



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

15th September 2014

Town Centre

More shoppers than ever are coming to Northampton every weekend as free parking continues to encourage people back into our Town Centre. By the end of June the Borough Council's free parking offer had seen over 23,000 more cars park in the our multi-storey car parks on Saturdays. This is a jump of almost 40% in just three months compared to the number of people parking at the same time last year.

Regeneration

On 14th July we announced that the development agreement between the Borough Council and Legal & General had been terminated. The development agreement, signed in 2009 by the previous administration, obliged Legal & General, subject to a series of preconditions including occupier commitment and financial viability, to attempt to extend the Grosvenor Centre back onto the site of the demolished Greyfriars bus station. Unfortunately, the Greyfriars development did not move ahead as required, and when permission for Rushden Lakes was granted in June, the Borough Council and Legal & General met and the agreement was terminated.

Legal & General are continuing with their multi million pound investment in the Grosvenor Centre, with Next and Primark opening major stores later this year, and the refurbishment of the malls and toilets, which are well underway and due for completion in early 2015.

Throughout August a public information event was held at The Guildhall for anyone to come forward with ideas for the future of the former Greyfriars site, and we will soon be putting together plans to transform the four-acre Town Centre site.

We will continue with the demolition of Greyfriars and are preparing the four-acre site for development, while seeking a developer to draw up plans for a major retail and leisure scheme. It is hoped that planning permission could be obtained and work ready to start on the site in autumn 2015.

We have appointed a contractor to take forward the next phase of the demolition of Greyfriars. DSM Ltd are reviewing and considering all demolition options for the building. The method of demolition will be chosen on the basis of safety and efficiency, and causing least disruption to nearby residents and businesses. The final decision will be made following discussion with the Health and Safety Executive and Northamptonshire Police, among others.

In July it was announced that Northampton is set to benefit from even more Government investment. The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) has been awarded Local Growth Deal investment of £64.4 million. As part of the announcement the Government also provisionally earmarked £20.6 million for road infrastructure improvements, including the St James Mill Road link. This project would

provide the industrial area with a direct connection to Towcester Road, transforming it from a cul-de-sac into a through road, with improved access to the M1 and A45.

In August it was announced that the Dallington Grange development in Northampton, to help deliver 3,400 homes, was on a shortlist of 36 large-scale housing projects in line to receive a share of £850million of funding to get work going onsite and housebuilding started.

During July and August people in Northampton were asked to comment on plans to introduce charges for developers that would help to fund new community infrastructure. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge that can be placed on new development and collected by each local authority. Introduced by the Government in 2010, the CIL will set out the financial obligations developers may be expected to pay in order to contribute towards the cost of additional infrastructure necessary to support development. The CIL is intended to be used to help fund infrastructure that is needed to support new development, for example, roads, schools and community facilities. The Borough Council, in partnership with Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Council, is considering how the CIL could be adopted and used locally.

Enterprise

In April we launched a new Business Incentive Scheme to make it easier for entrepreneurs and businesses to find new premises or expand. Through the scheme, grants and incentives are available to help businesses take on empty or vacant units. So far the scheme has awarded almost £200,000 in grants, which has unlocked more than £1.2m in private investment and will have created nearly 100 new jobs by the end of the year.

During the month of August in the Town Centre, £9,000 in grant funding was awarded to improve the appearance and shopfront of Chanse Leather Goods in Abington Street and 44-46 Bridge Street. Three Town Centre grants worth more than £16,000 were awarded to Café Creperie, Action Support and The Courtyard Café to take on previously vacant units. The Business Improvement Scheme is also supporting the creation of a new boutique hotel in Guildhall Road and a grant has been awarded to refurbish 13 Guildhall Road into a new hotel, restaurant and café within the Cultural Quarter. £35,000 has also been awarded to three more growing businesses. Northampton Hope Centre, Uber Shop Ltd and MJB Accountants will all be expanding existing facilities or relocating to new bigger premises thanks to our grants.

The Waterside Enterprise Zone continues to attract interest from developers and potential occupiers. In particular the new production facility for Cosworth is nearing completion, with production starting in the next few months. This will provide high quality employment and apprentice opportunities.

The University Innovation Centre was topped out at the beginning of the month, and is already attracting a lot of interest from potential start-up businesses.

The new railway station will open to passengers in the next few weeks, and this will allow the next phases, the demolition of the old station, and the construction of a new multi-storey car park, to proceed.

Councillor Tim Hadland

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning