

Councillor Community Fund

Since 1 April 2020, a total of £63,290.20 has been spent by councillors on supporting the delivery of positive outcomes in their wards. Nearly a third of this funding, £20,450.00 has been used directly for COVID-19 support and recovery. This is in addition to the £90,000 COVID specific grant that has already been awarded by councillors to organisations in the Borough.

Northampton Community Resilience Hub

Continue to support those most vulnerable in our communities – 1,222 referrals have been received by our local community resilience hub, individuals and families continue to receive support in getting access to food, with shopping, getting online, picking up prescriptions, support for loneliness, mental health and wellbeing and financial hardship.

Small charities and food banks in Northamptonshire have applied for funds from the “Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies” funded through DEFRA.

The first round of grants has been awarded through the Northampton Hope Centre. Which has been done on behalf of an oversight board made up from representatives of the County Council and Districts and Boroughs on the West to support food banks and local charities and build resilience into these areas.

This grant is for eligible projects that help and support people struggling to afford food and other essentials due to COVID-19 in Northamptonshire, there will be a final tranche of allocations of the funding next month.

A number of focus groups have been carried out with specific groups, including young people, the University, older people and our BAME communities, to gain a better understanding of attitudes and behaviours, in order to direct our communication and engagement activities more effectively.

Forums

1 December – World Aids Day virtual event

3 December – live virtual International Day of People with Disabilities event – Live streamed over You Tube dealing with autism, dementia, PTSD and disability sports.

5 January – community engagement at Thorplands (police priority area) with partners

Ongoing – Planning for virtual International Women’s Day & Inspirational Woman Award

Ongoing – Planning for month long campaign against Violence and Aggression May 2021 with the visit of the Knife Angel to Northampton

Submission of a stage two application has been made to British Cycling/Sport England for a Bike Trail project in the Town.

Events

The council cancelled all outdoor events on council land to support the Governments lockdown restrictions and help reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

The council has continued to deliver some events virtually this included Fireworks on Sunday 1 November; Diwali on Saturday 7 November and Remembrance Day on Sunday 8 November. There was no formal Christmas Light switch-on event this year, however Northampton has switched on Christmas lights across the town centre, Abington Park, Wellingborough Road and St Leonards Road. The council have installed four 40' Christmas trees with 6000 Christmas lights, 200 x 5' small business Christmas trees; lamp post Christmas lights, cross street Christmas lights and Christmas lights in trees along Abington Street, All saints, Market Square and the Guildhall.

This year we erected two large screens in Abington Street showing our virtual events across the year, messages from senior members of our community, Christmas carols, advertisement for town centre businesses, Covid19 safety messages and of course Santa messages as well. The screens operated from the 30 November – 24 December to help make Christmas a little brighter.

2021 looks to be another interesting year with Covid restrictions likely to be around for a many more months but we continue to look at ways of supporting event organisers in delivering safe events for the public to enjoy.

Culture & Heritage

Abington Park Museum remains closed and the decision to reopen will be kept under review against the changing national Covid situation.

The museum service has continued to develop and deliver a range of online events streamed live from Northampton Museum & Art Gallery. In November a third talk led by local historian Mike Ingram entitled Gunpowder, Treason & Plot attracted an audience of 40 adults. Carmela returned to deliver a Christmas pudding & festive desserts workshop which was enjoyed by 19 individuals. December saw Sharn Matthews, a social history expert deliver a talk on Christmas customs and the festive theme continued with a performance of A Christmas Carol by talented local actor, James Hornsby which proved very popular having sold 87 tickets.

Museum Expansion Project

Exhibition installation is almost complete and will be finished at the end of January. The exact opening date is to be confirmed and is subject to the changing Covid 19 situation and the respective tier Northamptonshire is placed in. The museum has undertaken thorough risk assessments and has achieved the 'We're Good To Go' industry standard consumer mark demonstrating we are adhering to Government and public health guidance, have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and have the required processes in place to ensure visitor safety.

Customer Services

We have seen a slight increase in calls in October and November (23,550) compared to August and September (23,246). When comparing with the same period of 2019, there has been a slight decrease in calls. This is mainly due to the reduced service being offered within Housing Repairs where during lock down. However, there is a consistent increase in Housing Solution calls when comparing the same period last year where we received 1061 calls in 2019 and 1922 in 2020 (81% increase). These are due to the increase in enquiries relating to people concerned about being asked to leave their current accommodation. Although evictions are on hold the processes are still in place to ensure customers are being given enough advice to reduce the risk of future evictions. The Customer Service Team meet regularly with the Homeless Reduction

and the Housing Options Managers and have recently reviewed the One Stop Shop (OSS) process and made changes to reduce footfall and wait times. The retrieval of brown bin process has been completed and had little impact on the Contact Centre.

Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

The overall crime rate is falling, with decreases in most categories, including both residential and business burglary. The notable exception being violent crime, which continues to increase.

Incidents of anti-social behaviour recorded by Northamptonshire Police increased by 27.8% during the year to the end of September. Police have been recording reports of breaches of the COVID regulations as anti-social behaviour offences and it is this which has been the main driver behind the increase in anti-social behaviour reports in the first four months of 2020/21.

A secondary measure for anti-social behaviour is criminal damage: figures for the Partnership decreased by 8.2% compared with 2019/20.

A Closure Notice extension for a further 3 months on a property which has caused high levels of alarm and distress to other residents due to the many incidents of ASB, crime, drug taking, and drug dealing has been secured by our ASB Team and a 4th 'Cuckooing' injunction was obtained on a prolific offender who had been persistently targeting the most vulnerable residents in Northampton.

We have launched an ASB reporting form on our website, for members of the public to directly report to the ASB Team.

Youth work commenced in the basement of McDonalds on the Drapery. Identified and promoted as a 'safe space' for young people, where they can access 1:1 and group work support.

During December - supported the delivery of, OPFCC led, Safer Streets home and vehicle security packs to 1,900 homes in the residential area surrounding the Wellingborough Road.

16 Dec – Community Engagement on Wellingborough Road (Op Sceptre; knife amnesty) with Northants Police

Councillor Anna King

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Community Safety