



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

14th July 2014

Northampton has been recognised as being among the best places for supporting entrepreneurs and innovators with more small and medium sized businesses being set up here than almost anywhere else in the country.

A government think-tank has placed Northampton as being one of the top ten places in the UK for new small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and also one of the top ten places where SMEs are successfully adopting high-growth strategies.

The Centre for Cities has published its 'Small Business Outlook 2014' looking at the strength and performance of SMEs, which are a vital part of the national economic recovery. Northampton has one of the highest levels of new SMEs as more and more entrepreneurs take advantage of the benefits of beginning their new business in Northampton.

The report also shows how more of our town's SMEs are also using high-growth strategies compared to other areas. This describes businesses that aim for quality rather than price, or deliver highly customised or bespoke products and services.

From 2nd June to 6th June the Guildhall hosted an exhibition showcasing the latest Northampton Alive projects and announced new projects that are set to create jobs and transform our town.

This year's exhibition included:

- Plans for the £14m expansion of Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, and Cultural Quarter improvements
- A 38,000sq ft expansion of Cosworth's Northampton factory
- Creation of 140 new jobs as Church's Shoes expand their existing factory onto a 4.5-acre site
- What is happening with many new developments taking shape in the Enterprise Zone
- The stadium expansions for Northampton Saints and Northampton Town FC
- The new state of the art University of Northampton campus

This is part of this administration's commitment to create new jobs and opportunities for people in our town.

Other new projects include the development of a major commercial area – called FOUR Northampton – on a key gateway location to the Town Centre, and phase II of the Castle Railway Station project, which includes the creation of a multi-storey car park and retail and commercial opportunities. There are now more than 40 projects in the Northampton Alive programme of regeneration, which represent a coming together of agencies in the public and private sector, business and commerce to work together to create a coherent and effective programme of regeneration in Northampton.

On 11th June Cabinet approved plans that will make way for a new £6.5 million creative hub with the creation of 240 jobs. Vulcan Works is one of the latest projects to join the Northampton Alive programme of regeneration which is reshaping our town.

The grade II-listed building, situated in Guildhall Road, was commissioned in the late 19th century by Henry Mobbs & Co to manufacture boot and shoe-making machinery. It occupies a key site within Northampton's Cultural Quarter and the plan is to transform it into an incubator for creative firms, offering space for 70 income-generating businesses.

Work will now begin on the development of a detailed business case. A full range of creative organisations have already been consulted on the plan and their comments will be taken into account. Work will start in 2015 with completion expected by December 2016.

The Borough Council's £250,000 Business Incentive Scheme which was launched in April this year has already made grants available to five businesses. Three vacant town centre units will be brought back into use as well as an industrial unit at the edge of town, creating 24 new jobs.

Businesses on Wellingborough Road are currently being consulted on a draft business plan which sets out a proposal to set up a Business Improvement District (BID) for their area. The Administration is actively supporting this proposal as we consider it is the most effective way to bring businesses together to collaborate on initiatives to improve their trading environment and we believe it will lead to real improvements to the Wellingborough Road area. This is a business-led proposal - run by Wellingborough Road businesses for Wellingborough Road businesses. If there is a positive response to the draft business plan, almost 400 Wellingborough Road businesses will be invited to vote in October on whether they would like to see a BID set up for their area.

During British Grand Prix week we hosted an international party of motor industry and motor sport engineering experts, and provided them with information on opportunities in the Enterprise Zone.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning