



Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

12th December 2016

Since becoming Deputy Leader of the Council, I have been supporting the Leader and Cabinet colleagues across a variety of areas within the council, and can report on some of my specific responsibilities as below.

Market

Our historic market is one of Northampton's great assets. It remains a priority. The market must be a vibrant trading area providing a good and diverse retail offer to the citizens of the town and beyond.

I recently attended my first meeting of the Market Advisory Group. While I appreciate the value of such forums, they must be representative. I was very disappointed that few Market Traders were present at the meeting. We must engage with the traders in order to develop the market so that it is the vibrant place we all want it to be. I am therefore currently meeting with traders and officers to discuss how to best to engage and work with traders in order to improve dialogue and move forward positively.

I have learned that it is a difficult time for Market Traders, and there is much uncertainty over the future. For the traders to be successful and to continue trading for the benefit of customers we need to maintain our support and investment in the facility. A new cleaning machine has recently been purchased that will deep clean the surface and other assets improving the environment. New stall covers are due to be provided in the New Year. Consideration is also being given to re-configuring the stalls in order to improve permeability and provide better stall frontages.

Events remain an important feature on the market in order to attract visitors and I would like to thank my colleague Councillor King for recent events, and Christmas activities on the Square.

Councillor Training

I attended my first meeting of the Councillor Development Group on 24th October. Through the Group and following suggestions from individual Members, the following events have been arranged:

- **07/12/16** - Licencing Committee Training on Hackney and Private Hire Licencing
- **Mid-January** - Licencing Committee Training on Liquor Licencing
- **30/01/17** – VOICE Northamptonshire will make a presentation on their work that is open to all Councillors. Two sessions one at 2.00 pm and another at 6.00 pm
- **06/02/17** – Lone Working System to be delivered by Louise Musson. Two one hour sessions, one at 2.00 pm an another at 6.00 pm
- **16/02/17** – Local Plan Briefing open to all Councillors to be delivered by Peter Baguley. One session, 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm
- **22/02/17** – Overview & Scrutiny Training for Scrutiny Committee Members. Provided by an external training provider. One session 6.00 pm to 8.30 pm
- **02/03/17** – Briefing open to all Councillors on Council Performance and Performance Reports delivered by Alice Turrell. Two sessions, 2.00 pm to 3.00 pm and 6.00 pm to 7.00 pm
- **22/03/17** – Briefing open to all Councillors on Urban Development delivered by John Dale and Peter Baguley. One session at 2.00 pm lasting all afternoon and will involve site visits by mini bus

- **03/04/17** – Chaining Skills Training open to all Councillors. Two sessions one in the afternoon, 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm and one in the evening, 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm. Provided by an external training provider
- **05/04/17** – Community Engagement Training open to all Councillors. One three hour session commencing at 5.00 pm. Provided by an external training provider
- **26/04/17** – Social Media Training open to all Councillors. Two sessions one at 2.00 pm and the other at 6.00 pm. Provided by an external training provider

Further details regarding these sessions can be obtained from Tracy Tiff.

These sessions have all been arranged at the request of Members, and I would welcome hearing ideas / proposals / needs from any Members regarding training.

Sports Clubs

I am currently making arrangements to meet with our valued professional sports clubs early in the New Year.

Scrutiny

Scrutiny plays an important role in the work of the Council and is valued. I am monitoring the progress of Scrutiny Reports and can confirm the Cabinet will consider its responses to outstanding reports as follows:

- Match Day Parking – February 2017
- NBC Owned Street Lighting – January 2017
- Impact of the effectiveness of the enforcement of Licensing Policies – Taxis and Private Hire – January / February 2017
- Impact of Anti-Social Behaviour on the Town – January /February 2017
- Heath Check of the Local Economy – December 2016

Street Lighting

I hope to Chair the Member / Officer Working Group continuing the work of the Scrutiny Group regarding NBC owned Street Lights if Cabinet accepts the recommendation of the Scrutiny Panel to establish the Group. This is an important matter and presents risks that we must address.

NCC is currently finalising its plans to install new street lighting within Northampton Town Centre. Concerns have been raised about the impact and appearance of new lighting columns in the major conservation area of the town centre around All Saints – Wood Hill, George Row and Mercers Row - as well as St Giles Square. Consequently I, along with our Planning Officer and Heritage Officer met with NCC / Balfour Beatty officers to discuss our concerns. They were very receptive. We are now working together to identify a sensible solution that ensures the new lighting sits well within this sensitive area without being obtrusive and adversely impacting on the listed building and structures in the locality. This includes a design and height of column that is appropriate to this heritage setting and that reflects the design of our own existing lights in the area.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 12 December 2016

Town Centre

Parking

The overall parking figures for the period April – October saw 1,562,794 car park users, an increase of 66,275 (4.4%) on the same period last year.

The two hour free parking in the council's multi-storey car parks in the same period saw 595,148 customers taking advantage of the free parking, a year on year increase of 81,289 (15.8%).

The free Saturday parking offer in the council multi-storey car parks for the same period saw 255,276 customers take advantage of the free parking, up 37,446 (17.2%) on last year.

The reopened St Giles Street has been pressure washed to reveal the silver colour to match Guildhall Road. The next Phases are similar improvements currently being considered.

Footfall

Footfall in the town centre for October was 1,499,027, an increase of 65,579 (4.6%) on the same period last year.

Overall for the year (April – October), there is an increase of 585,724 (7.6%) compared with last year.

Planning

The Northampton Local Plan (Part 2)

The Options Consultation closed on 21 November. Approximately 50 respondents' submitted comments and all responses are currently being logged and assessed.

Kingsthorpe Conservation Areas

Both of the Conservation Areas in Kingsthorpe are currently being reviewed. Public consultation has now commenced and runs from 8 November to 20 December. All residents in the affected areas will receive a leaflet setting out the proposals. The Council has a statutory duty to review its conservation areas - Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Growing Together Neighbourhood Plan

The Examiners Report was received on 9 November 2016. The report and the next stages of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation process including the Referendum will be considered by the Cabinet on 7 December 2016.

N/2015/1249 – The S106 agreement for the planning application to develop 64 dwellings at Ecton Brook Playing Fields was completed on 28th October and formal planning permission issued.

N/2016/0810 – An outline planning application for the development of 200 residential units at the University of Northampton Avenue Campus has been received.

The public inquiry for the Milton Ham appeal will commence on 29th November and is expected to last for 3 days.

Regeneration and Assets

Delapre Abbey

The works to extend the Car Park is scheduled to be completed in early 2017, in time for the opening in the Spring.

As the construction project nears its conclusion, a number of issues have come to light which will affect the total cost and the timetable for opening. Cabinet is considering the issues, which include a delay caused by the requirement to lay new gas and electricity mains to the Abbey. We will receive the Abbey from the contractors early in the New Year, in time for DAPT to complete the fit-out, Interpretation and training for an Easter opening. DAPT has been particularly successful in recruiting and training volunteers in recent months, which is a measure of the excitement that is building to be part of the Town's premier heritage project.

Vulcan Works

The Planning Application for the main project, a partnership between the Council and the University, has been submitted
Wates are the appointed contractor and they are pricing the works
The works will include the demolition of the former amalgamated tyres site, to be replaced with a new build office block.

Rail Station Multi-Storey Car Park

Preparatory work is continuing with Network Rail and the Department for Transport

Bellinge Depot – proposed temporary school

We have conducted extensive discussions with the tenant, an educational trust, concerning building work and planning permission for a temporary educational facility. These have been successfully concluded and following consultation with residents a planning application has now been made.

Sale of Land at Blackthorn Local Centre

A planning application was submitted by Blackthorn Health Care Ltd for a pharmacy relocating from the local supermarket. In response to objections received from residents and the police we have proposed a replacement site in an end terrace unit of a local retail parade and are completing negotiations.

Land at Crow Lane - Sale of Land

Following extensive negotiations for the sale of the above land, all matters have now been agreed and exchange of contracts is expected imminently. This will facilitate the expansion of a manufacturing company that relocated to Northampton.

Main Road - rent review

We have successfully conducted a review of the rent for an industrial property in Main Road. After extensive negotiations we have been successful in securing a 50% increase on the previous rental level. This reflects the strong local market for such premises.

72 St. Giles Street (Former "C'est La Vie")

The lease to the new tenant Barbarella Hair Limited has been completed and the new tenant who is moving from a smaller unit at No. 21 St. Giles Street is currently undertaking fitting out works. We wish them every success in their new premises.

Danes Camp Lift upgrade.

We have recently completed to upgrade the passenger lift at Danes Camp. The work was completed on time and within budget and will provide increased reliability, reduced running costs, higher speed, and improved ride quality.

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 12th December 2016

Finance

Autumn Statement

The Autumn Statement was published by the Government on 23 November. This included a number of announcements that could affect local government, particularly in relation to regeneration, growth and housing. The impact of the announcement is being assessed to understand the opportunities and implications for the Council.

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is expected in the middle of December and is anticipated to confirm the Efficiency Plan and the updated New Homes Bonus scheme.

Efficiency Plan and Budget

The Council's Draft Budget proposals for 2017/18 and over the medium term will be considered at Cabinet on 14th December. These proposals build on the Efficiency Plan approved by Cabinet in September 2016.

Statement of Accounts 2016/17

Work has already commenced on improving the year end closedown process in advance of the producing the Statement of Accounts 2016/17. The improvements include continuing to accelerate the closedown process in advance of the Accounts sign off deadline moving forward by two months to end of July for the 2017/18 Accounts, reviewing internal processes and regular meetings with KPMG to manage these changes.

Revenues & Benefits

Customer Service

LGSS continue to build on improvement plans and performance within the Revenues and Benefits customer contact centre, resulting in a sustained increase on the call answer rate and customer satisfaction.

Housing Benefit

The service has delivered fantastic levels of performance within our Benefits service in terms of our response rate to benefit claims and support to the most vulnerable customers of the Borough with our Discretionary Housing Payment priority service. In addition to this our accuracy levels remain well within the subsidy thresholds which supports both the council in terms of subsidy and the customer in receiving the right benefit at the right time.

The Fraud & Error Reduction incentive Scheme (FERIS) has now gone live with a 12 month programme of reviews planned to help the borough further reduce the level of fraud and error within the Benefits system.

Welfare Reform

The welfare reform steering group (NBC / LGSS & NPH) have been working closely with the DWP in preparation for the next phase of Benefit Caps came into effect 7th November 2016 to ensure we can support our customers in the best possible way during this welfare change.

Business Rates (NNDR) Revaluation 2017

The Valuation Office, who are part the Inland Revenue, have recently issued a draft valuation list for all NNDR properties, which will take effect from the 1st April 2017. The full list will be issued in December 2016. Whilst nationally this process is expected to be fiscally neutral, at a local level this will impact on the Council financially in terms of running costs. There may also be an impact on core funding, however the final details have not been released by Central Government yet. The Revenues & Benefits and Finance teams are currently assessing the potential impacts to inform the budget setting process.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance



Cabinet Member Report for Environment

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 12 December 2016

Environmental Health

The responses to the consultation on the Low Emissions Strategy are currently being evaluated and work is being progressed working together with the Scrutiny Panel to develop an action plan to implement the strategy.

Environmental Services

The winter shrub maintenance has now started and will continue until March 2017.

A number of new locations have been identified for additional litterbins within the Town Centre. The new litterbins have cigarette stubbing ashtrays on the top to help reduce the amount of butts that are being discarded onto the footpath.

The litterbins are being installed in three phases. The first phase is in The Drapery by the bus shelters. The second phase is in Abington Street, especially on the pedestrianised area. And finally, phase three is to replace the old stainless steel litterbins in Gold Street, as the ashtrays on those litterbins have been broken and the cigarette butts fall through the litterbin and onto the footpath. It is hoped that with the addition of the new litterbins, the issue with discarded cigarette butts will greatly improve.

Work on the Commissioning Options Review has now been completed. Following a report to Cabinet on 16th November, Cabinet made a decision to contract out Environmental Services when the current contract with Enterprise/Amey comes to an end in June 2018, which was subsequently discussed at the Overview & Scrutiny call-in held on 29th November.

Christmas Recycling

Waste and recycling collections will continue as usual, with the exception of brown bin collections, which will be suspended between 26 December and 7 January to allow for extra recycling to be collected. This will include the collection of any recycling items that won't fit into your boxes. These items should be sorted into different waste streams and put into separate clear or white plastic bags placed next to your boxes. Large cardboard, if flattened and placed with your recycling boxes, will also be collected during the two week period starting on 26 December.

Real Christmas trees will be collected on the scheduled brown bin collection day, or scheduled bin bag collection day, from 8 January for a four-week period. After this period please take any trees to the local Household Waste Recycling Centre.

Full details of waste and recycling collections from November 2016 to June 2018, were sent to house-holds mid-October, in the form of a calendar. Anyone unsure of their collection dates, can look them up at www.northampton.gov.uk/recycling

Play Equipment Policy

At the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting held on Monday 28th November, I announced the reversal of the Council's previous policy on damaged play equipment that has been completely removed. From now on, the Council will replace any equipment that was previously deemed beyond repair and completely removed. The budget for this has been identified and will be finalised as part of the 2017/2018 Budget Process.

A number of replacement items of play equipment have already been replaced/ordered for the following Parks and Open Spaces:-

- The Racecourse
- Abington Park
- Parklands Open Space
- Eastfield Park
- Rectory Farm Pocket Park

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Environment



Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement & Community Safety

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 12 December 2016

National Hate Crime Award

Northampton Borough Council scooped a national award for the work it does with diverse communities across the town at the Hate Crime Awards on Thursday 17 November.

The Borough Council beat off stiff competition from Manchester City Council to be presented with the “2016 Local Council Service Upstander Award” by Lord Bourne, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Department for Communities and Local Government, during a ceremony that honoured and celebrated people in society who challenge intolerance.

Northampton Borough Council won the award in recognition of the way it works with communities within the town, including the development of six community forums and the delivery of events in support of national awareness campaigns including International Men’s Day, Hate Crime Week, International Day for persons with a Disability and commemorative days such as Holocaust Memorial Day and Srebrenica Memorial Day.

Councillor Community Fund

Since the beginning of April 2016, 177 Projects, totalling £76,609.42 have been supported through the Cllr Community Fund.

Partnership Support

The process for 2017-18 will run from January–April 2017. Applications will be able to be submitted from Tuesday 3rd January 2017. We will be holding a showcase event on Monday 16th January 2017, this will be similar to the event we did last year, an opportunity for the organisations we funded for 2016-17 to showcase what they have been delivering, 6 months into the grant. We will also incorporate the training into the event for the partnership grant process, for organisations that are looking to apply for 2017-18.

Community Centres

Volunteers being utilised to support the improvement of the Community Centres:

- St Andrews – decorated Briar Hill Community Centre – October 2016
- Olympus Care – gardening project at Parklands Community Centre – October 2016
- Nationwide – decorated Far Cotton Community Centre – November 2016

Forums

Northampton Borough Council was shortlisted, after an application was submitted to the National Hate Crime Awards 2016; the application detailed all the good work that is being delivered through the forums, including events such as Hate Crime Awareness Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, Srebrenica etc.

International Men’s Day was held on Friday 18th November in the Market Square. Men came along for a free health check, given by the Leisure Trust. Information was provided by Lowdown, First for Wellbeing, Changing Minds, BST Gyms, Men in Sheds and Aquarius. Free give-aways were provided by Carlsberg (alcohol free) and Lush. Lowdown encouraged

men to sit on the sofa, for a chat and a coffee. The Cobblers offered football sessions and we had performances by the Northampton Male Voice Choir.

A civic ceremony was held in the Courtyard on Thursday 1st December to mark World Aids Day.

International Day for Persons with Disabilities was celebrated on Saturday 3rd December. Information on services that are available in the Town for people with a disability were present during the event, which was held between 11-3pm at Weston Favell Shopping Centre.

Events

This year's Christmas Light Switch-On on the Market Square attracted thousands of visitors into the town who enjoyed the day's entertainment and the switch-on delivered by Ellie Robinson the Gold Medal winner and this year's Paralympics.

The Christmas Craft Den and Santa Grotto in Market Walk has been popular with families and the Christmas Coca-Cola Truck visit on Sunday 11th December in St Giles Square attracted many visitors.

This year's six 40 foot Christmas trees, 210 business Christmas trees and cross street Christmas lights have all added to the Christmas glow in the town centre.

The Christmas Frost Fairs on the 26th November and 4th December and Light Parade on the 4th December have all added to the council's Christmas offer.

The council is supporting the Chinese community to help deliver the 2017 Chinese New Year on Sunday February 5th.

Culture & Heritage

November saw the opening of an exhibition 'Experienced Hands – the Art of the Shoemaker'. Using the painting 'Experienced Hands' by artist Frederick Hall as a starting point, this exhibition investigates the tools and techniques of traditional shoemaking, using tools and objects from the Shoe Collection. Complementing the exhibition, visitors were able to discover the fascinating craft of hand shoemaking by watching a shoemaking demonstration with Peter Prince, an independent boot and shoe maker.

A writing workshop inspired by the museums' exhibits and collections took place in November. Led by members of the Museum Writers Group, the event was well attended.

The Over 60s talks in December was once again fully booked.

A Christmas workshop for children at Abington Park Museum in December attracted good numbers.

November saw over 45 stallholders hire space at the popular Christmas Fair in Abington Park Museum. Visitors were able to browse festive food & drink, gifts and crafts from local producers. The event attracted over 1,000 visitors and was a huge success.

A number of significant donations were donated to the museum: Works on paper: Manor Farm House by Richard Barnard, a photograph of the Queen visiting British Timken and several pairs of shoes by designers Gucci and Biba.

During December Northampton Museum & Art Gallery was hired by Character Wines for an invitation only wine tasting event and Borneo Martell Turner Coulston LLP Solicitors held a drinks reception for guests.

Customer Services

National Customer Services Week was a success with many events engaging staff and customers, these included service managers spending time shadowing front line services. The increased awareness of links have already improved some services. A partnership networking meeting was held this month with all the One Stop Shop Partners and a Service Improvement Panel consultation was held with tenants.

This year we celebrated our Service Champions; those that go above and beyond for our customers and our corporate service achievements with many awards being presented for the Extra Mile Individual and Extra Mile Team awards.

Customer Services had a successful first year review of their 5 year Customer Service Excellence accreditation. The assessor was really impressed with the increased Partnership working including the co-location of Citizens Advice and Community Law Service.

Community Safety

Overall crime continues to increase seeing an 8% (+1,208 crimes) since the beginning of April 2016. Serious Acquisitive Crime is showing an increase of 22.6% (+548 crimes) with vehicle crime rising by 30.5% (+413 crimes), domestic burglary by 12.9% (+98 crimes). The rate at which violence against the person is increasing continues to slow in comparison to 2015/16 with an increase of 4.9% (+159 crimes). Anti-Social Behaviour incidents reported to Police have increased by 8.8%. Environmental ASB reports have increased by 7.2% but this is now seeing a reduction on previous months. Personal ASB has increased by 2.2%, and nuisance ASB also by 13.5%. However, figures are still lower than the same period last year.

Public Spaces Protection Order is now finalised and agreed by Cabinet/Full Council. Work is underway on the signage and locations. Busking was removed from the draft 'Order' following the results of the public consultation. However, any busking deemed anti-social will be dealt with using other powers. It is anticipated that the PSPO will be in place by March 2017.

The multi-agency Weeks of Action continued with Semilong/Regent Square taking place in October. A range of environmental improvements were undertaken on Royal Terrace, Regent Street and Deal Street, resulting in a much improved and safer environment. The Weeks of Action programme continue to see great involvement and engagement from residents and a range of public and voluntary sector agencies. Planning is now underway for the next Week of Action being held in St David's in March 2017.

During National Domestic Abuse Week (w/c 25/11), performances of an awareness raising drama production 'Tough Love' was delivered in 3 senior schools in Northampton. These sessions were supported by officers from Women's Aid, School Nurses and VOICE.

We are having a joint Killing with Kindness/keep safe at Christmas event in the Grosvenor Centre on Tuesday 6th December from 11am until 2pm. It will be NBC Community Safety, Police and NAASH. Messages we will be getting out are the usual Killing with Kindness messages plus keeping safe while Christmas shopping, keeping your presents safe from burglars, keeping safe on a night out.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement



Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

12th December 2016

Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter

I am delighted to report that, with the help and generous support of local businesses and dozens of volunteers, the building works and decoration are now complete.

The provision of an emergency nightshelter will play a vital role in helping us to end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton. It will also ensure that, when someone is sleeping rough, or is at risk of sleeping rough, they can immediately be offered a place to stay that is safe, warm and dry while they engage with the services best placed to assess and address their needs.

We are now in the process of recruiting a couple of staff and a large team of volunteers to run the nightshelter and, as soon as we are ready – and we have enough volunteers – the nightshelter will be up and running and start to make a difference. We are expecting it to open in January 2017.

In the meantime, if the temperatures are forecast to fall below freezing for at least three consecutive nights, the nightshelter will operate as a short-term severe weather shelter.

Anyone wishing to support the nightshelter (by becoming a volunteer or donating equipment, furniture or money) should visit the Northampton Nightshelter webpage on the Council's website:

www.northampton.gov.uk/northamptonnightshelter

Social Lettings Agency

I am very pleased that the Government is now taking action to crack down on the fees that letting agents have been charging tenants who are looking for private rented accommodation.

Work is almost complete on the development of an innovative, viable and sustainable operating model for our social lettings agency and, as soon as the business case has been signed off, the recruitment of the staff will commence.

The main purpose of the social lettings agency is to help the Council to improve standards in Northampton's private rented sector, bring empty homes back into use and make it easier for people to access good quality, well managed, affordable private rented accommodation.

It is intended, also, that the social lettings agency will prevent homelessness, reduce the Council's reliance on B&B and substantially reduce the Council's expenditure on temporary accommodation.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing