



## **Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning**

**Northampton Borough Council**

**10<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

### **Town Centre**

On 14th February the last of the scaffolding and protective hoardings were removed from the carriageway in Bridge Street, and traffic is now able to flow in both directions. Following the intervention of the Borough Council the owners of the former Angel Hotel agreed to scale back the protective scaffolding that has partially closed Bridge Street for two years. The repair and restoration of the Grade II listed building will continue, with a smaller amount of protective hoardings and scaffolding. Northamptonshire County Council has also removed the Traffic Order restricting two-way traffic, and the relevant signage and road markings have been changed.

Work to remodel the Market Square fountain began on 20th January. The first phase of work involved upgrading the underground systems serving the fountain. The area has been fenced off and this fencing around the compound will remain throughout the works. The new fountain is due to be turned on in the spring.

### **Regeneration**

This year's budget, which was approved by Full Council on 24th February, was a further commitment from this administration to regenerate the Town Centre, support local businesses and help boost the local economy. Free parking has been extended to help attract more visitors and shoppers into the town, and £13 million was set aside for infrastructure and regeneration projects in Northampton.

From April we will also be supporting local businesses through a Business Incentive scheme that will help to fill empty properties and support small businesses through a range of grants. In addition, the new Business Rate Rebate scheme will give qualifying retail businesses up to £1,000 in Business Rate Relief.

An official ceremony on 1st March marked the opening of the new North Gate Bus Station. The project was completed on time and on budget, and is a great credit to our Regeneration Team and the contractors and advisors. The new facility is a key part of the regeneration of the Town Centre that will improve access and give visitors arriving by bus a suitable welcome to our town. Bus services began operating from the station on 2nd March, which marked the successful completion of another major regeneration project by this Administration.

We are asking people to comment on plans to protect the historic site of the Battle of Northampton and surrounding area. In 1460 Northampton witnessed one of the major conflicts in the War of the Roses. The Battle of Northampton and its aftermath is seen as a significant event, not just in our town's history but as part of the story of our nation. This year we are celebrating the rich and interesting story of Northampton, so it seems only fitting that we are looking carefully at how we can protect the site of one of the most significant battles fought on English soil.

The plan looks at seven key areas:

- Battlefield – location and protection
- Historic landscape
- Nature conservation
- Access and interpretation
- Public use and events
- Landscape
- Management and maintenance

The Consultation closes on 27th March.

New play and activity equipment has been installed at Hunsbury Hill Country Park. The play area now includes a slide for younger children, fitness points and an extended adventure trail, including a double rope swing, which is suitable for all ages. The investment came in response to calls from local people who wanted more activities for children and young people in this increasingly popular park. The equipment has been paid for with £31,500 of s106 fund contributions from a local housing development.

## **Planning**

Plans to enhance the facilities at the County Ground have been approved by the Borough Council. Earlier this year Northamptonshire County Cricket Club submitted plans to replace 1,200 temporary seats with a new 900 seat permanent stand. Last year Northants Cricket enjoyed one of their most successful seasons in recent years, competing in all three formats of the sport. The club finished an impressive season that saw the Steelbacks win the Friends Life T20 and earn promotion to the top division of the LV= County Championship. The new permanent grandstand will be situated to the right-hand side of the indoor cricket school, as viewed from the cricket pitch, and has been designed to be more sympathetic to the area and neighbouring properties.

The planning application for the expansion of Cosworth's Northampton factory is now available online for the public to view and comment on. The world famous high performance technology specialists will be expanding their existing operations to increase Cosworth's engine assembly and manufacturing capacity. This follows Cosworth's plans for a centre of excellence were announced last year at a Northampton Alive event. The application supports the development of a key site within Northampton's Enterprise Zone and will bring forward the new production facility. The planning application has been submitted and the full proposal has been published online. The proposals includes details of a 38,000sq ft facility, located on the southern part of St James Mill Road joining Cosworth's existing site. If approved, construction of the new facility is expected to be completed by August this year.

The Public Examination of the Joint Core Strategy for West Northamptonshire resumes next week, following an adjournment from last July to allow further work on housing and job numbers to be completed. The Borough Council has objected to the proposed modifications and will be represented at the hearings.

## **Councillor Tim Hadland**

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning