October started with 10 days self-isolation for me after I tested positive for covid – I didn’t feel ill but I came into contact with someone who was later positive at a County Council meeting and therefore got ‘pinged’. The resultant test at Birstall was so quick and efficient, from arrival to leaving less than 10 minutes, and I got my results early the next day. If you get contacted by track and trace, or alternatively you develop symptoms, I really would encourage you to go and get a test. Details and how to book can be found here: **www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test**.

Leicester City FC granted Freedom of the Borough of Charnwood

Leicester City FC have been granted Freedom of the Borough of Charnwood by the borough council. The honour, the highest the Council can bestow, recognises the club’s success in recent years and its investment in the Borough of Charnwood.

The honour was conferred at a special meeting of the Council at Loughborough Town Hall on September 14.

Freedom of the Borough does not carry any privileges or powers but it is only awarded in exceptional circumstances where the prospective recipient has rendered eminent services to the borough. They will have demonstrated outstanding achievements in the borough and/or on the international stage which have brought pride and satisfaction to the borough.

Council finances continue to be hit by covid

Leicestershire County Council is preparing itself to address ‘extremely difficult’ financial challenges caused by the continuing pressures of Covid-19, growing demand for services, and its position as one of the lowest funded authorities in the country. The council’s cabinet discussed the latest position with its four year medium term financial strategy (MTFS) at its meeting in September. The council has previous said it needs to find savings of £80 million by 2025, with £23 million of that sum still to be identified.

It says the situation has been worsened still by the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the national economy and the increasing costs of supporting growing numbers of vulnerable adults – particularly those discharged from hospital who need extensive care packages. Current forecasts suggest the gap between the council’s income and what it spends on services could rise by between a further £10 million and £20 million by 2024/25.

As well as the impact on its day-to-day revenue budget spending, the council faces growing pressure on its multi-million pound capital programme. The capital plan aims to deliver major infrastructure projects in Leicestershire over the next four years and costs are expected to rise by £35 million over that period, with the possibility of further costs. The council says it is planning a review of its MTFS over the autumn before it carries out a public consultation on its next proposed budget review in December.

Help identify diseased ash trees and help keep Leicestershire green

Leicestershire residents are being urged to play their part in keeping the countryside green by helping the county council identify and manage diseased Ash trees. The authority’s scheme to plant a whopping 700,000 trees – one for every resident in the county, is already underway; but the council is also dealing with the challenge of Ash dieback.

The highly destructive disease is caused by a fungus and can lead to infected trees shedding branches or limbs, or potentially falling as the tree dies. There are no exact figures of the number of Ash trees in Leicestershire, but it’s estimated there are over 500,000 in the county, with over 120,000 of them next to roads.

As many of these trees are on private land, the council has launched a campaign to raise awareness of the issue among residents, businesses and landowners to remind them of their responsibility to ensure their trees do not become a hazard to road users or people using adjacent pavements. Ash dieback enters a tree through the leaves and bark and young trees die within a couple of years, but mature trees usually take longer. However large trees can become dangerous long before they die, so owners must take action to ensure safety.

 An infection at a point close to ground level can cause whole trees to become unstable and dangerous over much shorter periods with no obvious dieback symptoms in the crown. Diseased trees will show dead tips; sometimes discoloured and also a ‘pom-pom’ effect with clumps of living leaves around the areas affected by Ash dieback.

For more information go to: **www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/conservation-and-sustainability/ash-dieback**

Leicestershire is one of the least wooded areas of the country, currently around 6% woodland – well below the national average of 10%. The county council currently manages around 321,000 trees, but with diseases such as Ash dieback placing more trees under threat, the authority’s strategy and action plan, adopted in May 2020, will see the number of trees across the county increase dramatically.

The county council offers a free tree scheme for landowners affected by Ash die back, in partnership with the Woodland Trust. The scheme aims to replant native trees across the county to replace trees lost in the landscape.

If you need my help with anything please do get in touch.

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