

Economy And Assets

Economic Growth and Regeneration

- Towns Fund: Submission of the Northampton Town Investment Plan was made on 11th Dec. The Town Investment Plan sets out an ambitious plan which would deliver:
 - 15,600 square metres of new and refurbished commercial floorspace (including shared workspace)
 - 24,900 square metres of new public spaces
 - 2,300 square metres of new or expanded cultural and heritage venues, including new space for skills facilities
 - Remediation and enabling works for key sites in the town centre to create new public spaces, new mixed-use urban quarters, and commercial facilities.
- Northampton has been awarded £1m in advanced funding to remediate the former Marks and Spencer's building on Abington Street in order to prepare the site for redevelopment. A contractor has been appointed to undertake asbestos removal and soft strip out which will commence in January
- Grants to businesses as a result of the latest government lockdowns that have been imposed from November have started to be paid out to businesses with over £1m already distributed to local businesses.
- Northampton Museum and Art Gallery – Snagging work are now complete with the opening of the building to take place imminently.
- Vulcan Works Cultural Hub – Work is still progressing well on site with the main buildings now really taking shape which is changing the feel of that area of the town. Work has progressed well despite Covid with many of the facades now viable and the St Johns Building nearing completion.
- Government announced on Boxing Day that Northampton was successful in its bid into the Future High Street Fund, being allocated £8,44m. Northampton was one of just 73 towns selected from over 300 that put Expression of Interest for the fund and will be a great start to the next phase of investment in our town. This money will be used to transform the Market Square, making the area reflect the ambitions of the town. In the coming weeks we will be making further information available about how the money is to be spent.

Property Maintenance

- Service is running fully with officers working remotely responsive repairs, statutory compliance both being dealt with alongside capital project works
- Streetlight project finished with only snagging left to complete.
- Royal Theatre roof repairs contractor selected and works scheduled to be completed before April 2021.
- The specification for the replacement plant at Mounts, Danes Camp and Lings is complete with the procurement of these works to commence in January to appoint a contractor early in the new year.
- Billing Road cemetery gates contractor appointed and works to start end February 2021
- Billing Lakes phase 2 project complete handover to NBC from contractors early January 2021

Corporate Assets

- Recommendations for disposals approved at December Cabinet which included: -
 - Albion House to be sold at market value to facilitate the creation a major centre for leather to be established, which will incorporate the Leather Museum, the Leather Conservation Centre and crafting workshops.
 - A plot of land for a new electricity supply for the Vulcan works project will be sold to the electricity
 - Northampton Sub Aqua Club to be sold to the leaseholder who intends to invest in the site.
- The community asset transfers approved by Cabinet in May for transfer to Billing, Duston, East Hunsbury, Upton and Wootton Parish Councils are progressing through solicitors.
- The sale of land at Blackthorn has completed and the Abington Park Café lease has completed.
- Assets are supporting tenants who are struggling to pay their rent by reviewing accounts, contacting tenants and working with them to find solutions to resolving arrears which have accrued due to the impact Covid 19 has had on their business. There will be an unavoidable increase in the rent arrears as a result of the pandemic.

Town Centre

- The council continues to work closely with the BID and town centre businesses providing advice and support to businesses forced to close as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Footnote

This is likely to be my last report to Northampton Borough Council . after thirty years' continuous membership of the Council. I thank all colleagues, both members and staff, for their support, good humour and tolerance over the years, and wish you and the new Council well for the future.

Cllr Tim Hadland**Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise**