



## Cabinet Member Report for Deputy Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

As Deputy Leader of the Council, I have continued to play 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.

### Market

January and February are traditionally quiet months for the market. With all the storms and inclement weather some of the traders have taken time away to recharge their batteries before the build up to Easter.

In January we worked with NPH and the Citizens Advice Bureau to target the elderly with information on how to reduce their gas and electric bills.

This month we have worked with Vodafone and City Fibre to promote the gigabit broadband coming to the town. This will be an ongoing partnership.

We also held a vegan on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February with over 50 stalls and have committed to hold one per quarter going forward.

### Councillor Development Group

As previously reported the Councillor Development Group met on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019 and further meetings will be scheduled as required.

Since the last meeting of this Council:

- An information session on LGBTQ took place on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and was hosted by QSpace Northampton.
- On 27 February, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, together with representatives from the Lowdown spoke to Members about the work of the Lowdown.

Further training sessions proposed by the Councillor Development Group are currently being investigated:

- S106 – What it is and how Members can become involved and engaged. An external training provider has been contacted. This will be held in the new Municipal Year on a date to be confirmed.
- Officers are working on potential sessions for Members around - Gangs and Knife Crime – information and video material shown to schools by the police will be provided to Members.

Further briefing sessions on Local Government Reorganisation, led by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive, are scheduled with the next one set for 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at 6.00 pm in the Jeffery Room.

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

## **Legal Services**

Legal Services have been very busy. Their activities have included:

- Advising Private Sector Housing about the adequacy of evidence in order to enable them to continue to issue civil penalties in respect of unlicensed or badly managed HMOs.
- Advising Assets and Regeneration and instructing an external expert legal advisor with a view to applying for adjudication in respect of the defects at Delapre Abbey caused by either poor workmanship or non-performance by the contractor. The ultimate goal is to recover the extra money spent by the Council correcting or mitigating defects that the contractor has refused to accept responsibility for.
- Continuing to advise the Partnership Unit with regards to ending a dispute between Enterprise Managed Services and NBC and DDC arising from deductions for poor performance from contractual payments which they allege were invalidly deducted. NBC and DDC are very close to agreeing a joint position and paying EMS what they believe they are owed.
- Advising Environmental Health, Assets and the Countywide Traveller Unit (CTU) with regard to a small, established traveller encampment at Studland Road. Commercial activity and the siting of caravans on the public highway has expanded onto NBC owned land and Court action will be required to prevent this from continuing, especially as the CTU and NCC Highways have effectively tolerated the encampment and certain commercial activities on the adjoining highway for a couple of years.

## **Street Lighting**

Balfour Beatty Street Lighting Ltd have commenced work on upgrading our Lighting Assets and converting them to LED. The works started on 24<sup>th</sup> February and are expected to take 26 weeks to complete. At the time of writing works have been going on at Bradlaugh Fields and The Racecourse. Despite the adverse weather the works are on schedule, although a cable fault has been identified on The Racecourse that Western Power will have to address. Such issues were expected to arise as the works proceed

We have received a draft maintenance contract from Balfour Beatty that is being scrutinised by our officers and consultant. Hopefully this contract can be finalised and brought to Cabinet soon. Other lights that are NBC assets but not part of the current works as they are relatively new, and LED will also be included in the maintenance contract, i.e. those on Midsummer Meadow Car Park and South Bridge.

## **Rail Issues**

The Government has now decided to proceed with the construction of HS2. This new railway will have a significant impact on the West Coast Main Line, including the Northampton Loop, providing additional capacity / train paths. While its opening is a long time off, we need to work to ensure that Northampton benefits from this additional capacity / train paths. I will continue to press Northampton's case with Train Operators, Network Rail, DfT, and other relevant bodies.

The East West Rail Consortium is due to meet on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, after the writing of this report. I'll report on the meeting verbally. The Consortium met on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in Bedford. Due to sickness I was unable to attend, however the officer attending, Paul Everard, provided me with the following rundown of the points raised / discussed:

1. East West Rail Company rep did a presentation on their preferred route for the Central Section from Bedford to Cambridge (Route E). <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/latest-news/press-releases> This had only been announced 45 minutes before the meeting started. It will run via Bedford Midland (not Wixams) to a new station where it will cross the ECML between Sandy and St Neots and then continue to Cambridge via the proposed Cambridge South station at Addenbrooke's. This route was chosen because it performed best in terms of the balance between:

- Benefits for transport users
- Supporting economic growth
- Supporting the delivery of new housing
- Cost
- Environmental impacts and opportunities

It was also the most popular option with the public. There will be further consultation and analysis of how to incorporate 1<sup>st</sup> mile / last mile.

Next steps will be for EWR Co to choose their alignment within Route E and secure a Development Consent order. The aim is to start construction about 2025.

2. Network Rail rep did a presentation on Phase 2 of the Western section. They have started with ecological infrastructure – the overall aim is to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain. All of the rail infrastructure has now been removed from the Bletchley Flyover. The span of the flyover over the WCML is to be removed over Easter, so I guess we will have no trains to London that weekend. A replacement span will be put in later in the year. Ministerial sign-off for the Transport and Works Act Order for this section of the route is expected this week.
3. Suffolk County Council is working in partnership with Norfolk and Cambridgeshire County Council's on the work to be commissioned in support of the Eastern section. It was agreed that the Consortium assist with funding.
4. John Disley explained more about the Oxon Rail Corridor study, which will be feeding in to Network Rail's Continuing Modular Strategic Plan. It was explained that CSMP is the new process that replaces the RUS.
5. Gavin Dowland of Network Rail System Operator explained the strategic work he and his colleagues are doing with EEH to generate a Rail Strategy. Given wider capacity issues, there is a desire to term East West Rail as a mainline to highlight its potential for reducing the amount of rail travel that currently runs via the main London terminals.
6. The opportunity is being considered to incorporate Hyperspeed Broadband into the civils for Phase 2 of the Western section.

## Sports Clubs

The adaptations to Fernie Fields Sports & Social Club have been completed, and all Members were invited to view the finished works on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March. The works were supported through significant investment by NBC. The improvement to the facilities was necessary so that they are compliant with FA rules and requirements. I hope that Members attending the event on 1<sup>st</sup> March were impressed with what has been achieved and consider that the investment in this NBC asset was worthwhile.

**Cllr Phil Larratt  
Deputy Leader of the Council**