



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

7th March, 2016

The period since the last Council meeting has been a very busy one, with a number of major steps forward.

Budget and Corporate Plan

The Cabinet and officers have worked hard together on ensuring that the Council's budget and plans, to be agreed at Budget Council on the 29th February, provide a balanced financial position and a strong base for the future whilst continuing our momentum towards building a better Northampton.

Northampton Alive

Investment in Northampton Alive and in developing and growing Northampton continues. On the 22nd February, work started on the public realm improvements to St Giles Street which will enhance the Great British High Street. The County Council's Angel Street Building is progressing well. The development of a new screen at the Errol Flynn Filmhouse has received a boost with £100,000 funding from the Arts Council. The new boutique hotel on Guildhall Road is well underway as are plans for the Museum and Art Gallery and for the Vulcan Works.

Economic Success

These and many other projects are driving Northampton forward. The Centre for Cities Outlook published a few weeks ago ranked Northampton as the highest performing town or city outside London for business start-ups, with the second highest employment rate, in the top ten for digital connectivity, the number of local businesses and population change. We are also in the top 25 towns and cities for (low) CO2 emissions, number of private sector jobs and jobs growth, and number of patents held locally.

Northampton is an increasing economic success story. Looking ahead at the new developments underway and projected, not least the new University campus, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the future.

Private Sector Housing

The Cabinet have adopted new policies for the regulation and enforcement of standards in the private rented sector. I was pleased that this policy had substantial cross-party support and support from the Landlords Forum. This represents a sea change in our approach to this important sector and will be further built upon through the creation of the Social Lettings Agency in the near future.

County Council

I am pleased to note that following representations from this Council and others the County Council amended its budget proposals to not cancel County Council support for the County Travellers Unit, and not to pursue a saving to NCC of £4m through combined authority arrangements. I remain committed to working closely with the

County Council and Borough and District Councils to seek ways to share costs in the future as outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Big Sleep Out

Thank you to all councillors who supported me at the Big Sleep Out for the Hope Charity, and congratulations to those who took part themselves. I am pleased to say that my sponsors raised £1,389 which was more than I could possibly have hoped for.

St. Giles Street

As mentioned above, work has started on the phased refurbishment of St Giles Street. Businesses are remaining open throughout the works and I am sure we all look forward to supporting them in doing so. On March 12th, a special St Giles Fair will be held at the Guildhall to promote these important businesses and celebrate this great high street, as well as other local businesses.

Councillor Mary Markham
Leader of the Council