



## Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

27<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### Events

In September we announced the fantastic schedule of events that will take place in the Town Centre in the run up to Christmas. Highlights include a German Christmas Market, the return of the St Crispin Street Fair and a spectacular firework display in partnership with the University of Northampton and supported by Heart FM on Bonfire Night.

The St Crispin Street Fair will return to the Town Centre from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> October with some spectacular rides.

On 20<sup>th</sup> November the town will light up for Christmas with the annual lights switch on in the Market Square. There will be a full programme of festive fun, including entertainment from Royal & Derngate panto stars before the lights are switched on and the magic of Christmas begins.

One of the highlights of the switch on evening will be the launch of a German Christmas Market, which will set up along Abington Street to sell traditional food, drinks, gifts and crafts until 21<sup>st</sup> December.

A festival of Christmas songs and carols will take place on the Market Square on 14<sup>th</sup> December from 4pm to 5pm.

This is a great line up that kick starts with the street fair in October half term. It promises to provide a lot of fun before November's Bonfire Night and Christmas launch.

### Culture & Heritage

September saw the opening of the 'National Grid' exhibition at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery. The exhibition commemorates the dismantling of the 150 year old gasworks site on Towcester Road. With the old site now being regenerated, this exhibition looks back at a power house of the industrial revolution and the lives of those who worked there.

Heritage Open Days at Abington Park Museum saw a local Music and Drama group interpret memories of Abington Park from elderly residents of St Johns Home on the Wellingborough Road.

During October, the Northampton Town & County Art Society opened for their 101<sup>st</sup> annual show at the Guildhall Road venue. The exciting array of artists' work is on display in this ever popular annual exhibition and most exhibits are for sale.

On 3rd October a new exhibition opened at Hazelrigg House entitled 'Echoes of Northampton Castle'. The building is one of Northampton's oldest, and is close to the Norman Church of St Peter, and the site of the medieval castle. Displays in the house discover its past in a family friendly exhibition.

Ukulele Workshops have been on offer to budding players at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery during October. Half term workshops have also been open to young people with topics ranging from 'Leather Stamping', 'The Big Draw' and 'Ghoulish Crafts'.

### **Northampton Leisure Trust**

The Trust, in partnership with the Borough Council and Northamptonshire Sport, hosted its 6th Annual Sports Awards evening at the Guildhall on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The event was funded by eleven different sponsors and celebrated and showcased local sporting achievement, dedication and hard work across fourteen categories. Winners go forward to the Northamptonshire Sports Award being held on 6th November.

### **Forums**

The LGBTQ forum has been promoting the 'Straight Allies' campaign, which was the focus for International Coming Out Day, held at the Royal & Derngate Theatre on 11<sup>th</sup> October.

The Youth Forum supported the Borough Council's Heritage Open Days by providing tours around the Guildhall, and the Diverse Community Forum has been getting involved in supporting Diwali, which we were successful with a bid to the Arts Council, for £10,000.

### **Customer Services**

National Customer Services Week is a great opportunity to highlight how the Borough Council works to provide services for customers as well as demonstrating strong partnership working with external partners. This year's National Customer Services Week ran from 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> October, and events included:

Staff Borough Council staff and Barclays' Digital Eagles were at the One Stop Shop to give customers a variety of support and demonstrate how to use services online.

On 7th October The Guildhall's Courtyard was home to many of the council's partner organisations who were there to talk to residents about their services. In the Market Square other partners, including Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue and the council's Call Care team and Neighbourhood Wardens were available to talk about their work.

On 10th October the Borough Council joined up with Barclays' Digital Eagles to provide basic IT skills, including how to safely shop online, how to create an email account and use mobile and internet banking as well as demonstrating how to keep in touch with friends and family, making free calls with messaging client, Skype.

**Councillor Brandon Eldred**

Cabinet Member for Community Engagement