



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Northampton Borough Council

19th January 2015

Town Centre Operations

The Christmas free parking offer was well received by visitors, and initial figures indicate an increase in parking and footfall in the town centre during the festive season.

On 12th January Campbell Square car park will be closed for one week to allow for resurfacing as part of our ongoing improvements to car parks around the town. Motorists who usually use Campbell Square car park are advised to use Upper Mounts car park which is the nearest alternative car park.

On 19th January Abington Place car park will be closed for one week for resurfacing and motorists are advised to use St Michael's multi-storey car park on Abington Square, which is the nearest alternative car park. Notices were put up before Christmas in the two car parks to inform motorists of the planned closures

The new heating system has been installed at North Gate bus station, and has been in operation over the Christmas and New Year period to make the facility even more comfortable for those using it. The installation was completed on time ahead of the onset of winter weather.

Regeneration

On 8th December 2014 the top of Abington Street has reopened to traffic for the first time in decades. The newly reopened section of Abington Street has 30 additional parking bays that are free to use for up to two hours, as well as dropping off points and seventeen disabled parking bays. The temporary barriers that are currently in place will be replaced with permanent barriers once final assessments are completed.

There has already been great interest from businesses seeking to locate on the newly re-opened Abington Street, and we hope this will see the street thrive once again. We would like to thank all of the businesses on Abington Street for their patience through the reopening process.

Preparations are underway for manufacturing at Cosworth's new facility in the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone. New machinery is arriving and being calibrated, then tools will be set and catalogued to ensure each provides the exacting level of precision needed. The Borough Council built the new facility and handed it over last week to what is one of the UK's best known performance motoring brands. The new Advanced Manufacturing Centre will be right at the cutting edge of precision engineering, creating around 70 direct jobs with more in the supply chain. The new 38,000-square-foot facility will house an advanced flexible manufacturing system

capable of producing complex machined components for high-performance, limited production road vehicles.

In December we announced twelve more grants through the Borough Council's Business Incentive Scheme. The grants, worth a total of £120,000, will create almost 70 new jobs and unlock just under £600,000 in private sector investment to the local economy.

In just nine months, the Business Incentive Scheme has helped 36 businesses expand and grow and reduced the number of vacant or empty units in the town. The Borough Council has committed £305,000 in grants, which will lead to £1.6m of private sector investment by the private sector, creating over 120 jobs for local people. Plans to extend and expand the scheme that has helped almost 40 businesses since April 2014, have been announced as part of the budget proposals for 2015/16.

As well as continuing the scheme permanently after April, the Borough Council is proposing the creation of a mentoring system that would help support new businesses through their difficult first months of trading. The Borough Council, working with business partners, will provide an expert to work with new businesses to help give them the best possible start.

Planning

In December planning permission was given for the conference centre and 100 bed hotel, as well as giving the go ahead to 255 homes and a small number of retail units on land surrounding Sixfields Stadium. The development of Sixfields Stadium is essential for the future prosperity of Northampton Town Football Club. It will allow them to generate income all year round and maximise revenue, putting the club on a sound financial basis from which to develop and move forward.

The Planning Section has been given the "Smarter Planning Champion" status by DCLG for actively encouraging and providing IT supports for applicants to submit planning applications via the planning portal. Over 75% of planning applications have been submitted through the Portal to the Borough. This status has only been given to 60 Local Planning Authorities in England.

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning