



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

28th April 2014

Town Centre Operations

Free weekend parking and two hours free parking on weekdays began on 1st April in Northampton's multi-storey car parks. The scheme is designed to make it more convenient for people to visit our Town Centre and is part of this Administration's commitment to support local traders and the Town Centre economy. This initiative has been introduced after successful summer and Christmas free parking trials, which was received positively by shoppers and businesses. Visitors to Northampton Town Centre will be able to park free of charge on Saturdays and Sundays and for up to two hours free every week day at St John's, St Michael's, Grosvenor Centre and Mayorhold car parks. Parking remains free on Sundays and bank holidays in all Northampton Borough Council car parks.

Regeneration

Northampton has been named top for business according to the latest report from finance data specialist Experian. The key criteria measured were number of start-ups, rate of insolvencies, level of financial health and business turnover. Northampton was the only place in the country to achieve a score as high as 19. We achieved top marks for turnover, start-up and insolvency rates and dropped just one point for financial strength.

Businesses locating to the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone will benefit from tax incentives for a further three years, under measures announced by the Chancellor. This means that businesses moving to the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone will benefit from business rate discounts for five years, with the offer extending until March 2018. Our Enterprise Zone is already giving the local economy a major boost with 465 jobs having been filled in the area from January 2013 to March 2014.

Earlier this month we announced the timetable for the demolition of the old Greyfriars Bus Station. Some internal stripping of fittings had already taken place before contractors moved into the site at the beginning of March to clear the mess left by pigeons and overgrown shrubs from interior courtyards. On 7th April work began to strip asbestos from the building, before the final stripping of internal fixtures and fittings such as lights, power sockets and wall and floor coverings. On Easter Sunday the bridges that link Greyfriars to the Grosvenor complex were removed. Demolition work is scheduled for completion by the end of 2014.

Work has started on a £400,000 project to carry out urgent repairs to the roof of Delapre Abbey. The project is being jointly funded by the Borough Council and English Heritage, and is part of the multi-million pound restoration of the abbey. Building work to repair the roof of the main building has begun, and is essential to prevent leaks into the building that has caused damage to the interior of the abbey. At the same time there are also urgent structural repairs to the north wing of the building. A £200,000 grant has been awarded

from English Heritage's Historic Buildings, Monuments and Designed Landscapes Scheme. English Heritage makes this funding available for conserving and restoring the country's most significant historic assets. This Administration has also committed £200,000 to the project to preserve this much loved treasure.

The Borough Council has now taken over the responsibilities of the development quango WNDC following its demise on 31st March. This Administration will continue to push forward with the regeneration of our town, and we thank WNDC for its assistance.

Carlsberg UK has announced plans to increase its distribution capacity in Northampton with a move from Swan Valley to Brackmills. The move follows completion of Carlsberg UK's new bottling plant in the Waterside Enterprise Zone, further cementing the firm's relationship with our town. If planning permission is granted, the £35million facility at Brackmills will create 50 new jobs and double the company's present capacity.

Church's Shoes are set to press ahead with the expansion of their factory in St James. The Borough Council has worked closely with the Homes & Communities Agency and private landowners to assemble a 4.5-acre site adjacent to the company's headquarters in St James. The company is now in a position to forge ahead with the application process for a new facility which will create up to 140 new skilled jobs at the heart of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone. The company intends to submit a planning application for the multi million project in June, and work is expected to start on site by late summer.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning