

Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 3rd June 2019

As Deputy Leader of the Council, I have been playing an active role in the establishment of a Unitary Council and the transition to it, while continuing to support the Leader and Cabinet colleagues across a variety of areas within the council. I can report on some of my specific responsibilities as below.

Unitary

The West Northants Steering Committee established three task and finish groups to look at matters as we move towards establishing a Shadow Authority. One was to consider governance issues for the Shadow Authority. Basically it was to produce a draft constitution. I was pleased to represent Northampton Borough Council on this group along with Councillor's Beardsworth and Oldham.

The group was chaired by a South Northants Councillor and had three members of the County, Daventry, South Northants, and the Borough Councils. I'm pleased that the group worked well together in a co-operative way. There was a great sense of the need for openness and transparency, as well as the need to ensure public engagement. The draft constitution encompasses these values that I believe are the values of this Council.

Market

Market Traders remain keen to get a greater understanding about the Town Centre Masterplan. It is therefore intended to hold a meeting of the MAG for traders to learn about the proposals from those developing and promoting them. This will also enable traders to give feedback on the proposals and offer their suggestions.

The provision of fixed / permanent stalls remains a significant priority for traders.

Councillor Training

The Councillor Development Group met on Thursday, 9th May 2019. It will next meet on 8th July 2019.

Caseworker is now fully functional and contains the electoral register but remains underused. A discussion took place as to how to proceed with the system and it was agreed that further training sessions be arranged to encourage its use. We will consider the number of licences required going forward in light of the training.

There was also an open and honest discussion about the Contact Centre with the manager of the service, looking at why not all Members use the service. Consequently all Members have been asked to complete a survey regarding the service and I would urge all Members to do so.

Since the last meeting of this Council, Member Briefings have been held regarding the Procurement Process, Antisemitism & Islamophobia, and Unitary Status. A further session on Antisemitism & Islamophobia is being arranged to be delivered by another provider

There is only one further briefing session that has been arranged:

20/06/19 – Local Government Reorganisation – to be delivered by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. One session at 6.00 pm in the Jeffery Room.

Members of the Licensing Committee have been invited to join training hosted by East Northants Council at 2pm in the Council Chamber at East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston, NN14 4LZ, on 7th June 2019. The training will be on Taxi Licensing Panels and will be delivered by James Button.

Can Members wishing to attend any of these events please inform Tracy Tiff as soon as possible.

Street Lighting

We are working through the procurement process to take forward the work required to our Street Lighting assets, and to secure a maintenance contract for their ongoing maintenance. A Cabinet Report will be coming forward in the coming few months.

It remains the intention to deliver the work required during the summer / autumn.

All lights will be converted to LED that will significantly reduce our energy costs and also reduce our carbon footprint.

Rail Issues

The East West Rail Consortium met on 13th March 2019 in Cambridge, and meets again on 11th June 2019 in Bedford.

The meeting received an update on the East West Rail Company from the newly appointed CEO. The meeting focused on the recent publication of the Eastern Section Prospectus, the consultation taking place on the options for the route between Bedford to Cambridge, and how services from Norwich / Ipswich connect with the route at Cambridge

The Public Inquiry with regard to the Western Section of East / West Rail that connects Northampton / Milton Keynes to Oxford and Aylesbury was still ongoing. We were appraised of some of the objections that are not considered to be insurmountable. We expect to hear more about the inquiry at the forthcoming meeting.

We were also appraised of works planned to take place on the Western Section in the near future, i.e. the Bletchley flyover, utilities, etc.

There is a study underway into the West Coast Mainline Capacity post HS2 and DfT are taking forward work as to the station requirements at Old Oak Common. These aspects of work are important in the context of ensuring the ambition to realise the Northampton – Old Oak Common corridor potential. I told the meeting that the Northampton Loop must provide the flexibility that enables it to support planned growth and provide the town with greater connectivity both north and south as well as East and West.

Governance Review

We have now received the report of our consultants, Opinion Research Services, on the first round of consultation regarding setting up a Town Council and possibly some further Community Councils. Ruling out the do nothing option, the working group is proposing that two options be taken forward to the next round of consultation. This features later on the agenda.

We have received two formal requests. One for a Community / Parish Council for Kingsthorpe and one to extend Duston Parish. These are referred to in the later report.

Our established Parish Councils are continuing to show interest in taking on NBC assets in their individual areas. These are still being progressed following the adoption of policy last October supporting and favouring the freehold transfer of such assets.

Councillor Phil Larratt

Deputy Leader of the Council