. It is badged as a data gathering organisation and initially will focus on adult social care, adult skills, waste management and reserves. Other areas will follow. It is not clear how this body will interface with CQC, OFSTED or the LGA's Sector-led improvement programme. It is not even clear whether Oflog will be gathering existing data or putting a new burden on local authorities to generate data.

There was considerable discussion over the Government's programme for Asylum Seeker and Refugee resettlement. The Government is wanting to cease the use of hotels which means other options are being considered, for example RAF Scampton which we have all heard about and in addition the Government is putting out feelers for new detention centres.

Moving significant numbers of asylum seekers and refugees to an area has a significant impact on the local authority and our partners for social services support, education and health in particular though the Government is not planning these developments with the local authorities. In addition, though, as asylum seekers await decisions on whether they can remain some young adults claim to be minors in order to avoid being deported and whilst there are ways of assessing ages these are costly and time consuming and are being managed locally rather than within a national programme. Another impact for local authorities is that for the large centres such as RAF Scampton, the Government will be buying up the nation's supply of modular buildings to house the refugees so if local authorities need them, for example as temporary classrooms or surgery provision (as we have at Empingham Medical Practice), they will struggle to find a supplier, especially at a price we can afford.

We discussed the work of the Employers' Board and were all encouraged to read <https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/News/njc-guidance-on-remote-and-hybrid-working> Hybrid working has many advantages for both employers and employees but also has disadvantages and so needs to be well managed. We also had our attention drawn to EMC's Councillor Development programme <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-development/councillor-development-1> which includes a number of e-learning modules which many prefer.

Gale Waller
July 2023