



## Report of the Leader of the Council

### Northampton Borough Council

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019

Since my last report to Council, I have continued to work with the Cabinet, Members, the Chief Executive, and Officers across all areas of the council. Many of these activities and issues are referred to in Cabinet colleagues' reports.

#### **Unitary Status**

With the new Prospectus For Change recently released and a slightly revised Governance structure, the work to date has been focussed on mobilising the new programme team as well as reviewing the skills that will be required in the team to take the work forward, with a focus on transformation over the next 12 months. Myself and the Chief Executive also hosted a Member Briefing session on 20th June and would strongly urge Members who wish to maintain a broad overview of the work that is being undertaken, to attend future sessions.

The Chief Executive and I, alongside the Chief Executive of Daventry were guests at a Northamptonshire Town & Parish Councils event that was held at Bugbrooke Community Centre. It was extremely helpful to see and engage with both Clerks and Parish Councillors from the West Northants Unitary area, in which we were able to update them on the work done to date as well as the key timelines for unitary. We agreed that it would be useful to have further sessions as the year progresses.

#### **Economic Development**

By now you will have heard the fantastic news that Northampton was one of only 40 or so local authorities (from over 300 that submitted expressions of interest) that was successful in getting through the first round of the Future High Street Fund. We will now need to submit a detailed bid for support from the Future High Streets Fund, which will need to be finalised by the end of the calendar year, and an announcement on successful projects that will secure some of the funding is expected to be made some time in the spring/summer of 2020. Linked to this, the consultation on the wider vision and masterplan has now concluded and we are now reviewing the outcomes of that consultation. We will then feed this back to our architects, 5Plus, who have been commissioned to finalise the master plan, and they will then reflect appropriate changes and feed this back to Northampton Forward in early September.

I am also pleased to say that the first meeting of the cross-party Town Centre Regeneration Working Group met, in which we were able to discuss progress with regards to Northampton Forward, the Future High Street Fund bid itself and the Masterplan. These meetings will continue on a regular basis to ensure elected members' views from across the Council can be fed into the activity.

Linked to this is a separate piece of work that we had commissioned, to review the viability options on Greyfriars and we plan to share the key details of this work with members in the next few weeks through a Members Briefing session. Clearly the Greyfriars site has, understandably, attracted interest in the consultation part of the master plan, and therefore it's important that whatever work we next undertake needs to factor in the outcomes from this particular report.

I also had the pleasure of visiting the Decathlon site at Brackmills Industrial Estate, from where all Decathlon products are distributed nationwide. I have recently been pleased to support Decathlon in their bid for a distribution industry award, in the category of staff wellbeing initiatives, and I was glad to learn on my visit about the huge amount of staff development activity that they undertake, and the way in which many young people in particular are also supported to grow their business related skills. I am hoping that we can now work with Decathlon on a number of wellbeing projects, as they are very keen to get involved in the wider Northampton community.

The Waterside Enterprise Zone is a significant part of the wider Economic Growth agenda for the town and since its inception in 2012 over £440m of private sector investment and a further £81m of public sector investment has been generated, as well as reinvestment from key Northampton companies such as Carlsberg, Cosworth, Mahle Powertrain and Freefoam. A total of 1507 new jobs have been created, with 76 new companies joining the existing companies located within the Enterprise Zone. Therefore in my role as Chair of the Enterprise Zone Board, I was particularly pleased to take the new Chair of SEMLEP (Peter Horrocks) and the Chief Executive (Hilary Chipping) alongside other Board members on a tour of the site, showcasing our success stories including the Train Station Phase 1, the Innovation Centre, the University of Northampton, Carlsberg Bottling Plant and Hellermann Tyton, to name but a few. We also took the opportunity to launch with the SEMLEP EZ Board Phase 2 of key sites that we are looking to develop out including the Railway Station Phase 2 and FOUR Waterside. Again this was well-received by the Board and we are looking to develop more detailed business cases for what needs to be done to get a number of these sites progressing over the coming months.

Our relationship with China and developing closer economic links continues, and myself and the Chief Executive hosted a visit by delegates from Tangshan, a city with a population of over 10 million people, who are keen to look at future investment in Northampton. We were able to showcase a number of potential sites that may be of interest and we are looking to further develop those links over the coming months.

## **Civic and Celebratory Events**

I have been fortunate enough to attend a number of wonderful civic events in the last few weeks including the Armed Forces Day and Parade on Saturday 29th June- it was wonderful to see so many people supporting those both active and retired from the Armed Forces, alongside the Mayor and the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff.

As some of you may know we now have a new High Sheriff for the County in Nicko Robinson and again it was positive to catch up with him at the beginning of his year of office, and to understand more of his key areas of focus which again centre on Crime Prevention and in particular Knife Crime. I am sure that Nicko will want to work closely with Cllr King and Officers as we work in this important area alongside the Police and key community groups.

## **Other Activity**

Whilst many of the things I have been involved in are referenced in more detail in colleagues' cabinet member reports, some of my other recent activities of particular note include:

- Hosting a visit from the University of Northampton of post-graduate overseas students from countries such as South Korea and China, where we were able to provide a presentation on the workings, function and history of the Council, as well as a tour of the Guildhall.
- Attendance at the East Midlands Council's AGM
- Taking in the wonderful atmosphere at the Northampton Town Festival at the Racecourse on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July
- A visit to London with the South East Midlands Business Ambassador Reception at the House of Lords, alongside other Leaders from across the region

- A celebration of Heritage Open Days' 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary again down in London and which I am proud to say we are an active participant and coordinator of events in Northampton once again this year
- Myself, the Deputy Leader, Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Executive all attended this years' LGA Conference held in Bournemouth, which as always proved to be a great opportunity to pick up new ideas, and learn about the things other councils are doing which may be of value to NBC.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn  
**Leader of the Council**