

# NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



## COUNCIL

Monday, 17 March 2008

**YOU ARE SUMMONED TO ATTEND A MEETING OF NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL, WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE GUILDHALL NORTHAMPTON ON MONDAY, THE SEVENTEENTH DAY OF MARCH, 2008 AT SIX THIRTY O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING WHEN THE FOLLOWING BUSINESS IS PROPOSED TO BE TRANSACTED:-**

**1. MINUTES.**

To approve the minutes of the proceedings of the Meeting of the Council held on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008

**2. APOLOGIES.**

**3. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

**4. QUESTION TIME**

**5. CABINET MEMBER PRESENTATIONS**

(copies herewith)

**6. REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY**

(copy to follow)

**7. STAFF APPEALS**

Report of Solicitor to the Council (copy herewith)

**8. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY FOR NORTHAMPTON**

Report of the Chief Executive (copy herewith)

**9. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE MAYOR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.**

The Guildhall  
Northampton  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2008

D.Kennedy Chief Executive

**Council**  
**Monday 27 March 2008**

**Portfolio Holder Presentations**

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1. Report of the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Improvement (Page 1)
2. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement & Safety (Page 4)
3. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing (Page 7)
4. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration (Page 9)
5. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment (Page 11)
6. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Performance (Page 13)
7. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance (Page 15 )

**Report of the Leader of the Council,  
Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Improvement**

*Aspire for CPA excellence / High standards of service*

**Housing Benefits Service**

I received a letter from James Plaskitt MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Work & Pensions on 20th February confirming that his department would no longer need to be closely monitoring our Benefits Service. This represents a major milestone on our improvement journey. Benefits was one of the services most heavily criticised in the March 2004 Comprehensive Performance Assessment as 'letting down the most vulnerable in society'. It is, therefore, particularly pleasing that they should be the first service out of 'engagement'.

The service is now consistently performing at the top of second quartile and continues to improve. This is down to the hard work and dedication of our staff and their colleagues throughout the council and to the guidance provided by the team from Kendrick Ash.

Recruitment for a Benefits Manager is now in hand. Once in post Kendrick Ash will withdraw their support in a planned and controlled manner to ensure that we are able to maintain performance with only internal resources. I am very confident that our staff will continue and improve on the excellent levels they are now delivering.

We now look forward to other services being released from engagement in the next few months. Finance, Planning and Leisure are all candidates to be next.

**Inspections**

Inspectors were on site on 25th & 26th February for a general Direction of Travel inspection. The impressions and initial feedback were generally positive. The results of the inspection will form part of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter from the Audit Commission.

The Streetscene, Waste Management & Sustainability inspection is taking place on 10th March. Inspectors have been provided with a detailed 'self assessment and a Service Improvement Plan. We expect the inspectors report will be made available in April.

Work is continuing for the Housing Progress Assessment inspection planned for May 2008.

*A clear vision for Northampton*

**Northampton Sustainable Communities Strategy**

A Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton has been successfully developed by partners on the Local Strategic Partnership. The strategy will underpin the development of Northampton through to 2031. The strategy has

been approved by the LSP Board and is on this agenda (17 March Council) meeting to consider its adoption by Northampton Borough Council.

### **Northamptonshire Sustainable Communities Strategy**

The consultation on Northamptonshire County Council's Sustainable Communities Strategy was launched in January and will end on 10 April. The Council is formulating a response to the consultation which will include views expressed by councillors at Overview and Scrutiny and at the LAA event for all councillors held on 13 March.

Initial concerns have been expressed at the lack of strategic vision in relation to Northampton within the context of the county, and in particular the impact of the growth agenda on the town and surrounding area. With a projected population of approaching 300,000 by 2031 Northampton will be equivalent in size to many cities and therefore will have a significantly greater role within the county and beyond than the strategy recognises. The impact of that growth on economic and infrastructure investment must be reflected if Northampton is to secure investment to support the growth agenda. Councillors are encouraged to contribute to the consultation and promote the need for the widest possible response from partners and communities to ensure future investment in Northampton and Northamptonshire.

The failure of the strategy to adequately recognise Northampton's position in a 'hierarchy of place' not only affects Northampton. It negatively impacts on the positioning of all towns and villages within the county.

### ***Act as advocates for Northampton to partners***

#### **Ministerial Visit**

Iain Wright MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in DCLG, visited Northampton on 26th February (technically a Parliamentary Visit) at the invitation of Sally Keeble MP. The Leader and Chief Executive were involved in a 'round table' discussion with the Minister and partners.

Topics covered included:-

- Improving Northampton Town Centre
- Regenerating Brownfield sites
- The urgent need to progress Planning Policy for the area
- The strengths and weaknesses of Northampton as a place
- Improving partnership working between the main agencies
- Raising the level of 'ambition' locally

The meeting was positive and the minister expressed his pleasure at the ambition being shown by participants.

Later in the day he visited the Goldings Estate and saw some of the problems left by a previous, poorly planned and executed expansion of the town.

### **Raising the Tibetan Flag**

The Tibetan flag was raised outside the Guildhall on 4th March – the ninth year that this ceremony to remember the plight of the people of Tibet has taken place in Northampton. Caroline Scattergood, the driving force behind this event, told an audience of over 100 that she had recently been informed by the UK representative of the Dalai Lama that Northampton's celebration was unique in involving the Mayor, Council and local people in the flag raising.

Tony Woods  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement & Safety**

### *Safe, clean neighbourhoods for people to live in*

#### **Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

Overall trends show recorded crime in most categories significantly below last year's levels. Compared to the most similar Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership areas, as defined by the Home Office, Northampton is now in line with its peers on most measures. However, we are determined to see a further step change reduction in crime and will be working to make sure that all the Council's services are properly joined up to achieve this.

The reduction in anti-social behaviour incidents is particularly satisfying, as this is a major concern to local people. At the end of January the number of incidents was 22% down compared to a year ago. Effective case management and early intervention by the multi-agency Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (hosted by this Council) have been key contributors to this success.

#### **Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership**

The Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership is moving closer to having a dedicated team of staff located together to improve its ability to respond rapidly and effectively. Initially these will be Borough Council and Police staff. This is expected to help lead to a seamless service to the public.

### *Places for people to enjoy*

#### **Cultural Strategy**

The Cabinet's adoption of the interim cultural strategy in February was a major milestone in developing this town's cultural life – including music, sport, arts and physical recreation for all tastes in our diverse community. We will be consulting widely on what kinds of facilities and activities people think our town needs now and in the future. This is a real opportunity to put Northampton on the map, and build pride in our town, and it is hoped this will capture the imagination of many people.

#### **Leisure and Sports Development**

The leisure service continues to achieve recognition for quality, most recently in its improved score in being re-awarded its Chartermark. Sports development rose by two categories from 'Standard' in February 2006 to 'Highly Commended' under the QUEST quality assurance assessment this February. Scoring is based on a number of different aspects of the service such as customer care, health and safety, partnership working and social inclusion. The department's Kings Heath physical activity project was a runner-up in the Healthy Communities category for the Sustainable Communities national awards in London at the end of February. Evidence of the popularity of our leisure services comes from the continuing growth in Direct Debit sales, now also on-line.

### **Museums and Events**

The museum service's 'Venezia!' festival has proved a positive talking point, even before its official press launch which took place on 26th February. Sponsors have been queuing up to be associated with this programme of events. Meanwhile, planning for the 2008 Balloon Festival is moving forward, while a group of councillors will be meeting soon to consider the longer term development of Northamptonshire's premier event.

### *Consult widely on key decisions affecting people's lives*

### **Single Equalities Scheme**

The Cabinet adopted a Single Equalities Scheme for the Council at its meeting on 11th February. The scheme incorporates the existing Gender, Race and Disability schemes and extends our commitment to equalities to include age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The Single Equality Scheme sets out how Northampton Borough Council will ensure that everyone has equal access to council services, job opportunities and to having their voices heard. It brings all equality groups together without losing focus on the specific needs of any community and helps demonstrate that equality and diversity are at the heart of what we do and reinforces our commitment to the equality agenda.

### **Community Engagement Strategy**

The Council's Community Engagement Strategy was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 3rd March. The Community Engagement Strategy sets out the principles by which the council will engage communities in the development of council services and activities. In addition the strategy sets out a process for engaging communities and ensuring effective management of the information gained from such interactions. The methodologies and techniques to deliver the strategy will be developed separately. These will be included in a detailed costed action plan to deliver the strategy which will be submitted to Cabinet by June 2008.

### *Value for money / High standards of service*

### **Restructure Update**

We have recently appointed a Service Improvement Team Leader. We expect to recruit a Partnerships and Support Services Manager as soon as the new structure is in place.

### **One Stop Shop Pilot Project**

A pilot evaluation is scheduled to take place on 28th February with recommendations to Management Board regarding future options for integrating into the One Stop Shop if this is successful and of mutual benefit to NBC and Police.

### **Complaints Management**

Complaints monitoring has recently seen an improvement in performance, with a corporate response rate of 87% of responses provided on time to stage 1 complaints, councillor enquiries and MP enquiries in December. Due to an increase in volume performance fell to 66% in January and the Customer



Liaison Team are working closely with service areas to address this downturn. An action plan has been created to improve the corporate complaints board. Divisional management teams are also being approached by officers to develop 'learning logs' which will enable them to learn from each complaint received.

### **Call Care**

Connection charges to external organisations, which have not been reviewed since 1995, was recently commissioned to ensure that the services provided value for money. Charges applied were consistent and fair and met the overall costs of providing the service.

Brendan Glynane  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing**

### *High standards of service*

#### **Housing department performance**

First and foremost I must add my personal congratulations to the revenues and benefits service for their hard work in improving services and achieving disengagement. In other areas of performance, I am pleased to report progress in rent collection and voids management.

For the 5th month running the staff have achieved a higher than 100% collection rate in rent income. This means that the level of arrears is reducing month on month and the percentage of rent collected this year is on target to move out of the bottom quartile for this best value performance indicator.

During the past month, 125 empty council homes have been let. There is now less than 1.5% of the housing stock empty. This performance is comparable with top performing councils.

Weekly meetings are being held with service managers to review performance and address issues. The property maintenance teams are working towards a target of 10 days on average to complete works to empty homes and performance is significantly improving in this area.

#### **Partnership Working**

The corporate manager for housing services attended the East Midlands regional conference attended by the Chief Executives of both the national Housing Federation and the Housing Corporation. The key messages from the conference were that local authorities have a strategic role in delivering housing growth and that housing associations must work in partnership with us to deliver affordable housing solutions. We will be looking to build on this message in the weeks to come by engaging the registered social landlords in meaningful dialogue.

#### **Choice Based Lettings & HomeSwapper**

We are working towards introducing a Choice Based Lettings scheme which will allow those on the housing register more choice in where they live. This is one of the most exciting schemes introduced by the Council for many years and will change the lives of our housing applicants tremendously. The scheme will give the applicant more choice and autonomy and will enable greater simplicity, with feedback showing exactly how housing is being allocated. This will allow social housing applicants the choice usually only available to those in the private housing market and will help create more stable communities. A project team has now been established to deliver Choice Based Lettings by this summer.

A new scheme called HomeSwapper has also been introduced for existing tenants. This is the largest UK database of social housing tenants looking to move. HomeSwapper is for social tenants who want a house swap. This is also called mutual exchange and now that Northampton Borough Council has joined HomeSwapper our tenants can use the service for free.

**Rough sleepers**

The official rough sleepers count was held on 27th February. The housing service worked in partnership with CAN and others to conduct the count.

**IBS Housing System integration**

A number of additional modules to the IBS computer system used by the Housing service have successfully gone live on the IBS housing system. These include former tenant arrears, anti social behaviour and estate management.

Sally Beardsworth  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration**

### *Improve our town centre / A safe, attractive town / Parks, leisure & cultural heritage*

#### **Market Square**

Joint working with local traders and retailers has continued. Work is on track to establish a programme to improve the use and quality of the square as the focal point of our town centre.

#### **Beckett's Park Improvements**

The implementation of improvements are on track for completion by the end of March. This has significantly improved the access and linkage between the Waterfront and Town Centre and a pleasant new riverside walk in Midsummer Meadow.

#### **'Building for Life' design standards**

I have attended a one day conference with Yvonne Falkner (Housing Strategy Officer) organised by the Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA) and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) to promote CABE's 'building for life' principles for designing new neighbourhoods. I look forward to promoting these principles to ensure that we achieve higher standards to create a strong sense of place for new developments, good links to neighbouring places and high standards of sustainability.

#### **Local Development Scheme**

The four planning authorities have agreed a detailed Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Joint Committee responsible for the Joint Local Development Documents for West Northamptonshire. The Secretary of State has been formally requested to establish the Statutory Committee.

A Shadow Board is to be established prior to the establishment of a Statutory Committee.

The Joint Core Strategy remains behind programme, in part due to the success of public consultation to which more responses of greater length were received than anticipated. It has, therefore, taken longer than expected to process the results. Furthermore, we are awaiting clarification following government proposals for changes to the regulations regarding the process for preparing plans. We are, therefore, unable to progress certain aspects of the strategy until we know the outcome of these proposals. Additional resources are now beginning to be allocated, but recovery of the delay is unlikely. The proposed amendments to the planning system may result in further amendment to timescales.

Work on Sixfields Area Action Plan has commenced with consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal already underway. The potential for establishing the Planning Policy context through a Masterplanning approach is currently being established. The current work will inform and support either an Action Plan or Masterplanning approach.

## *High standards of service*

### **Establishing an Integrated Planning Service**

The recruitment process for Head of Planning, Development Control Manager and Building Control Manager has progressed through the search phase to the advert stage. The interviews for Head of Planning are planned for the week commencing 14th April 2008. The appointments to the Development Control Manager and Building Control Manager will follow with the newly appointed Head of Planning.

Richard Church  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment**

### *Safe clean neighbourhoods for people to live in / Improve our town centre*

#### **Street Scene**

We are now in the final stages of confirming the partnership arrangements with Choices Horticultural. Once the service level agreement is finalised Choices will then operate out of Abington Park providing support to, and learning from our own qualified on-site horticultural staff. At no extra cost to the Council ten extra gardeners will be working out of Abington Park, acting as extra eyes and ears around the park, thereby adding to the general sense of security. The arrangement will also give us access to the gardeners' specialist skills to make picnic tables, look after the sensory garden, and look after the polytunnels on Southfields allotments to grow plants for use in parks across the town. Northamptonshire County Council are also providing £5,000 to improve the mess facilities at Abington Park to be used by their and our staff.

#### **Bradlaugh Fields**

We have submitted an entry for Green Flag status for Bradlaugh Fields following the development of a new Management Plan for the park. The judges will be visiting in June this year to make their decision.

### *Consider the future of the planet in everything we do*

#### **Carbon Management Programme**

I am pleased to announce that the draft Strategy and Implementation Plans have been completed and agreed by Cabinet. The Council agreed budget includes investment to achieve an 8.1% reduction in Carbon Emissions in the first full year of the Plan. This is to be met by a range of means, including funding energy efficient lighting in St John's Multistorey Car Park, upgrade insulation in leisure centres and specific areas of the Council's buildings, and purchase software which will allow us to monitor our energy usage.

The Strategy sets out the Council's aspiration to be Carbon Neutral by 2020 and achieve a 35% reduction by 2012. This programme includes real action with measurable outcomes, both in cost savings and Carbon Reduction. This is one way in which the Council can play a key role as a Community Leader in tackling Climate Change.

Our commitment to the Carbon Management Programme affirms and puts in to motion our manifesto commitment to put concern for the environment at the heart of everything we do.

#### **Kerbside glass collection**

Kerbside collection of glass to 4000 properties within East Hunsbury, Duston and St James commenced on 7th February. This has been very successful with over 20 tonnes collected within the first three weeks. This is a very positive step towards honouring our manifesto commitment to introduce kerbside glass recycling in the Borough.

This pilot will provide information on the recycling rates for glass and allow staff to plan the roll out to the rest of the town and to establish the investment required to deliver this.

### **Kitchen Waste**

We are continuing to meet with the Northamptonshire Waste Partnership and other partners to discuss how we can progress the collection and recycling of kitchen waste.

## *High standards of service / value for money*

### **Housing Repairs inspection**

The date for our housing progress inspection has now been set for 5th to 16th May. The scope of the inspection will include the repairs and maintenance service and progress against our service improvement plan. The inspectors will also be looking at how we are improving our customer services and how we manage diversity issues and value for money.

### **Street Scene & Waste Management inspection**

The Audit Commission inspection of Street Scene, Waste Management and sustainability concluded on the 14th March. The inspectors were on site for a full week and assessed the services against the key lines of enquiry. It is anticipated that the draft report will be provided by the Audit Commission during April.

A medium term Service Improvement Plan has been developed to identify future priorities for each of the services and provide a focus for further improvements.

Service Standards have now been revised and finalised to incorporate comments raised during a public consultation exercise

### **County Enforcement Pilot**

On the 25th February 2008, the Council's Environmental Service hosted and led a county-wide event, targeted at Hotel, Guest House and Bed and Breakfast businesses. This was a partnership event including the County Council, all District Councils in Northamptonshire, the Health and Safety Executive, Northampton Enterprise Limited and the Fire and Rescue Service.

The pilot's aims were to give businesses the latest information on legislative requirements and examples of best practice, in order that they could undertake self-assessments and interventions leading to reduced inspections by enforcement agencies. Priority topics covered included: Slips, Trips and Falls, Manual Handling, Fire Safety, Trading Standards, Fair Trading and Product Safety. The event was very well attended with some eighty attendees. Initial analysis of delegate feedback indicates strong support for this approach to achieving legislative compliance.

Trini Crake  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Performance**

### *High standards of service*

#### **Direction of Travel and Inspection Preparation**

Work has been ongoing to support the Direction of Travel assessment (25th and 26th February). The report is expected to be available in March. Work is also proceeding on the Streetscene inspection taking place on 10th March.

#### **Implementation of Performance Management System**

Progress with the project is on track with the first training course having been completed for administrators. Further training is being rolled out and we are on course to implement the first phase by June as planned.

#### **Corporate and Service Planning**

The Corporate Plan was presented at Council on 28th February. It represents a clearer statement on what we will do to deliver the five corporate priorities and includes a range of specific targets.

#### **ICT Services**

The PC replacement programme continues to be rolled out. The need for modernised, efficient PC equipment was again highlighted in the Employee Opinion Survey.

#### **Operation Flag**

As a licensing authority for private hire vehicles the council is responsible for issuing and enforcing all aspects of the drivers private hire licenses. Private Hire vehicles are not allowed to accept passengers unless they have been pre-booked as it invalidates the insurance and protection of the public.

As previously reported "Operation Flag" has been undertaken before with twenty-eight private hire drivers falling foul of the sting operation. So far twenty-four drivers have been prosecuted for plying for hire and/or insurance offences and the Council's Licensing Committee have taken action against four of these drivers to suspend the drivers licences or to reprimand them

This enforcement action will continue as part of the Licensing department's activities to ensure that the public have full insurance protection when using private hire vehicles.

#### **BOHO Lounge**

An application was made to NBC for a licence at the former Snooker Club in Bridge Street Northampton. The Licensing sub-committee rejected the application because of concerns about crime and disorder issues of such a large establishment in the centre of the leisure zone of the town.

An appeal was made against this decision and was up held by the Wellingborough Magistrates Court as they reached the conclusion that crime and disorder would not increase. The concentration of licensed premises in this area is a concern to a number of stakeholders and the policy framework to ensure a safe town centre needs further consideration.



## *Publish targets & performance on monthly basis*

### **Overall Performance**

Performance reports for January show that 49% of our performance indicators are on course to meet their targets, with a further 17% within an acceptable tolerance.

### **Absence Management**

After a significant improvement last financial year, the projected year-end position for the Council indicates we will not achieve the 9.5 Full Time Equivalent Target for Absence.

The overall projected result masks good and poor areas of performance. Management Board are considering the need for corporate actions, in addition to tackling the under-performing areas through the performance management arrangements.

## *Honest and even handed / clear vision and leadership for Northampton*

### **Single Status**

The Council has been working jointly with Trade Unions to implement new Pay and Grading arrangements from 1st April 2008. In December 2007 the Management Board reviewed the progress of the project and identified a risk that the current result of job evaluation would not enable the Council to achieve equal pay and thereby did not help the Council in achieving its legal obligations, and could be open to legal challenge. This view was confirmed by an external expert who subsequently reviewed the position.

Management and Unions have agreed to negotiate and agree a new process to ensure that the Council complies with national agreements on job evaluation by 1st April 2009. Equal pay claims, which are outstanding, will be negotiated with the intention of agreeing appropriate resolution by 30th April 2008.

### **Employee Opinion Survey (EOS)**

The annual Employee Opinion Survey was undertaken in November 2007 and the results were published in February. The results show that measures have not changed significantly since 2006 but this needs to be considered in the context of the uncertain year for the organisation which saw the departure of a Chief Executive and the appointment of John Edwards as Interim Chief Executive.

The Cabinet received a report at their meeting on the 3rd March, which detailed the implementation of action plans by Corporate Managers, and the implementation of these improvement plans under the guidance of David Kennedy should ensure improved indicators when the survey is repeated in November 2008.

Brian Hoare  
March 2008

## **Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance**

### *Live within means & consult on balance of services and taxes*

#### **Budget 08/09**

It has been a busy month for finance. Cabinet met on 20th February to recommend the budgets for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital to full Council along with separate reports on prudential indicators and the treasury management. These were all subsequently agreed at the last meeting of this Council on 28th February.

A number of strategies have also been approved over the last month. We delivered the budget in line with the medium term financial strategy, published the Capital Strategy, which will underpin our capital programme and the management of the same. We also approved the Treasury Management Strategy as part of the budget report. This strategy guides the management of our debt and investment portfolio. On 3rd March we agreed an up to date procurement strategy, which will give direction and guidance for our procurement of goods and services and help drive improved value for money.

### *Sort out the Council's finances*

#### **Monthly Monitoring & Improvement**

The latest Budget Monitoring was reported to Cabinet on 3rd March. We are still showing positive results, with an underspend of £346k. Work is well underway for the preparation of the closure of the authority's accounts.

Improvement in the finance department has been recognised by the finance government monitoring sub-board and we are now actively discussing disengagement criteria. Service Plans for the area are almost complete, again the focus is on delivering further improvement in the service and preparing for the use of resources inspection under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

#### **Northampton Door to Door Service (NDDS)**

Arrangements are agreed for them to move to premises at Westbridge Depot on 21 March and we are working with NDDS to ensure that this move takes place in a smooth and co-ordinated way. We are pleased that we have been able to assist them in this way.

#### **Shopmobility**

We are now making an appraisal of the costs of works to enable the re-opening the Greyfriars car park for general use, which would not require the re-location of Shopmobility. We now have clear costings for the alternative proposal of moving Shopmobility to adapted accommodation at the Mayorhold Car Park, which are being taken into account in arriving at the most appropriate strategy.

Malcolm Mildren  
March 2008

**Council**  
**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008**

**Supplementary Report of the Leader of the Council,  
Portfolio Holder for Partnerships and Improvement**

*Aspire for excellence / High standards of service*

**Management Structure**

The Chief Executive will issue a consultation document this week to staff regarding the structure of the organisation. This expands on his earlier consultation on the culture of the organisation and the structure at Director level together with an aspiration to move to a professionally qualified, Head of Service model at the level below Director.

The results of that consultation were brought to and agreed by Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

**Portfolios**

I do intend to make a number of amendments to the responsibilities of individual Portfolio Holders to better align the political and managerial leadership of the Council to ensure better and more efficient and effective leadership. These changes are likely to be incremental over a period of time as new Directors are appointed and as the new management structure develops.

However, I do intend to make one very significant change effective immediately after Easter. Currently, Housing Repairs falls within the Environment Portfolio. This is largely historic as, under previous management structures the Direct Service Organisation (DSO) operating out of the Westbridge Depot were managed as a single entity. However, Housing Repairs more naturally forms an integral part of the Housing Service and, in particular, of the landlord function. Therefore, I intend to remove the anomaly whereby the Environment Portfolio Holder is responsible for this service but the Housing Portfolio Holder 'purchases' all of the service on behalf of tenants.

With effect from 25<sup>th</sup> March 2008 the Housing Portfolio Holder, Sally Beardsworth, will take over direct responsibility for Housing Repairs. This, together with management changes that are already being implemented, will result in an integrated landlord function within Housing Services and will enable the Housing Portfolio Holder to work with the new Housing Director to drive through improvements and to ensure better team working within the Housing Service.

It will also allow the Environment Portfolio Holder, Trini Crake, to focus on the core functions of the environment services.

## *Act as advocates for Northampton*

### **WNDC Board Appointments**

DCLG confirmed on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008 that Cllr Tony Woods would be appointed as the NBC nominee to the Board of the WNDC for a three year term from 15 March 2008. They further announced that Cllr Richard Church would be appointed as the County Council nominee for a similar term.

I am delighted with these appointments. I very much want to see the regeneration of Northampton and want that regeneration to be of the very highest quality so that Northampton takes its rightful place as a city that people want to make their home. Government has decided that Northampton will grow rapidly. It is our job to ensure that that growth provides Northampton with an environment and facilities the equal or better than the best European cities of a similar size.

My key priority as the Leader of Northampton Borough Council and as a Board Member of the WNDC will be to ensure the two organisations work very closely together and with others for the benefit of the people of Northampton.

It is pleasing that, finally, there will now be representatives of all three major political parties on the board. The absence of any Liberal Democrat representation on the Board during its first three years was unfortunate and has very significantly weakened the WNDC.

Council and the public can now be assured that the needs of Northampton will be vigorously espoused by Cllr Church and myself.

Tony Woods  
March 2008



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# COUNCIL

## 17 March 2008

**Agenda Status: PUBLIC**

**Directorate:**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW</b>
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### 1. Summary

This report considers proposed changes to the Constitution suggested by the Constitutional Review Working Party. The report is not seeking Full Council's approval to constitutional changes at this stage, but a further report containing relevant drafting will be brought to Full Council on 28 April 2008.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council is asked to note and comment on the deliberations of the Constitutional Review Working Party contained in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 2.2 To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with group leaders and the Constitutional Working Party, the drafting of appropriate amendments to the Constitution, such drafting to be brought back to Full Council for approval on 28 April 2008.

### 3. Report Background

- 3.1 Council, on 17 November 2007, requested the Council's Cabinet to reconvene the Constitutional Working Party with proportional representation (2-2-1) to review the Council's Constitution. Full Council's resolution required the following to be considered:
  - 3.1.1 permitting the public to speak at full Council on any item listed on the agenda;
  - 3.1.2 allowing Councillors more time to question portfolio holders in full Council;
  - 3.1.3 extending the guillotine to provide adequate time for business;
  - 3.1.4 reducing the deadline for submission of written questions from five clear working days;

- 3.1.5 reducing the deadline for submission of Motions from twelve calendar days;
  - 3.1.6 other possible constitutional amendments that the Monitoring Officer, Overview and Scrutiny or the Constitutional Review Working Party consider worthy of consideration.
- 3.2 Cabinet considered Full Council's request on 7 January 2008 and agreed the setting up of the Constitutional Review Working Party (CRWP) on the terms required by Full Council. The following members form part of the CRWP:
- Cllr David Perkins (Chair); Cllr Keith Davies; Cllr David Palethorpe; Cllr Michael Hill; Cllr Brian Markham and Cllr Hollis as an observer.
- 3.3 The CRWP met on a number of occasions and formulated its proposals. This report outlines the deliberations of the CRWP which are attached as Appendices 1 and 2
- 3.4 There are two aspects to the CRWP's deliberations, those directly addressing Council's resolution. These are presented in the report as Appendix 1. Then there are those that consider wider aspects that go beyond Full Council's resolution. These are presented as Appendix 2.
- 3.5 This report is not, at this stage, seeking to make changes to the Constitution. Full Council's view are being sought on the amendments to the Constitution proposed by the CRWP, and Full Council is being asked to delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the group leaders and the CRWP the drafting of appropriate amendments to be brought to the April 28 Full Council meeting.

#### **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

##### 4.1 Resources and Risk

None specifically arising from this report.

##### 4.2 Legal

These are contained within the body of the report

##### 4.3 Other Implications

None specifically

#### **5. Background Papers**

FJF file – Constitution file

**Report Author and Title:** Francis Fernandes

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## Constitutional Working Party Recommendations in Response to Motion from Council referred to Cabinet on 7th January 2008

<p><b>1. Permitting the public to speak at full Council on any item listed on the agenda.</b></p>	<p>(A) That the current “Deputations and Public Addresses” item on the Council agenda be used for public comments and petitions.</p> <p>(B) This item to be restricted to a maximum of thirty minutes duration.</p> <p>(C) Each public speaker to have three minutes to say whatever they wish to, across any subject or other agenda item except “Motions”.</p> <p>(D) Public speakers to register by 12 noon on the day of the meeting.</p> <p>(E) The Mayor to have discretion to reorder the order of public speakers so as to encourage those who have not addressed Council before or recently and also for the purpose of balancing the contributions. Mayor to also have discretion to either allow more public speakers for items of greater public interest or to request a further Council meeting to hold the discussion.</p> <p>(F) This provision to not prevent a member of the public also registering to speak to a motion.</p>
<p><b>2. Allowing Councillors more time to question portfolio holders in full Council.</b></p>	<p>(A) That Portfolio Holder presentations and questions be extended up to forty five minutes</p> <p>(B) That notwithstanding the existing provisions in the Constitution, the Mayor to ensure that Portfolio Holders do not take longer than the three minutes allotted for their presentations.</p>
<p><b>3. Extending the guillotine to provide adequate time for business.</b></p>	<p>Agreed that the extension of the current Guillotine time by 30 minutes. The decision of whether the 30minute extension be resolved by starting the meeting earlier at 6pm or closing the meeting later at 10pm should be left with the Council to agree.</p>
<p><b>4. Reducing the deadline for submission of written questions from five clear working days</b></p>	<p>(A) That the Council agenda be published seven clear working days before a meeting.</p> <p>(B) That the deadline for submission of written questions be 10:00am on the Monday following publication of the agenda.</p>
<p><b>5. Reducing the deadline for submission of <u>motions</u> from twelve clear working days.</b></p>	<p>(A) That the deadline be eight working days.</p>





## Constitutional Working Party Recommendations in relation to other possible constitutional amendments as part of the Motion from Council referred to Cabinet on 7th January 2008

### 6. Other possible constitutional amendments that the Monitoring Officer, Overview and Scrutiny or the Constitutional Working Party consider worthy of consideration.

#### 1. Motions – Council Procedure Rules

The working Party had a discussion of the Council Procedure Rules for Motions and the following was agreed:

- (A) That the submission deadline for amendments to motions be increased by 2 and half working days. If Council meetings are scheduled for Monday, amendments should be submitted to the Monitoring Officer by 12noon on the Thursday before the meeting. Monitoring Officer to circulate electronically the valid amendments to Political Group Leader's and Political Assistants by 12noon the following day (Friday).
- (B) The speaking time for all Councillors be reduced to 5 minutes for Movers and 3 minutes for Seconders and all other Councillor speakers.
- (C) Clause 6.7 of the Constitution –
- To give Mayor the discretion to amend a motion on factual or grammatical basis, which did not have an impact on the meaning of the motion.
  - The full clause would no longer be applicable with recommendation 1 above.
  - 6.7 Clause should be moved to Clause 3.4.
- (D) Right to Reply –
- No debate should take place at the time an Amendment is put forward. The Amendment should be voted upon. If the amendment is accepted it would become the substantive Motion and the debate should take place on the substantive Motion. If the Amendment is lost the debate should take place on the Original Motion. The speeches allowed under Amendments would be restricted to the Mover (5minutes) and Secunder (3 minutes) and a right to reply to the Mover of the original motion.
  - The Secunder should have a right to speak on a substantive Motion.
- (E) Clause 6.11 of the Constitution 'Closure of Motion' –
- A Member who has already spoken on the Motion should not have a right to request closure of the Motion.
  - Discretion should be given to the Mayor to reject a closure of Motion, if deemed that an adequate debate had not taken place.

- (F) Number of Ordinary Motions – Restriction of three Ordinary Motions per meeting is considered. Discretion should be given to the Mayor to allow additional Motions should a need arise.
- (G) Motions would normally be considered in the order they had been received but at the discretion of the Mayor (in conjunction with the Group Whips) this order could be varied.
- 2. Public Speaking at Planning**
- (A) That the Public Speaking Protocol be varied to allow the Chair discretion to allow the reallocation of speakers' places where a registered speaker fails to attend the Planning Committee meeting.
- (B) That the Public Speaking Protocol is varied to extend the particular Ward Councillor's notification of registration to speak, to the start of the meeting.
- (C) That the Solicitor to the Council give consideration to changing the order of speaking so that those in favour of an application speak before those against.
- 3. Substitution on Licensing and Planning Committees**
- (A) That a scheme substitution for Licensing and Planning Committees be devised on the basis of one named substitute per group per Committee.
- (B) Each substitute member to go through the appropriate training and to attend at least three meetings of that Committee each municipal year as an observer.
- (C) Substitutes attendance as observers at Planning Committee and Licensing Committee to be shown in the attendance (in the Minutes).
- (D) That these substitution rules would need to be rigorously enforced due to the risk of appeal of decisions if substitutes were not seen to be fully competent.
- 4. Opposition Group Business –**
- (A) To include an Item 'Opposition Group Business' as a standing item on the Agenda for the Opposition Group Business, which could include Opposition motions.
- (B) Time limit of 10 minutes is allocated to the item. The meetings would consider business from only one opposition group per meeting based on the political proportionality. Proportionality would apply over the life of the Council and be reviewed after each election including bi-elections. Currently the proportionality equates to one meeting for Labour Group for every three meetings to the Conservatives.

- (C) The administration would not be able to submit amendments on any Motion submitted under this item
- (D) The item should only apply to ordinary meetings
- (E) Members of the Public should be excluded from speaking on this item.

**4. Use of Traffic Light System in Council Chamber**

The Constitution includes the use of the traffic light system in the Council Chamber from the first Meeting of Council in May 2007 and that the traffic light system would be strictly adhered to.

**5. Re-Order Council Agenda**

'Matters of Urgency' item be reordered on the Agenda to take place before the item 'Notices of Motion'.

**6. Councillors Speaking at Cabinet**

Agreed the alterations to the Access to Information Procedural Rules and the Guidelines for Open Government in respect of the Guidelines for Open Government paragraph 4.2.4.3 that Councillors wishing to speak at Cabinet meetings would only need to inform the Chair prior to the start of the meeting.

**7. Planning Protocol**

Agreed the following alterations to the Appendix to the Planning Protocol. It was agreed that paragraph 1.1 be clarified in so far as the reference to a representative of a Parish Council "in whose area the application falls" and that it be made clear that Ward Councillors would not be required to pre-register their wishing to address the Committee.

**8. Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) – Delegated Powers**

Delegations to Officers in relation to Tree Preservation Orders need to be amended so as to allow the emergency in position of TPOs by officers and subsequent report to be made to the Planning Committee where this delegation had been used.

**9. Listed Building Consents**

To look into the need/possibility for a Delegation to Officers for the granting of emergency listed building consents and subsequent report to the Planning Committee where this delegation has been used.

**10. Contract Procedure Rule**

Minor amendments were required to the Contract Procedure Rules, which would be submitted to the Working Party.





**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# COUNCIL

## 17 March 2008

**Agenda Status: PUBLIC**

**Directorate: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>STAFF APPEALS – CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION</b>
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### 1. Summary

This report is seeking full Council's authority to make changes to the Constitution to enable certain staff appeals against dismissal to be dealt with by Officers, namely the Head of Paid Service or his nominee.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Council approves Model 4 (outlined in Appendix 1) which would mean all appeals against dismissal below Head of Paid Service, Chief Officer and Statutory Officer levels would be heard and determined by the Head of Paid Service or his nominee;
- 2.3 Council delegate to the Solicitor to the Council the authority to amend the Constitution to implement 2.1 above.

### 3. Report Background

- 3.1 Currently, staff appeals against disciplinary matters are heard by an Officer and Member Appeals Panel, as outlined in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Cabinet's views were sought on the various models that could be used by the Council to determine relevant appeals.
- 3.3 At its meeting on 11 February Cabinet confirmed its support for Model 4, which delegates the hearing and determination of certain appeals against dismissal to the Head of Paid Service or his nominee.
- 3.4 The reasoning for the proposed changes are contained in Appendix 1 and Council should note that no changes are proposed in relation to the Statutory Officer or Chief Officers.

## **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

### **4.1 Resources and Risk**

The determination of appeals by Officers trained in employment law should reduce the risk of successful legal challenges against dismissal. Further, clarifying the governance arrangements in appeal processes will reduce risk.

### **4.2 Legal**

These are covered in the body of the report.

### **4.3 Other Implications**

None arising directly from this report.

## **5. Background Papers**

FJF Staff Appeals file.

**Report Author and Title:** Francis Fernandes

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Appendices



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

## CABINET REPORT

Report Title

STAFF APPEALS

PUBLIC

### AGENDA STATUS:

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	11 February 2008
<b>Key Decision:</b>	NO
<b>Listed on Forward Plan:</b>	NO
<b>Within Policy:</b>	NO
<b>Policy Document:</b>	NO
<b>Directorate:</b>	Chief Executive's
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Brian Hoare
<b>Ward(s)</b>	<b>All</b>

### 1. Purpose

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- 1.1 To review current arrangements in relation to member involvement in staff appeals to establish streamlined and clear appeal processes and to make recommendations for constitutional change to full Council.

### 2. Recommendations

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- 2.1 That Cabinet approves Model 4, which is an Officer only Panel for appeals against dismissal for all officers below Chief Officer and Statutory Officer levels.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recommends the above to Full Council for implementation through relevant constitutional changes.



### **3. Issues and Choices**

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#### **3.1 Report Background**

- 3.1.1 The present procedure for appeals in staff disciplinary matters was approved by the Council's Personnel Sub-Committee on 26 July 1999.
- 3.1.2 The current process in relation to appeals against dismissal lacks clarity, as the Appeals Panels are not specifically referred to in the Constitution. Whilst there is an Appointment and Appeals Committee in the Constitution, its remit is focused on the requirements of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 which deals with the appointments and appeals arising from the most senior officers, including statutory officers.
- 3.1.3 Currently the Council's disciplinary procedures give all employees a right of appeal against formal disciplinary action. Appeals against the less serious disciplinary matters that result in first, second and final warnings are to an officer nominated to hear the Appeal, who in essence will be a more senior officer than the one who imposed the disciplinary sanction. There is an Appendix to the procedure, contained in the employment handbook, which lists the officers who can hear these appeals. This is by reference to the structure as it then was and is, given changes in structures, out of date. The posts equate to operation manager upwards in the present structure
- 3.1.4 Appeals against dismissal are to an Appeals Panel made up of two elected members and a Director, advised by Human Resources.
- 3.1.5 This report is not suggesting any changes to the way appeals would be dealt with in relation to the Head of Paid Service, Chief Officers or the Statutory Officers. Appeals from these individuals will be to the Appointments and Appeals Committee. There are legal and practical reasons why a member only committee should determine such appeals.
- 3.1.6 There are various models that could, and are being used by a number of local authorities, to hear appeals against dismissal. These are considered below.

### **4. Options**

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#### **4.1 Model 1 - Appeals Panel Officer/Member - Status Quo**

- 4.1.1 This Model would maintain the status quo. There are various problems with this model as mentioned above. Further a number of Members trained to participate in Appeals are Portfolio Holders. This has not been by design but chance. This is unwise for the following reasons. Employment matters are not executive functions under the relevant Functions Order. However, members of the executive are able to sit on such panels but would not be sitting on the Panel as executive members i.e. they would not be *acting* as the executive. There is therefore possibility of role confusion.

- 4.1.2 There is also a further practical problem in that members who participate in appeals could end up having to defend their position in tribunal proceedings. Whilst that is not a problem in itself (if the decision were made properly) there is the practical difficulty of having to sit through potentially long and drawn out proceedings.
- 4.1.3 Given the above it would be legitimate for Cabinet to decide that members of the executive would no longer sit on such panels. A number of local authorities have constitutional provisions that specifically exclude executive members from sitting on Appeals.

If this option were chosen then it would be prudent to:

- Exclude members of the executive from such Panels.
- Increase the Pool of trained members from which members can be drawn.
- Clarify the governance arrangements for the panels and implement this through amendments to the constitution (as this is not a formal committee, but an unconstituted panel the decision maker on the panel would be an officer rather than members, although any decision would be based on consultation with the members on the panel).

#### **4.2 Model 2 - Appeals Committee (Non-Executive Members only)**

- 4.2.1 Many Councils use this model. This is a full member committee and it would be run like a normal committee. i.e. the proportionality rules would apply and decisions would need to be made by members (not officers). The Council could constitutionally exclude the executive from sitting on such committees.
- 4.2.2 If this option were chosen, the normal administrative rules of meetings would apply i.e. there would be a need to publish an agenda and papers would need to be available 5 clear days before the meeting (although given the nature of the matters that the Committee would be dealing with a lot of the papers would be confidential).
- 4.2.3 This model does have the benefit of clarity and simplicity in governance terms. There are also further practical advantages in that because appeals need to be heard by more senior managers than the preceding disciplinary issue. Depending on the seniority of the employee concerned one could just run out of senior managers to hear appeals. An appeals committee would resolve this particular problem.

#### **4.3 Model 3 – Appeals Committee (all Members entitled to participate including Portfolio Holders)**

- 4.3.1 This Model is almost the same as Model 2 above except, Portfolio Holders will be able to sit on the Committee.
- 4.3.2 This model is not recommended. As stated earlier, in the comments in Model 1, it would not be a good idea for Executive Members to sit on appeals because of practical reasons and because of role confusion.

#### **4.4 Model 4 - Officers Hearing Appeals - Head of Paid service**

- 4.4.1 It is possible for the appeals process to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service without member involvement subject to this not applying to Chief Officers and Statutory Officers. The scheme would not require the Head of Paid service to physically conduct the appeal as this could be delegated to another officer or even to an independent person. Of course, the Head of Paid Service's nominee would need to comply with principles of fairness and natural justice and any nominee will be chosen on that basis.
- 4.4.2 There are clear benefits to this model because of its simplicity and clarity. Also, it is likely that Officers would be able to better equipped to deal with the actual appeal and be in a better position to defend their decision in tribunal.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

##### **4.5.1 Model 1 – Appeal Panels (Status Quo)**

Decision Making:	Director
Participants on Panel:	Non-executive and trained Members N.B. Members involved but not in decision making.
Problems:	There is the potential of confusion of the roles of Members in this Model.

##### **4.5.2 Model 2 – Appeals Committee (Non-Executive Members only)**

Decision Making:	Member Committee
Participants on Committee:	Officers in an advisory capacity.
Problems:	Potential for this to work but there are administrative problems with servicing such committees and obtaining member representation.

##### **4.5.3 Model 3 – As above but including Executive Members**

Decision Making:	Member Committee (Executive not to sit on this Committee)
Problems:	See above.

##### **4.5.4 Model 4 – Head of Paid Service**

Decision Making:	Head of Paid Service or nominee
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Participants on Panel:

Specialist advisers (Officers or Specialist),  
advising the Head of Paid Service (or his  
nominee)

## **5. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **5.1 Policy**

Constitutional changes will be required.

### **5.2 Resources and Risk**

Clarifying the governance arrangements for appeal processes will reduce risk.

### **5.3 Legal**

Covered in the body of the report.

### **5.4 Equality**

None arising directly from this report

### **5.5 Consultees (Internal and External)**

Appropriate Consultations have taken place with Trade Unions through the MTUCM

### **5.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes**

Streamlined and efficient appeals processes will assist in staff management in the authority.

### **5.7 Other Implications**

None specifically

## **5. Background Papers**

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5.1 FJF Staff Appeals file.

**Report Author, Title and Extension**

**FRANCIS FERNANDES**  
**Solicitor to the Council**  
Tel: 837334





**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# COUNCIL

## 17 March 2008

**Agenda Status: Public**

**Directorate: Chief Executive**

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton</b>
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### 1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Council the final Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) for Northampton.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council adopts the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton.

### 3. Report Background

- 3.1 The Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) was developed by the Northampton Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and replaces the previous Community Strategy and Vision. The SCS contains a Community Vision to take Northampton forward to 2031. This Community Vision was developed following extensive consultation with Northampton stakeholders and local communities and was approved at Cabinet on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007.
- 3.2 The Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton was developed in response to the introduction of a new structure to the LSP and with regard to the Government white paper 'Vibrant Local Leadership'. The white paper, as well as discussing the role of councils' as local leaders, noted the Government's agreement that Community Strategies should become Sustainable Community Strategies. These new strategies would provide a long-term view and integrate social, economic and environmental priorities. These issues were further explored in the consultation paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships: shaping the future'.
- 3.3 In summary, the purpose of a SCS is to set the vision and priorities for Northampton agreed by all partners of the Northampton LSP including local people and communities, built on a solid evidence base. In addition, the targets of the strategy would contribute towards the delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) outcomes.

- 3.4 It should be noted that as a district level LSP both the Northampton Partnership and its SCS should be fully considered and involved in the development of the Northamptonshire SCS and LAA, and conversely that the Northampton SCS should reflect Northamptonshire's LAA outcomes. This is particularly relevant given that the Northamptonshire SCS is currently being consulted upon.
- 3.5 In assisting the LSP in developing its SCS, liaison through county wide LSP network and the LAA officers has enabled the SCS to link with the LAA as far as is possible at this time.
- 3.6 In addition to the links between the Northamptonshire SCS and LAA, development of the Northampton SCS has regard to other local and regional plans, for example the relationship between the Northampton SCS and the Local Development Framework which makes sure that key spatial planning objectives are aligned. This has particular significance given the development aligned to the growth of the Milton Keynes South Midlands area.
- 3.7 The Council has a legal requirement to be part of the Northampton LSP and its SCS. However, in adopting the Northampton SCS, it should be noted that the process undertaken in partnership to produce the strategy demonstrates the added value in collaborative working to deliver outcomes locally on improved health, educational attainment, employment and a reduction in crime.
- 3.8 Cabinet considered the Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> February and recommended the strategy to Council for adoption.

#### **4. Implications (including financial implications)**

##### **4.1 Resources and Risk**

There are currently no additional direct financial implications related with the adoption of the Northampton SCS however, it should be noted that the delivery of the priorities and LAA outcomes are contained within the Council's Corporate Plan and service plans which include the details of any associated resource implications and expenditure.

##### **4.2 Legal**

There is a legal requirement for Local Authorities to develop and produce a Sustainable Communities Strategy. The Council will meet its duty by endorsing the Northampton Sustainable Communities Strategy.

##### **4.3 Other Implications**

There are no specific equality and diversity issues associated with this report. The Community Vision contained within the Northampton SCS was developed on the basis of a full consultation process. The full SCS was consulted upon through each partner organisation, and the individual action plans.

#### **5. Background Papers**

- 5.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement In Health Bill, Bill 16 of 2006-07, Research Paper 07/01, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2007
- 5.2 ODPM, *Vibrant Local Leadership*, January 2005
- 5.3 ODPM, *Local Strategic Partnerships: shaping the future*, December 2005

- 5.4 Communities and Local Government, *Planning Together – Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Spatial Planning: a practical guide*, January 2007
- 5.5 NBC Cabinet Report, *Draft Corporate Plan 2007-2010: Community Vision and Council Priorities*, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006
- 5.6 NBC Cabinet Report, *Corporate Plan 2007/08-2011/12*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2007
- 5.6.1 NBC Cabinet Report Sustainable Communities Strategy for Northampton, 11 February 2008

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## Northampton Local Strategic Partnership



A Sustainable Community Strategy for

# Northampton

2008 - 2011

This plan outlines our vision up to 2031 and how we aim to achieve this. It will be refreshed periodically to reflect changes and progress. This plan focuses on activity that will take place during the first phase of the vision, up to 2011. The intention of this plan is not to repeat what individual organisations are doing but to add value. This means that energies can be focused on the areas where we can make the most impact collectively.

Northampton in 2031! - A place of **PRIDE • RESPECT • EXCITEMENT • VITALITY • FUN • PASSION.**

The spirit, commitment and determination of the people of Northampton will be there for everyone to see. Northampton will build upon its historic market town roots to become a 21st century market city with diverse multi-cultural communities giving leadership to Northamptonshire as its principal urban centre.

People who visit Northampton will look upon it as a place where they would want to live, work and bring up a family and those who live here will want to stay. We will celebrate all that is good about Northampton and Northampton will be all these things because:

## By 2011 it will...

- **Be recognised for good quality, environmentally friendly housing:**  
We will continue to promote good affordable, well-designed housing for all. With attention to the environment and the use of sustainable resources
- **Be well served by modern and efficient public services:**  
Local councils will have their role as community leaders, working in partnership to deliver this vision for Northampton. Their decisions will be easy to understand, transparent and will involve local people.
- **Be safer:**  
People will use the city centre and move around all of Northampton at night without fear.
- **Be cleaner:**  
All of Northampton will be clean and litter-free. We will work together to build a community culture of no tolerance of those who litter and pollute our streets.
- **Be healthier:**  
Our green spaces, the street -scape and urban design will help to make the healthiest environment so that people have good physical and mental health and live longer.

## By 2021 it will...

- **Be a city:**  
With a population approaching 240,000 over the next 15 years, Northampton will become city sized and as such we will develop an infrastructure that ensures that during this rapid period of growth there are enough schools, health care services, emergency services, roads, affordable quality housing and green space to support the rest of our vision. There will be excellent public services, healthy, skilled and prosperous residents who are proud of where they live and aspire to improve their lifestyle and opportunities.
- **Be a place made up from caring communities:**  
Communities will be developed and built upon respect and understanding of people of all ages, status and ethnicity. We will invest in, support and promote the family in all the forms that it takes so that there is the opportunity and desire to stay together, learn from and support each other.

## and by 2031 it will...

- **Be a major regional cultural and economic centre:**  
Northampton will be a centre for educational excellence our schools will help develop good citizens and produce exceptional results. Our colleges and university will work with local businesses to increase the skills base and develop and retain the jobs and workers of the future, improving the quality of life for all.  
  
Our traditional architecture will be mixed with new urban design. The Cultural Mile will snake through the city, joined together by our integrated transport system. Included within the Cultural Mile will be a heritage trail that celebrates our boot and shoe past. We will take full advantage of all that the River Nene has to offer and develop a water-based experience for all ages. All this plus a specialist niche shopping experience like no other makes Northampton a tourist destination of choice.
- **Be supported by its excellent transport system:**  
People will be able to move about the city and all of Northampton easily, hopping on and off an environmentally friendly transport system. They will have more choice of how they travel. They will free us from our dependence upon our cars to move around Northampton. Pollution and congestion will be virtually eliminated.

**LIVING AND THRIVING:**

**Northampton** is unique and we are ambitious for its future. We intend to transform **Northampton** into a world class place that plays a vital leading role in Northamptonshire in growing and contributing to the UK economy. Its location, at the heart of the country, means that it is ideally placed to drive growth, enterprise and productivity across the county. **Northampton** has already demonstrated a dramatic capacity for economic success; the area has seen substantial rates of population growth. New areas of housing are needed to accommodate this growth but development must be planned in a sustainable way and contribute to growing community cohesion.

**LIVING AND THRIVING**

- Deliver sustainable growth
- Promote sustainable transport
- Lead and facilitate sustainable development
- Promote the development of business and inward investment in Northampton
- Ensure that social, physical and green infrastructure are adequately and timely provided to meet people's needs
- Use land and buildings effectively and maximise opportunities for re-using land that has been previously built on
- Encourage locally distinctive, high quality design and sustainable construction that is environmentally sensitive
- Strengthen and diversify the economic base of Northampton; taking advantage of opportunities for knowledge-based industries, owing to its position within the Oxford/Cambridge arc.
- Improve quality of life of people living in suburban and urban areas; making places attractive, clean and safe.
- Improve quality of and access to housing
- Develop and enhance a distinctive and diverse cultural and leisure offer
- Involve our voluntary and community sector in planning, decision making and delivery of services
- Improve our schools and match our training opportunities to economic needs

**ACTIVITIES**

Town centre Regeneration and Development (Central Area Action Plan, Public Realm, Regeneration projects)	Community and Voluntary Sector Forum	Improving Northampton's attractiveness to investors (Economic Strategy for Northampton)
	Community Enabling Fund	
Improving Neighbourhoods and Green Spaces (Breathing Spaces)	Improving transportation (Transport Strategy for Growth)	Investment in infrastructure that includes roads, schools, utilities, community and health
Skills for employment	Market Square development	Water Management Schemes
Planning for future growth of the area with neighbouring councils (Joint Core Strategy Development Plan Document)	Carbon Management Programme	Cultural Strategy including Cultural Quarter within the town
		Leisure Strategy

## Case Studies

**Upton:**

Award winning and nationally recognised scheme where planning code was set by the council for a requirement to use sustainable materials, sources, insulation values for energy efficiency, sustainable urban drainage solutions. Upton is located on the south-west fringe of Northampton. Upton was formerly a greenfield site. The Commission for New Towns was granted an outline planning permission for development of Upton, this was updated in 2003 following formation of the partnership of English Partnerships with Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and The Princes Foundation, following an Enquiry by Design public consultation which established promoting a high quality sustainable urban extension with the commercial element of the development located along the Weedon Road frontage. The Upton Design Code was formulated by the partners and NBC adopted the Code as supplementary planning guidance for the Upton development area. Work is underway on another key feature of the development, the sustainable urban drainage system which is an environmentally-friendly technique aimed at reducing the amount of "run-off" surface water generated by a development. These include measures such as the use of reed beds, which have the added advantage of creating attractive wildlife habitats. Work has been completed on new infrastructure, including a roundabout on Upton Way and a spine road, which links the development site between Upton Way and Weedon Road. Improvements have been made to the nearby Duston Mill reservoir to increase its effectiveness in line with new standards introduced by the Environment Agency enhancing the land's function as an existing flood plain.

**New Life Buildings:**

Partnership work involving NBC, police, Leicester Housing Association and local residents whereby the council engaged with a partner able to attract funding to refurbish property which had become difficult to let, had reports of high levels of antisocial behaviour and was in poor condition, turning it into a successful mix tenure venture that includes housing tenancy support and ensures that nominations benefit people on the housing register.

The Newlife Apartments, formerly known as Beaumont and Claremont Court, in Northampton has received a "Highly Commended" award in the Regeneration category at a RICS Awards 2007 ceremony and a "Mention" at the Civic Trust Awards during 2007. Ground floor apartments have been adapted specifically for residents with disabilities, incorporating wider doors for wheelchair access, specially adapted kitchens and wet rooms and emergency pull cord facilities. Security of the blocks was a big issue as over time they had become a focus for drug dealing, prostitution and antisocial behaviour. Access to the apartments and communal areas is now controlled via electronic gates operated by personalised key fobs. 24 hour remotely linked CCTV cameras are on every floor and intercoms provide further peace of mind for residents. A local employment scheme was in operation and together with a supply chain that employed several people from the local community.

**FIT AND HEALTHY:**

In **Northampton**, there are differences in Health experiences within the town and the quality of life is affected by a wide range of issues, including where we live, our level of education, and whether we have a job. We are building on the learning from joint initiatives to involve people and improve health and quality of life and we are offering support and information to help people make decisions about whether to smoke, what to eat and drink, what contraception to use and what level of physical activity is best for them. As partners, we will work closely to ensure that advice and support is available, along with consistent information on how to access services.

**FIT AND HEALTHY**

- Improve people's health and lifestyle
- Improve educational achievement and enjoyment
- Improve life chances
- Provide training and education opportunities for employment and sustainable economic development
- Increase job opportunities in line with national, regional and sub-regional strategies
- Promote equality of opportunity and improved participation in the community in the decision making process
- Design health into new growth and regeneration

**ACTIVITIES**

Alcohol and drug strategy	Strategies on Smoking	Physical activity
Mental Health Projects	Strategies on obesity	Strategies on sexual health
Strategies on breast feeding	Education extended services/ Well being centre	Health impact assessments

**Case Studies**

- Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) opened at half term in 2007 on Spencer Brook. Funding achieved jointly by NBC and NCC from Barclays for Sports. Residents, Safer Community Team (SCT) and councillors report regular usage, before school, after school, evenings and weekends. The £20,000 that Barclays for Sports also provided for programming activity on the MUGA will be used to help lever funds from the Community Investment Fund for a joint project by NBC, NCC, SCTs and residents for a three-year physical activity project in Spencer and in Eastfield.
- Far Cotton recreation and community centre: opened in 2007 as a multi-use facility, including a library, community meeting space, sports changing facilities and set to expand over time

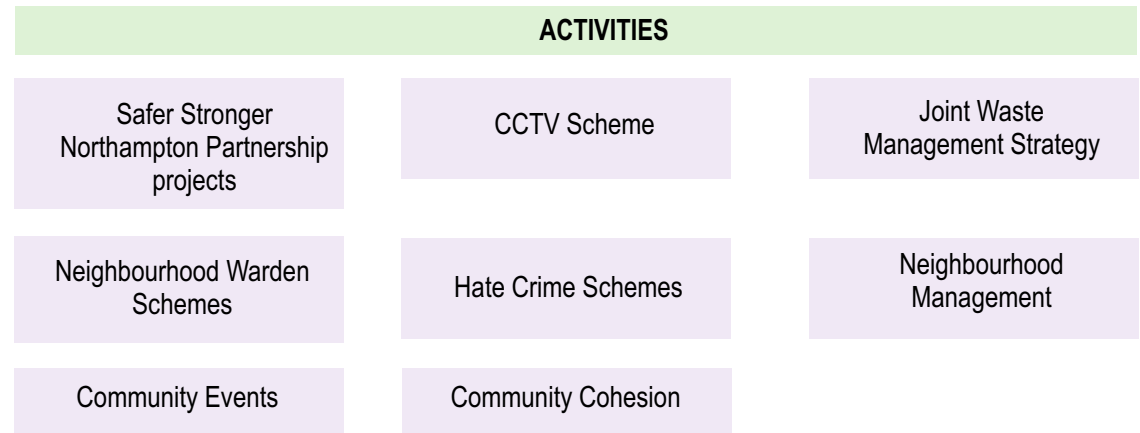
**SAFE AND SECURE**

Quality of life and safety in the town are priorities and one of the most important things that make the town a place where people want to live. Although there has been a reduction in crime levels, it is necessary to look at how people's perceptions are affected. The Northampton Safer Stronger Partnership has been reconfigured to lead on major aspects of this work.

**SAFE AND SECURE**

- Significantly reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Reduce harm and impact of alcohol and class A drugs
- Improve the environments that people live in (built and natural)
- Improve partnerships to deliver joined-up services
- Improve cohesion and pride in communities and the town
- Improve offender management
- Partnership working to specifically improve quality of life for children and young people

**ACTIVITIES**



**Case Studies**

- Neighbourhood Renewal has supported the Friends of Eastfield Park to develop plans to improve park. This has involved developing and carrying out a community survey, holding two major clean up days (spring and autumn) and supporting the group to develop plans for the park. The community clean up days were particularly successful- with volunteers from the University and well as local residents.
- Operation Nightsafe: The partnership works hard to ensure Northampton town centre is a vibrant, safe place to visit at all times of the day. Different agencies came together to deliver 'operation nightsafe'. In this operation the police, local licensing officials and trading standards staff came together to ensure those premises operating under the licensing regime were operating responsibly within the law. For the first time we saw police and ambulance crews 'teamed' together to bring a joint, effective response to all incidents requiring their attention. The local 'Pub Watch' scheme worked with the licensing trade to bring about many local initiatives to make the environment less volatile and positively encouraged responsible drinking in the town. The operation saw increased high visibility patrols across the town at vulnerable times. All told this was a great effort by all the agencies make a real difference by working together.

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Increasing the involvement of children and young people in decision-making, local democracy and removing barriers to accessing services, to help them to know what's on offer for young people, things to do and who they can talk to for support are priorities at both county and local area levels, with the Children and Young People's Partnership Board providing a countywide focus to which Northampton partners are committed. From spring 2008 services will be encouraged to work to accredited outcomes to prove achievement against the countywide Charter of Youth Involvement.

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Demonstrate progress against the seven elements of targeted youth support in east Northampton
- Develop an action plan for implementation of the Integrated Youth Offer across Northampton
- Implement universal youth offer in consultation with young people with a localised needs' focus
- To work with partners to promote positive activities for children and young people

### ACTIVITIES

Integrated Youth Officer

Improving educational attainment for 15 to 18 year olds

Changes to physical infrastructure of schools and colleges

Development of Our Space

Healthy schools award

Play strategy: Local play schemes - youth shelters - skate board facilities

To reduce the number of young people not in education or training (NEET)

Cross cutting issues relating to mental health, childhood obesity, youth crime

### Case Studies

- Young people have been involved 'X marks the spot' - the hidden history of Spring Boroughs. This project has run by the museum, funded by the Lottery as part of a programme of activities for young people in the area, co-ordinated through Neighbourhood management. The resulting dvd has been shown locally at the Forum cinema and the group has been interviewed by ITV news. The dvd has been entered into a young film makers competition and the group have been short-listed into the top 5 and this has already been screened in Nottingham and London. We will find out shortly whether this will be screened on BBC 2 before Christmas, fingers crossed!!
- A new social enterprise is beginning in Far Cotton. The Gener8 Project in Delapre will take children who have either been excluded or struggle to cope in mainstream Schools, offering them the chance to take their GCSE's or gain vocational qualifications. In addition the project offers a café to provide a place for all youngsters in the area to gather and counselling will be available on a variety of issues. The hope is that by providing young people with somewhere to go issues around Anti-social behaviour in the area will be reduced
- Community involvement from Young people has been key in the development of Victoria Park in St James. A community activity Day took place that involved Young People having the opportunity to say what they wanted to see in the Park. The Redevelopment is due to complete in March 2008

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# Northampton Local Strategic Partnership

