



Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

2nd March 2015

Councillor Community Fund

The Councillor Community Fund was introduced by the Administration in April 2012 to provide £3,000 per year to each councillor to allocate to community organisations or projects. Over 600 applications were received and over £374,000 of funding was allocated by councillors.

The Councillor Community Fund has been a popular scheme and has enabled individual councillors to direct thousands of pounds of funding where it will do the most good in their communities or to support community events.

Partnership Grants

During the last four years, the Administration has allocated a total budget of £2.2 million has been awarded in Partnership Grants to 96 community and voluntary groups. The small grants process is administered by the Northamptonshire Community Foundation on behalf of the Borough Council and 58 projects have benefited from the scheme with £100,000 a year in small grants.

Forums

The Administration has strongly supported the Forums to allow for public engagement and involvement with the work of the Borough Council.

I am grateful for the work undertaken by the Disabled People's Forum; the Diverse Communities Forum; the LGBTQ Forum which has continued to mark the annual International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and, since 2013, has also marked International Coming Out Day; the Pensioners' Forum; and the Women's Forum which was introduced by the Administration in 2012 and has marked International Women's Day since 2013 and also introduced the annual Inspirational Woman of the Year Award; and the Youth Forum which won the National Diversity Award in 2012.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the co-chairs of the Forums – Cllr Phil Larratt and Mr Martin De Rosario (Disabled People's Forum), Cllr Christopher Malpas and Mr John Rawlings (Diverse Communities Forum), Cllr Anna King and Mr Matthew Toresen (LGBTQ Forum), Cllr Brian Oldham and Mr Roger Rumsey (Pensioners' Forum), Cllr Anna King and Ms Jane Carr (Women's Forum), and Cllr Anna King and the young people who have helped to lead the Youth Forum. Through their hard work we have seen the Forums play an active role in community life and support the work of the Council.

Museum Service

Refurbishment work was carried out the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery during 2012 and to Abington Park Museum in 2014.

In April 2014, the Administration announced plans for a major expansion of the Museum building into the Old Gaol block when Northamptonshire County Council relocate staff as part of the Project Angel regeneration project. Plans were also announced for Abington Park Museum, which will focus on the building's connection with William Shakespeare and on the history of the Northamptonshire Regiments. The Council will also explore how some parts of the building, known as Abington Manor, can be used for other purposes such as conferences or weddings.

In July 2014, the Sekhemka statue sold for a record-breaking £15.7million with the Borough Council receiving around £8million which was allocated to the Museum Service for the expansion plans.

Despite the challenging financial situation, the Administration also increased the opening hours for the museums in April 2014.

Northampton Leisure Trust

The Northampton Leisure Trust was set up in 2011 and remains a key partner. It received charitable status from the Charities Commission in February 2012. Under this Administration, the Borough Council has worked in partnership with the Northampton Leisure Trust to host the Northampton Sports Awards at The Guildhall, with the winners of the awards going onto the Northamptonshire County Sports Awards.

In October 2012, the Northampton Leisure Trust also took over the management of Duston Sports Centre on behalf of Duston Parish Council and supported by the Borough Council.

Events

Bringing events to Northampton has helped to attract visitors to the town and support local businesses and has been a key objective for the Administration.

June 2012 marked HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and The Big Jubilee Picnic was held in Delapre Park as part of the celebrations with Union Jack bunting around the town and street parties held by local people.

In July 2012, the Olympic Torch came to Northampton ahead of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Over 45,000 people lined the streets of Northampton to watch the Torch pass through the town. Other events were held in the town as part of the Cultural Olympiad including Games Time at Delapre Park with music, video and fireworks; Godiva Awakes with a 33ft high puppet powered by 100 cyclists passed through Northampton en route to London wearing bespoke riding boots designed by Northamptonshire boot maker, Horace Batten and which are now on display in the Museum; and The Lionheart Project saw three giant hand crocheted lions displayed on the Market Square.

Christmas remains an important town for visitors to the town and businesses and the Administration has worked with businesses and partner organisations to provide a positive experience with high profile ceremonies to switch on the Christmas lights, an ice rink on the Market Square in 2012 and a German Christmas Market in 2014.

The Administration introduced the Alive at Delapre music festival in 2013 which has attracted thousands of visitors to listen to Paul Weller, The Wanted, James Morrison,

Simple Minds, a host of 80s stars and Boyzone. The event will continue in July with performances from Jessie J and Alfie Boe.

In 2013, the Borough Council saved the popular Delapre Beer Festival from cancellation by taking over the event after CAMRA announced it would be stepping down. The Borough Council ran the event for a second year last year with over 6,000 visitors and it will return again in May to be managed by Phipps Brewery and CAMRA.

In November 2014, the Administration brought back the popular Fireworks Display to the town with a fantastic display on Midsummer Meadow attended by 18,000 people.

The Administration also brought back the popular St Crispin's Fair in October 2012 which is now an annual fixture on the town's events calendar and increased to four days in 2014. The fair attracts thousands of families into the town centre and Market Square and received positive feedback from the public and businesses.

In May 2014, Northampton hosted the first ever Women's Cycling Tour in the town centre which attracted thousands of visitors.

The Administration introduced the On The Waterfront festival in Becket's Park in 2013 which included a big screen showing of Andy Murray's win at Wimbledon and, in 2014, included the town's first outdoor film festival allowing families to watch a free line-up of films including Disney's "Frozen", "Mamma Mia", "Despicable Me 2" and "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs".

To mark fifty years of the British Grand Prix at Silverstone, the Administration introduced the Grand Prix Experience in 2014 including pit stop challenges, race driving simulators and stands from the Mercedes Formula 1 team, Silverstone Race Track and the Richard Sanders Group.

Other annual events remain important parts of the town's calendar including Remembrance Sunday, the Diwali lights procession with the Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation, Holocaust Memorial Day, events to mark World AIDS Day and the Heritage Open Weekend. Earlier this month we also introduced events to mark Chinese New Year.

The Bands in the Park season in Abington Park remains an important focus for the Administration and the season now runs from April until September with a vast range of popular bands which help to attract people to the park, and the Administration remains committed to continuing this programme.

Tourism

The Administration introduced the Love Northampton website in February 2012 with a website dedicated to promoting events and venues across the town. Since its launch, the Love Northampton website has helped to promote over 2,000 events at around 100 venues and has also supported over 450 shops, businesses and restaurants across the town.

In February 2013, the Love Northampton tourist guide was published supported by sponsorship from local businesses. It proved popular and was republished in 2014 and 2015. In January we also launched the Love Northampton smart phone app and last

month we hosted a Love Northampton event on Valentine's Day at The Guildhall to showcase local businesses in Northampton.

Armed Forces Community Covenant

The Armed Forces Community Covenant for Northampton was introduced by the Administration in March 2013 and was signed by a number of partner organisations to recognise the important role played by our Armed Forces. The Community Covenant includes a commitment to mark important events like the annual Armed Forces Day in June and Remembrance Sunday in November but also to support serving members, veterans and their families through services provided by the Council and partners.

On 23rd June 2013, the Borough Council joined with The Royal British Legion and the Korean Veteran's Association to hold a drumhead service of commemoration and dedication at the Abington Square War Memorial to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the armistice of the Korean War. The ceremony also included the unveiling of a new memorial to all those who have died on active service and through terrorism from Northampton since 1945.

The seventieth anniversary of the D-Day landings in June 2014 was marked with a drumhead service at the Abington Square War Memorial, followed by a parade back to The Guildhall.

In August 2014, the centenary of the start of the First World War was marked with a series of events. The opening of a major exhibition at the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, "A Shoemaker Goes to War" started a weekend of commemorations including a Service of Commemoration at All Saints' Church and a candlelit vigil at 10pm on 4th August 2014 to mark the moment that lights went out across Europe.

One Stop Shop

The One Stop Shop remains an important focus of providing front line support and advice to people and the Administration has continued to enhance and improve the services and support available by working with partners and by making space available.

An enquiry desk for Northamptonshire Police was introduced to the One Stop Shop in February 2014 as an opportunity to bring together services offered by the Police and the Borough Council.

In April 2014, the Borough Council joined with the not-for-profit financial co-operative, the Northamptonshire Credit Union, to open a new access and information point at the One Stop Shop. The new access point has allowed the Credit Union's advisors to be more accessible and to be open to the general public for longer opening hours.

Community Centres

The Administration carried out a process of detailed public consultation to transfer control of the town's community centres to local voluntary and community organisations.

The following transfers took place:

- Duston Community Centre to Duston Parish Council in January 2012
- Abington Community Centre to its existing management committee in March 2012

- Alliston Gardens Community Centre to Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre in March 2012
- Bellinge Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Briar Hill Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Camp Hill Community Centre to its existing management committee in March 2012
- Kings Heath Community Centre to the Need to Know Centre Northampton in March 2012
- Kingsthorpe Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Rectory Farm Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Semilong Community Centre to Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre in March 2012
- Southfields Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Spencer Dallington Community Centre to Deafconnect in March 2012
- Standens Barn Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- St James Community Centre to The Doddridge Centre in March 2012
- The Pastures Community Centre to its existing management committee in March 2012
- Vernon Terrace Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in March 2012
- Lodge Farm Community Centre to Community Spaces Northampton in January 2013
- Far Cotton Community Centre to its existing management committee in November 2012
- Parklands Community Centre to its existing management committee in April 2014
- Blackthorn Community Centre to Blackthorn Good Neighbours in June 2013
- Weston Favell Parish Hall to the Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation in April 2014

The Community Centres are now effective facilities for local people across the town's communities and the Borough Council has effective partnerships with all of the voluntary and community organisations running them. The transfer process has been praised nationally and the Administration worked hard to improve the situation inherited from the previous administration.

New Parish Councils

A Community Governance Review was carried out throughout 2012 with local referendums being held in six communities across the Borough. People in West Hunsbury and Hunsbury Meadows voted to establish new parish councils to better represent their areas and help to decide on local services and the first elections were held in May 2013.

Sports Clubs

The Administration has worked hard to build bridges with the sports clubs following the problems during the Liberal Democrat control of the Council.

The Administration now has positive relations with Northamptonshire County Cricket Club, Northampton Saints Rugby Club and Northampton Town Football Club, and all of these clubs have been able to proceed with development plans in the last four years by working constructively with the Council.

In April 2012, the three sports clubs started selling tickets from the One Stop Shop to help make it easier for people to buy tickets in the town centre.

In September 2013, the Cricket Club celebrated promotion to Division 1 and winning the Friends Life t20 Trophy with an open top bus parade through Northampton and a Civic Reception at The Guildhall.

Over 30,000 people crowded the streets of Northampton in June 2014 to celebrate The Saints' wins of the Aviva Premiership and the Amlin Challenge Cup with an open top bus parade through the town. Later this month we will also be staging a Festival of Rugby with The Saints to mark the LV= Cup final being staged at Franklin's Gardens with a wide range of activities to celebrate the game of rugby.

As part of the Administration's plans to develop Sixfields Stadium, the Council has supported the Rugby and Northampton Athletics Club to become part of the multi-million pound sports complex at Moulton College and the sod cutting ceremony took place in January.

It has been a privilege to serve as the Cabinet member for Community Engagement since 2011 and I am proud of all that has been achieved in my Department. I would also like to thank Cllr Anna King who has served as my Assistant Cabinet member since 2011 who has been a fantastic help to me.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet member for Community Engagement