

Councillor Community Fund

Since 1 April 2020, a total of £44,334 has been spent by councillors on supporting the delivery of positive outcomes in their wards. £17,700 of the total has funded organisations that are directly supporting those most vulnerable in our communities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A further £90,000 has also been awarded by councillors to support community groups/organisations that provide a wider service to the community and have suffered a loss or reduction in income or fund raising as a direct result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Northampton Community Resilience Hub

Referrals to the Community Resilience Hub, through the county support line have significantly reduced.

We have received a total of 1,158 referrals. 62% of the support offered has been in relation to food provision, 27% for prescription collection and 6% for loneliness and social isolation support. People have also been supported with financial hardship, furniture collection, getting online and mental health.

Forums

10 October - World Mental Health Day - local volunteers for the charity Action for Happiness held a free online session aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of Northamptonshire residents, also used the opportunity to launch the Happy Café projects that have recently been established.

Hate crime week took place week commencing 12 October. Links to videos and posts were promoted, focus of the week was to raise awareness of what hate crime is and where/to whom people can report hate crime. Working with the police and other partners, focussed on community engagement, local and national campaigns and key messages and a primary school poster competition.

Plans developing for International Men's Day (including the role model award) and also 16 Days of Activism 25 November – 10 December, which will focus on raising awareness of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Events

The council have cancelled all outdoor events on council land until January 2021 to support the Government lockdown restrictions and help stop the spread of the virus.

However, the council are planning to deliver virtual event experiences for Diwali, Remembrance Day, Fireworks and Christmas Light switch-on and we are working closely with community groups, civic groups and businesses on all these activities.

The council will use all the available social media outlets to promote these virtual events so the general public can join in and experience something new. Covid19 is making all of us look at new ways to deliver our events.

Culture & Heritage

Due to the local Covid-19 situation in Northampton remaining high the reopening of Abington Park Museum was delayed from early August to late October 2020. Due to the rapidly changing Covid situation nationally it has been decided to suspend any opening and will now be kept under review. All procedures and equipment is in place and an opening can be affected with one week's notice.

Two online talks took place live from Northampton Museum & Art Gallery by local historian Mike Ingram and were attended by an audience of 43. A further talk is planned for November along and planning is ongoing into organising other online based events later in the year.

Museum Expansion Project

The installation of exhibition galleries continues and significant progress is being made. The programme has been reviewed after the first months installation under Covid 19 safe working conditions and without the large team of volunteers who would have supported installation. A solid programme is in place and an opening date can be confirmed for early 2021. The programme and opening date are contingent on no significant disruption due to either staff or contractors contracting Covid or any significant national lockdowns

Customer Services

As an ongoing review of our service delivery we have started workshops and briefings to all frontline staff. This is essential training to ensure all staff have the tools to help support customers through this ever changing time and will include:

- Food Provision and support available.
- New initiatives available through DWP to support people into work
- The power of language in communication
- How to respond positively (verbal/written)
- Defensiveness- how to deal with it
- How best to explain news that you feel will not be received well
- Conflict Management and dealing with difficult situations/customers effectively
- How to respond when dealing with sensitive issues
- Empathy - Understanding the customers position

Customer Services and Digital staff are working closely with Future Northampton Project teams on Automated projects to come up with Proof of concepts to ensure a seamless transition into a Unitary Council.

Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

The overall picture is positive with decreases from the figures for the previous year in the majority of crime categories. Offences of violence are the notable exception and violent crime remains a priority for the Community Safety Partnership.

The Community Safety Strategy has been completed and published, detailing the priorities of the community safety partnership for the next two years. There is also a comprehensive action plan evidencing how the strategy will be delivered and the outcomes met.

Work continues on the development of augmented reality and the knife angel. Working with various partners to develop projects and activities to raise the awareness of youth violence and we continue to work with free to talk, who are delivering youth detached work in our hot spot areas in the Town.

Town wide PSPO has now been published. Enforcement approach being adopted, police will utilise the PSPO powers to deal with street drinking and anti-social behaviour by issuing Fixed Penalty Notices.

Dunster Street PSPO is currently out to consultation.

Wilson farm track-Gate has been installed today and the gate locked, this will aim to resolve the longstanding issues that have been taking place with regards to fly-tipping and Arson.

Day of action held in Eastfield park following a spate of green waste fly tipping and cutting of tree branches in the park.

Range of activities in Thorplands, in response to community safety issues, including the start of Basketball/Free2Talk youth activities and the delivery of a letter to all residents encouraging engagement and reporting to the police, housing and environmental services.

Our ASB Case Managers have been working with the police to tackle anti-social behaviour and have achieved the following:

- 1 x closure order obtained on a property which had been causing anti-social behaviour
- 1 x Cuckooing injunction submitted (our 4th one) for a prolific offender who targets vulnerable people.
- 2 x Environmental Visual Audits being conducted on the Mounts area and Spring Boroughs to identify what action can be taken in relation to criminal activity.
- 1 x Criminal Protection Warning issued to an aggressive beggar
- 1 x Criminal Behaviour Order submitted for a prolific town centre offender.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement & Safety