



Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

20th July 2020

As Deputy Leader of the Council, I have continued to play an active role in the establishment of a Unitary Council for West Northamptonshire and the transition to it as a member of the Shadow Executive and as Chair of two Task & Finish Groups – Civic Matters and Equalities. However, I'm 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

As the town reopens from lockdown, the market has continued to play a vital role in providing fresh food and services to customers. Most traders have returned despite the footfall being approximately 50% of its pre Covid level. Also, they have benefitted from the governments' discretionary grant fund to assist with their business costs.

The market has also welcomed two new traders with a further two scheduled to start later in July.

Due to the pandemic there are no events planned for the foreseeable future and we continue to work closely with our traders and partners to ensure the safety of our customers.

Councillor Development / Democratic Services

Meetings are continuing to be held virtually over Zoom and have attracted a lot of public interest, for example: Annual Council attracted 255 views, Planning Committee has attracted over 220 views at one of its meetings and more recently 97 views, whereas the first meeting of Overview and Scrutiny that was held remotely had 50 views. Cabinet attracted the interest of 125 individuals viewing the meeting on YouTube.

My thanks goes to all our Democratic Services and other personnel who have facilitated our transition to remote meetings and events so successfully.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) is celebrating 20 years of Scrutiny at the end of July 2020. A Zoom event of a Panel of people who have been involved in Scrutiny in some way at various points over the past two decades will take place as part of the celebration. The Democratic and Member Services Manager, NBC, has been invited, and has accepted, to join this Panel to share experiences of scrutiny at Northampton over the years.

The Mayor, on his YouTube account and Facebook account is recording and publishing events remotely too. VE day was a great success as was Armed Forces Day.

Member briefings are continuing with them being held remotely. Members received details of the Local Plan Part 2 on 6th July 2020 and on 7th July 2020 received an update on Local Government Reorganisation. A further session hosted by an

external provided is scheduled for 21st July about Member involvement in the pre-planning application process.

Legal Services

The current Covid situation has delayed all the Council's ongoing civil and criminal Court proceedings and has prevented it from commencing any new proceedings in any Court. This situation may change as time progresses but there will be a significant backlog for the Courts to deal with, which will probably cause further delay.

Street Lighting

The streetlight project continues to progress well. The Racecourse looks far better having had the new lights installed. We continue to receive good and positive feedback from the public where the new lights are in situ.

However, Balfour Beatty are reporting a 4-week contract overrun in the contract due to the amount of lights being fed from private and unknown sources. We have had another contractor checking for supplies and updating locations to feed back to Balfour Beatty for them to be actioned. Costs are still within the agreed budget figures and there will be no additional payments for time delays.

Rail Issues

Public consultation on the England's Economic Heartland (EEH) Transport Strategy is due to start on 14th July. The document will set out a policy framework for strategic transport provision and investment in the Heartland Region to 2050. As mentioned in my report to the previous meeting, this document includes a section on improving East West rail connectivity and makes reference to the benefits that this could have, in combination with the delivery of HS2, for North-South rail connectivity along key corridors such as Northampton – Milton Keynes / Bletchley - Aylesbury – Old Oak Common. The consultation will close on 6th October 2020. It is intended that the Council will submit representations in response to this consultation reflecting our aspirations for better rail connectivity for Northampton.

Flooding

The survey report documents regarding water courses referred to in my last report are still being considered by officers. Some urgent works are being undertaken on an ad-hoc basis. We continue to liaise with the County Council Flood Risk Team on anything reported to them regarding issues with our water courses. The works to Billing Lakes are nearing completion which will assist with holding water and slowing flow rates

Governance Review

We are continuing to pursue the transfer of assets to our established Parish Councils where they have indicated a wish to take them on.

Consideration needs to be given to the assets that are to be transferred to the new Town Council, Kingsthorpe Parish Council, and Far Cotton & Delapre Community Council. A meeting of the Governance Review Working Group will be held in August to start considering these transfers.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council