



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

On 11th October we hosted the latest Northampton Alive event at the Guildhall. Representatives from local companies were invited to come along to hear an update on the schemes progress. It was also an opportunity for us to hear the views and comments of local firms and community groups.

The regeneration of our town is moving ahead very quickly. Legal and General have announced a £3m refurbishment of the Grosvenor Centre, the North Gate Bus Station will open on 2nd March 2014, the demolition of the Greyfriars Bus Station will begin on 31st March 2014, work will begin to reopen Abington Street next April, work will begin on the Albion Place Hotel in January, the planning application for the expansion of the Sixfields stadium has been now submitted, and we are expecting The Saints to submit their plans for the expansion of Franklins Gardens during October.

Delapre Abbey has been awarded a £3.2m lottery grant from The Heritage Lottery to go towards the restoration and preservation of parts of the building. The money will be matched by £1.34m from the Borough Council.

Earlier this month Northampton based firm Cosworth Engineering announced plans to invest in a new factory that will create 70 new skilled jobs in the borough. This is great news for our town and is another vote of confidence in Northampton as place to do business.

On 8th October the Prime Minister visited Northampton, and whilst here he praised our efforts to regenerate the town by describing it as 'the beating heart of the British economy'. This was significant recognition of the progress we are making, and evidence of Northampton's growing reputation.

Northampton Borough Council, Moulton College and the Rugby and Northampton Athletics Club have come together to find a new home for the town's athletics club when development work begins at Sixfields. The deal will see the club move to Moulton College's campus to enjoy all the benefits of state of the art facilities to support the athletes train and compete. The new athletics track and supporting infrastructure will be the latest addition to the £18 million investment in sporting facilities already in place at Moulton College.

On 5th October Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service were awarded the Freedom of the Borough in a ceremony at the Guildhall. My thanks to those who attended to officially recognise the important work and bravery of the men and women in the Fire and Rescue Service.

His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester visited Oasis House in Northampton on 3rd October to see the good work being done to help the homeless. Oasis House was officially opened at the beginning of 2012 and has revolutionised the provision of services for homeless people in Northampton.

On 27th September the Steelbacks received a heroes' welcome when they returned to Northampton having completed one of the most successful seasons in the team's history. Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Cricket Club invited supporters to come into the Town Centre to celebrate the players' success. The team set off from the county ground in an open-top bus to parade the T20 trophy through St Giles Street, before arriving at the Guildhall for a civic reception in their honour.

Community Safety

All crime and violence continues to fall and exceed the annual Community Safety Partnership targets. To date there has been a 9.3% reduction in violence, which exceeds the annual target. The summer seasonal peak was less severe than previous years, being consistently below last year's average. Repeat victims of domestic violent crimes have reduced by 22.9% compared to the same period in 2012-13. Serious Acquisitive Crime has reduced by 6.4% and is on track to meet the annual target.

Crime prevention and awareness raising events for University students have taken place during September to coincide with Freshers Week. Students were provided with information packs, property marking and crime prevention advice.

The first CSP Week of Action took place in the Blackthorn and Goldings areas during October half term. There are further weeks of action planned in November and December to support Police pre-Christmas operations.

The Northampton Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) handled 71 cases of serious and persistent anti-social behaviour between April 2012 and March 2013. The majority of these cases related to adults. Early intervention has proved again to be the most effective course of action to deter and prevent continued anti-social behaviour. During 2012/13 the unit sent out 408 warning letters as a preventative measure to those identified as committing anti-social behaviour. Youth outreach workers have also been working in nine areas of the town where youth related anti-social behaviour was identified as a problem. Just seven of the 71 cases referred to the unit led to an ASBO, CRASBO or injunction.

Councillor David Mackintosh

Leader of the Council



Cabinet Member Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

Oasis House

His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester visited Oasis House on the 3rd October 2013 to see at first hand the work that is being done to help the homeless in Northampton. After being introduced to representatives from various agencies, His Royal Highness toured Oasis House taking in the training rooms accommodation, dog kennels, canteen and day centre. During the tour HRH was introduced to support workers, volunteers and service users and commented on how impressed he was with the building and the facilities being provided.

Call Care

The relocation of Call Care from Exeter Place to the third floor of the Guildhall was completed on the 14th October 2013. As well as substantially reducing the accommodation costs of the team this will also release four flats to be reinstated to the housing stock for much needed tenancies. The team's Disaster Recovery site is also being relocated from Eleonore House to the Westbridge Depot. The move has also involved an upgrade to the systems which will involve significant service improvements and savings by nearly halving the annual licence and maintenance fees, making the system paperless and providing the ability to handle all types of calls as well as lifeline calls.

Estate Services Apprentices

On 4th October I presented certificates to six of the Estates Services apprentices. I have been very impressed with the apprentice scheme and very pleased with the progress all six of them have made in the year that they have been with the Borough Council, and the contribution they have made to create such a customer focused and enthusiastic team.

SCATE (Safe, Clean and Tidy Estates)

At the end of September the first large scale consultation exercise on the SCATE project for Briar Hill took place. The project brings together a range of neighbourhood services including Housing Management, Environment Wardens, Leaseholders Services, Capital and Estate Improvements and Customer Engagement in making a concentrated and concerted difference in improving neighbourhoods. With preparations for improvements to porches, windows, brickwork repairs and upgrading unpopular bin areas well underway it was important to go out into the estate and gauge residents' opinions and capture their ideas on what further improvements would make a real difference to the neighbourhood.

Housing Options Review

This project has taken a major step towards its conclusion with both the Tenants' Panel and the Employee Focus Group having scored the five options using agreed criteria and weightings that they have devised. The outcome of this part of the process will be reported to a special tenants' conference to which all of the Borough Council's tenants have been invited.

The outcome was reported in the latest edition of Your Home Your Future which was sent to all members of the Council. Both groups scoring independently of each other placed the creation of an Arms Length Management Organisation (an ALMO) as their preferred option with the transfer of the housing stock to a newly created independent mutual housing association as second. Retention of the housing stock under the current arrangements was placed last by both groups.

The views of these groups will now go forward for consideration by the Housing Options Panel (the member/tenant/employee steering group) which will make its own recommendation to a special meeting of the Cabinet on 4th December, and to then to full Council on 9th December.

Councillor Mary Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing



Cabinet Member Report for the Environment

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

Environmental Services

The new refuse and recycling collection rounds introduced in September affects approximately 22,000 properties. There is an on-going communications programme with those affected and Enterprise is working with the councils Warden Service to ensure any issues are dealt with early and effectively. The purpose of these changes is to reduce the amount of residual waste going to land fill and maximise recycling. All homes affected are being encouraged to fully participate in recycling all that is possible as this will enable the residual waste to fit within the 2 sack collection per week. Enterprise will give advice and facilitate the process of recycling for any property that requires assistance.

The Partnership Unit is working with Housing, Enterprise and SCATE (Safe, Clean and Tidy Estates) to get as many properties as possible transferred from refuse sacks onto containers, such as wheelie bins and eurobins. In September 2013, 101 properties in Ryehill were transferred from sacks to wheelie bins.

Environmental Health

On 7th October the Borough Council, in partnership with the Chewing Gum Action Group (CGAG) launched BIN IT YOUR WAY with the aim of reducing littered gum in our town. The scheme is funded by the chewing gum industry, and the Borough Council is among sixteen local authorities and BIDs taking part this year. High profile advertising will be present at a number of locations around the Borough and Wardens and Rangers will be carrying out education and enforcement, the effectiveness of the campaign will be monitored and an update provided in a future report.

The new round of the Junior Wardens programme has begun with sessions taking place at Ecton Brook Primary school.

Licensing

Multi agency taxi checks have been undertaken with around one in four vehicles being non-compliant.

Multi agency visits involving the Fire Service, the Police and Environmental Health have been undertaken on ten key establishments, with no significant issues being found.

Since the introduction of legislation allowing us to suspend Premises Licences for non-payment, the arrears on Premises Licences has fallen from £21,000 to just over £500.

Councillor Mike Hallam



Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

Events

Events in September included Heritage Open Weekend on the 11th-14th, with over 30 venues open to visitors plus tours and trips to other venues.

In October the Freedom of the Borough Parade for the Northamptonshire Fire Service was held in the Town Centre and Market Square.

The St Crispin Fair will take place between 27th and 29th October. Some changes have been made to this year's arrangements following feedback after last year's event. The fair, which is now in its second year since being reintroduced by this administration in 2012, has proved very popular, and we have asked the organisers to work closely with Town Centre businesses to find out how we can make this year's fair work for them as we help attract more visitors to Northampton.

The Christmas light switch on will be on 21st November and will mark the beginning of our exciting programme of Christmas celebrations, aimed at helping Town Centre traders by giving shoppers a fantastic festive experience.

Coming Out Day took place in the Museum on 11th October, and was the first time this event had been held, working closely with the forums and LGBTQ community.

As Strictly Come Dancing takes over our TVs and as familiar faces from the town prepare for Northampton's Strictly Come spin off, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery opened their latest exhibition, 'Strictly Shoes'. The exhibition launched on 5th October and explores the history of ballroom and Latin dance as well as the social significance of dance in popular culture. Since 2012 the museum has been collecting memorabilia, shoes, costumes, photographs and dance cards from local people, which will be featured in the exhibition to help explore Northampton's dancing past and our love for ballroom dance.

London's ultimate luxury shopping destination, Westfield London, has joined forces with Northampton Museums & Art Gallery to create a ground breaking exhibition that showcases leading UK shoe designers. 'My Favourite Shoe' explores how vintage shoes inspire and influence contemporary designers, with interviews about the designers' work, design process and inspiration. The event is part of a wider drive dubbed The Cinderella Syndrome, aimed at raising awareness of the Northampton shoe heritage collection and making it accessible to new audiences by taking items from the collection into non-museum venues. It has been made possible thanks to an Arts Council England funding award of £47,000 to Northampton Borough Council's museum service.

Fundraising events took place in Northampton from 5th to 13th October to mark Guide Dogs Week. The event was partly organised by the Borough Council's Park Rangers.

Culture & Heritage

The Mods exhibition which was scheduled to end on 29th September had been attracting such interest that we have transferred a large part of it into the shoe lounge in order that it may continue for a further month.

Our museum has been fortunate to be one of just four museums that have been selected to exhibit the amazing reconstruction of King Richard III that has recently been created based on CT scans taken from the skull that was found amongst the remains of the monarch excavated in Leicester earlier this year.

Northampton Leisure Trust, in partnership with the Borough Council and Northamptonshire Sport held the Northampton Sports Awards at the Guildhall on 17th October 2013. The evening was a great success, with the winners of the awards going onto the County Awards being held in November.

Councillor Community Fund

Applications for the Councillor Community Fund are being received on a regular and steady basis, and so far during 2013/14 a total of 59 applications have been received amounting to £38,153. The applications cover a wide range of local initiatives, allowing councillors to make a positive impact on the areas they represent and to empower local residents to be active in their communities.

Customer Services

Following the first of the Partners Synergy Group meetings, Customer Services will now be hosting regular meetings with all our external partners. The purpose of the meetings is to understand each partners role and responsibility, and what their organisations can offer our customers during the Welfare Reforms. These will continue bi-monthly. The benefits to customers are already being delivered with faster referrals and greater access to information and support.

The Contact Centre gave a presentation to the Repairs and Maintenance Service Improvement Place (SIP) mainly consisting of customers/tenants which was well received. This was followed-up with 'shadowing' sessions by tenants with Contact Centre staff to observe and make suggestions to improve. This was followed-up by a successful review session.

Councillor Brandon Eldred

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

Finance

The Chancellor will make his Autumn Statement to the House of Commons on Wednesday 4th December which will provide some indications on what local government can expect in the settlement later that month. We will watch the statement with interest and recognise that everyone must play their part in sorting out the national economy.

We are already aware that the Government is proposing a Council Tax freeze again and this Administration will be proposing no increase in Council Tax again this year in our Draft Budget in December to help hard working people in Northampton in difficult financial times

KPMG, the Council's external auditors have now finalised the audit of the statement of accounts and annual governance statement which were both published on the Council's website by 30th September. KPMG, in their report to the Audit Committee explained that their audit of the Council's financial statements did not identify any material adjustments. The Authority made a small number of non-trivial adjustments which were of a presentational nature and after the addition of an explanatory narrative to the Officer Remuneration note there were no non-trivial uncorrected differences. This is an excellent result and the Audit Committee Chair commented that there had been extra pressures on finance due to changes relating to LGSS and thanked both the staff for their continued professionalism and hard work and KPMG for the presented report.

Work is underway identifying options for the budget setting process for 2014/15 in order to deal with the pressures that there are on local government in these difficult times. Work will continue on this over the Autumn and Winter. Finance staff are currently engaging with Directors, Heads of Service, and budget managers to assist in the identification and analysis of various proposals that will feed in to the development of a draft budget which the Council will put out to consultation in December. There will be difficult decisions that will need to be made to keep the books balanced and the administration is committed to continuing its strong financial stewardship of public money and ensuring that front line services remain as protected as possible.

Revenues & Benefits

We are seeing positive results from the Performance Support Framework introduced in 2012, with overpayment classification accuracy at 99%, its highest level since monitoring began, and Revenues accuracy as high as 97%. These improvements are making a significant difference to the income the Council receives.

The Revenues and Benefits team has been recognised at the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV) Awards. The team won the “blue ribbon” category, Revenues Team of the Year, and were placed second in the Excellence in Staff Development category.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Finance



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

28th October 2013

Town Centre

In October as part of the Freedom of the Borough granted to the Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, a display of vintage and modern fire engines was held on the Market Square.

The development works on the University Accommodation and North Gate Bus Station are continuing on schedule for opening next January and March. The new hotel development on part of the Albion Place car park starts on-site in the near future.

Local businesses were asked for their views on issues in Northampton Town Centre at the Town Centre Summit on 20th September. Former independent retailer Stephen Church chaired the summit, and will now produce a report that will review the issues facing Northampton Town Centre and identify potential future developments. The event was attended by representatives of different groups from the town's day and night time economy including property landlords, independent and corporate retailers, restaurants and hair salons, Northamptonshire Police and the Northampton Town Centre BID.

Regeneration

This summer residents, businesses and visitors to Northampton have asked for the Market Square fountain to be remodelled and turned back on. We asked residents for their views on the future of the fountain, and the majority of people wanted to see the fountain remodelled and turned back on. We have started working with specialists on bringing the fountain back into use for visitors to the Town Centre to enjoy next spring. The remodelling of the fountain is expected to take sixteen weeks to complete and cost around £50,000.

Next year, visitors arriving in Northampton's new North Gate Bus Station will see the town's heritage brought to life through three works of art. Three artists have been chosen to bring their creative talents to Northampton and tell the story of our town. Northampton Borough Council and NN Contemporary Art Northampton selected three artists from 27 applications to work on a fitting welcome to Northampton. Thanks to £75,000 funding from Arts Council England, each artist will have the opportunity to create a celebration of our town's heritage in the new landmark building.

On 11th September Northampton Borough Council's Cabinet approved a report proposing the transfer of land at Midsummer Meadow to create an access route to the proposed new University of Northampton campus via a new bridge crossing of the River Nene

Northampton Town Football Club has submitted a planning application to Northampton Borough Council which will see Sixfields Stadium's capacity increase to about 10,000. The

expansion of the stadium will mark the first stage of a multi-million pound redevelopment of the area which will support growth in the Enterprise Zone and bring forward more revenue streams for the Football Club. With additional planning applications expected later this year for housing and local retail facilities, and plans for a hotel to be submitted early next year. The redevelopment of Sixfields Stadium and the surrounding area is part of a £12 million loan deal put together by Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Town Football Club.

Agreement has been reached on the move of the Rugby and Northampton Athletics Club to a new purpose built facility on the Moulton College campus alongside the College's impressive range of sporting provision.

The planning application for the expansion of Northampton Saints' Franklin's Gardens ground is expected to be submitted during October, and is likely to be determined by the Planning Committee early next year.

Work to demolish Greyfriars bus station is to begin on March 31st 2014. Some decommissioning of the building took place in February this year, when fixtures and fittings were stripped from the former office complex and the overgrown roof-garden areas, once an architectural feature of the building, were cut down. The new North Gate Bus Station will open at the beginning of March 2014 and the Greyfriars building will close completely. The site will be secured and fenced while a detailed demolition programme and site clearing programme is put in place. The physical demolition of the building will take up to eighteen months to complete, after which the site will be ready for redevelopment that will regenerate this area of the Town Centre.

Legal and General have announced a £3m refurbishment of the Grosvenor Centre. This work will be internal and external on the Market Square and is set to be completed before Christmas 2014.

Construction work at Castle Station is progressing well, a temporary footbridge has been installed and highway works are on-going. The foundation piling work is now complete, and the steel frame will begin to take shape in the next few weeks.

A sculpture officially unveiled by King George V has been restored to its original glory to mark its centenary. Over the summer a team of specialists have been hard at work making sure the bust of King Edward VII on the corner of Billing Road and Cheyne Walk is in the best possible condition to mark its centenary and see another 100 years of life in Northampton.

Proposals to establish a Business Improvement District in Wellingborough Road are moving forward following a successful first meeting. Northampton has Business Improvement Districts in the Town Centre and at Brackmills, both of which have been running for a number of years. The Council suggested that BID status might further strengthen and support businesses on the Wellingborough Road as part of a wider package of measures to revitalise the Town Centre. Around 30 business representatives attended the meeting at the Guildhall to discuss the BID proposals.

This summer thousands of people came into Northampton to take advantage of free parking in the Town Centre. During the month of August visitors to Northampton were welcomed with free parking every Saturday and two hours free parking on weekdays in addition to the regular free parking offers. The popular free parking scheme attracted 21%

more cars to the Town Centre. Free parking is part of a raft of initiatives announced in July by the Borough Council to support local businesses, boost the local economy and encourage more people into our Town Centre.

We have been working closely with the Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust and Friends of Delapre Abbey to submit the £3.6 million Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the restoration of Delapre Abbey. We were delighted to learn that the bid was successful. The money will be used to preserve and restore the main Abbey buildings. The Borough Council will provide match funding with an investment of £1.34m. The project involves refurbishing the main Delapre Abbey building, including rebuilding the conservatory and opening the south wing for events, restoring the 18th century stable block into a new reception area, shop, classroom and exhibition space and the 19th century stable yard, creating units for use by small retail businesses. The first phase of work on the Abbey, comprising the replacement of the roof, is a programme supported by English Heritage and the Council, and work will start in the near future and take about six months. The main Abbey restoration will follow on next year.

Cabinet has approved applications requesting the designation of a Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area, received from a group known as Growing Together which is led by local charity Blackthorn Good Neighbours. This means that Growing Together now have the responsibility of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for an area which includes the communities of Blackthorn, Goldings, Lings and Lumbertubs.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning