

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Portfolio Holder Presentations**

---

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 3)
3. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing (Page 6)
4. Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration (Page 8)
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 16)

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Partnerships & Improvement**

**Management Restructure**

Recruitment of a Director of Housing and a Director of Planning & Regeneration are well in hand with final interviews planned for 24 July 2008.

Recruitment of a Director of Environment & Culture will commence shortly. An internal candidate for the post of Director of Finance & Support was interviewed by the Appointments Panel on 30 June 2008. The Panel were delighted to recommend that Isabell Procter be appointed to that post from 1 October 2008.

Recruitment of Heads of Service for Planning, Human Resources and Landlord Services is progressing with final interviews planned for late July and early August so that relevant Directors can be involved in the selection of their teams.

An Assessment Centre was held during week commencing 23 June 2008 for managers 'at risk'. The Chief Executive will announce the results shortly. Recruitment to unfilled Head of Service posts will commence shortly with adverts being placed in early September for maximum effect.

**Partnerships**

The Northamptonshire Local Area Agreement (LAA2) has been submitted to Government Office on time. The Borough Council has been active in ensuring that this agreement delivers real benefits in Northampton.

The Public Service Board has been established and will be overseeing projects within the LAA2 and the completion of the Northamptonshire Sustainable Communities Strategy. This is being simplified and rewritten under the tag-line "the best place in England to grow". The input of NBC to this process has had a major impact on the final framing of the strategy and reflects the growing influence and commitment of NBC within this partnership. The revised strategy is due to be available for approval in September.

The orders establishing the Joint Strategic Planning Committee are expected to be approved later this month. There have been some delays in moving the Joint Core Strategy forward. The new committee should help resolve these however, NBC with the County Council, South Northants and Daventry District Councils have commissioned a short review of the Joint Planning Unit to ensure it has the capacity and resources to deliver.

## **Improvement**

Feedback received from a number of key individuals at the Local Government Association conference (1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008) suggests that there is a general perception that Northampton Borough Council is now improving well. Establishing a clear reputation as an improving council is important in recruiting and retaining staff and so in building the capacity to accelerate the rate of improvement.

The Government Monitoring Board met on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008. They continue to be happy with the progress being made and extremely supportive of our plans for further improvement. The next GMB meeting will be in October.

## **WNDC**

Council has asked for regular feedback from my activities as a member of the WNDC Board.

The board approved in principle the use of a Standard Charge approach to increase the amount of S106 monies available for infrastructure development. The initial level is being set at £20,000 per dwelling (including affordable housing provision) – with existing S106 negotiations continuing for commercial developments. This is somewhat less than the amount calculated as required but was considered reasonable as a first step. Further discounts will be negotiated for brownfield sites to recognise the additional costs of mitigating problems with the land.

The board are discussing the implications of the ‘credit crunch’ and the current economic environment. Clearly, commercial house building has slumped recently. Registered Social Landlords may be the only people building houses in the near future.

**Cllr Tony Woods**  
**10 July 2008**

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

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

**Customer Services Operations**

Successful liaison and communication across teams/departments prior to the implementation of changes in bin rounds has reduced the impact on our customers. Additional resources were available in the Contact Centre to meet additional demand, with changes made to the messages on the telephone system and CRM scripts to support staff to give consistent information.

At the beginning of the change additional calls were received, this has now reduced. The Contact Centre experienced a small increase in the number of missed bin collection calls. Staff provided members of the public with full details of the changes in their area.

Front line staff in the One Stop Shop are working closely with Housing Services and receiving training on Choice Based Lettings. Customer Service staff remain committed to working with Housing to achieve successful implementation of this project.

There is a time limited project One Stop Shop transformational group reviewing the existing use of the One Stop Shop, customer feedback, stakeholder requirements for the future to forward plan how existing accommodation is used, review resource and capacity for service delivery.

**Support Services**

Print Services Unit and Post Room worked collaboratively with Waste Management to produce stickers for bins and advise customers of revised bin collection dates. 14,000 stickers and hangers were made available to place on wheelie bins. The Post Room sent out 14,000 letters.

Post room & Electoral Registration have jointly purchased a new inserter/enveloped, which will increase efficiency and assist in reducing external expenditure.

Print Services Unit were responsible for producing much of the work on display at the Venezia Exhibition. This has received both local and national recognition.

## **Call Care**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> May a full 3-year audit was conducted by Telecare Standards Association (TSA). Call Care passed this inspection and is accredited to the TSA Part 1 for calls handling. The inspector complimented staff on the quality of their pre-inspection submission. There were no improvement notices issued. Work is in progress to achieve Pt 2 of the accreditation in the autumn of this year. A presentation will take place in November 2008.

Following a financial review in August 2007, increased call monitoring charges from 0.38p/unit/week to 0.52p/unit/week became effective from April 1<sup>st</sup> with planned incremental increases during 2009/10 & 2010/11. There have been no increases for 10 years. The impact has been a loss of income of £1200 from the termination of a contract with one customer. No other negative feedback has been received.

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

### **Crime Figures:**

The first quarter of the year has seen a general drop in recorded crime, reflecting a very focused and intensive approach to offenders and 'hotspots' by the police and other partners, including this Council. This trend needs to continue if Northampton is to achieve the kind of results which similar partnership areas are recording. This Council is better co-ordinating the work of its various front-line services (eg maintenance, housing) to ensure that we make the most of opportunities to reduce and prevent crime and disorder.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy:**

An updated policy was approved by Cabinet this month, confirming the flexible and proportionate approach that has brought considerable success in tackling ASB in the Borough. Early intervention with individuals and families is preventing problems from escalating.

### **Partnership Strategic Assessment:**

Last year saw the first 'partnership strategic assessment' for community safety in the county, in which all the key agencies took part in identifying problems and issues and then prioritising them. This work has now been incorporated into the local Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership's plans. The next partnership

strategic assessment is now underway, again with the full involvement of this Council's officers.

## **Culture and Leisure**

### **Venezia!**

The festival has proved a great success, attracting much positive publicity and achieving impressive numbers of participants for most events. I am particularly pleased at the good links we have made with the business community, showing their support for a strong cultural offer for Northampton, and at the diversity of activities and tastes which Venezia! has catered for. We will certainly be looking to build on this for future events on a similar pattern.

### **Balloon Festival:**

Arrangements for this year's Festival on 15-17 August are well advanced. A full programme of arena entertainment and continuous attractions has been confirmed, and most of the evening acts as well. Our headliner this year will be Rick Astley (remember 'Never Gonna Give You Up'?). The team is working hard to reduce unnecessary expenditure and raise income for the event, but festivals generally are suffering at the moment and last summer's rains have not helped. However, with a little support from the weather the 2008 Balloon Festival should be a fantastic event. Councillors are also looking at the longer term future of the event, working closely with other professionals locally with a view to proposals later this summer.

### **Cultural Investment Plan:**

Cultural Investment Plan: A major piece of work is underway to map the existing 'cultural infrastructure' of Northampton and West Northamptonshire, and identify the gaps and how they might be filled in the short, medium and long term. Commissioned by WNDC, paid for by the Arts Council and supported by NBC and NCC, the plan will help to argue the case for investment in culture through developer contributions. A number of well-attended events have helped to shape the work and ensure that different perspectives are represented.

Leisure Investment: limited capital investment in our leisure facilities is now underway, which will improve our customers' experience and satisfaction. Included in the programme is the replacement of worn out features in the leisure pool at Danes Camp, and much needed modernisation of changing facilities. As well as improving customer focus, this will help to safeguard income for the council.

**Cllr Brendan Glynane**

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing**

The following is an update on key issues delivered or being progressed within the housing services portfolio.

**Performance**

Voids performance remains good, however there is likely to be a reduction in performance during July and August as Choice Based Lettings (CBL) is introduced. The year to date performance is 23 days. We recently held an awards ceremony to recognise the individual contributions of the voids, housing needs and tenancy services teams and this was well received by the staff involved. There is still room for improvement but we have improved considerably from the previous poor performance.

In Benefits, it is currently taking 18 days to pay new claims and 9 days to pay when people have a change of circumstances, such as an increase in income or rent increase. This level of performance has been maintained for some months now and this had made a real difference to people who rely on benefits to help them with their housing costs.

The Annual report to tenants has just been published. This highlights a number of achievements this year including:

- Signing up to the Respect standard for tackling anti social behaviour
- All tenants received a new, revised tenants handbook
- Direct Debits for rent payments introduced in April this year
- Over 200 tenants joined the sounding board and some have taken part in focus groups, mystery shopping etc.

The report also identifies where we need to make improvements.

**Partnership Working**

Changes to the management of Anti Social Behaviour

Housing management can now use the threat of 'Demoted tenancies' to deal with serious anti-social behaviour. Where appropriate, tenants will have certain rights withdrawn and may face eviction from their home if they do not change their behaviour. Housing is working very effectively with the Anti-social behaviour unit to address this issue.

## **Homeless Strategy**

We are currently reviewing our homeless strategy for the next five years in line with government requirements. The Homeless Forum, representing the majority of homeless agencies in the town, are very much involved in the consultation process and it is intended to share the draft strategy with members for their views before it is finalised.

## **Key Issues**

Choice Based Lettings will go live at the end of this month.

The economic downturn is having a significant effect on the housing market. Building of new housing has slowed down significantly and in some cases had stopped altogether. We need to work in partnership with local housing associations to access government funding to purchase some of the new housing which remains unsold, for use within the social housing sector. We also need to provide good quality advice for people who are struggling with their mortgage payments to help them remain in their own homes and prevent increasing numbers of homeless applications. This is a challenging time for housing nationally and we are aware of the need to respond positively herein Northampton.

On that note, recruitment processes are under way for the Director of Housing and Head of Landlord Services positions and appointments will be made shortly.

I attended the Chartered Institute of Housing national conference in Harrogate recently. In addition to the issues around the “credit crunch”, I was most interested in the proposed role for housing in addressing “worklessness” and how this will contribute positively to place shaping and community cohesion. I was also very pleased to listen to how we might attract the right talent to the council in the future, using the experiences of others to guide us. Perhaps most challenging of all is the question of how we deal with the issues related to an increasingly elderly population. By 2051, the numbers within the population over 65 will have risen from 9.3m in 2000 to 16.8m and this is already putting an increasing strain on a number of public services. In terms of housing, we need to ensure that there are suitable options available for all including the right to live independently in your own home.

**Cllr Sally Beardsworth**  
**July 2008**



**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration**

**The ‘Chrysalis’ centre**

This is the working title for a new business start up centre providing workshop and retail opportunities for new creative businesses. 36 Guildhall Rd has been identified as the preferred site. This would enable us to bring a listed building on a key site back into use. East Midlands Development Agency has short-listed the £5 million project. We are now working on a detailed proposal.

**Town Centre retail strategy**

A report on a retail strategy for the town centre has set out the opportunities for retail in the town, and the risks of taking the wrong decisions. In particular, the danger of further out of town retail development acting as an unsustainable threat to the town centre. The report sets out the importance of the Grosvenor/Greyfriars development to attracting major new retailers to the town. It also highlights the need to encourage specialist retail outlets to key locations in the town. The report will inform the council’s work going forward, particularly the Town Centre Area Action Plan.

**Market Square and Abington St frontages**

The cabinet have approved a report commissioned to identify opportunities to improve the frontages of buildings in the Market Square and Abington St. Research was undertaken into the history of a number of important buildings. The report identifies measures to return original shop fronts and improve aspects of the exteriors. This will improve the contribution of these buildings to the street scene and heritage of the town centre. Working with owners and leaseholders, the Council will now be seeking external funding to take these proposals forward.

**Market Square**

Pleydell Smithyman are concluding the work on the Market Square, programme of events and business plan. A £900k funding application has been submitted to Northamptonshire Enterprise Limited to implement a programme of changes to the square. A paper is being drafted for the 4 August Cabinet.

## **Disposal of School Playing Fields - Parklands and Grange Rd**

Following the recommendation of Scrutiny One, I have written in response to the County Council's consultation on a further proposal to dispose of these two school playing fields for development. The County Council have given no evidence for the Secretary of State to change his previous decision not to dispose of these playing fields, and there is a significant shortage in playing pitches for junior football and rugby. There has been no response to this council's request for community access agreements to playing fields at PFI schools covering affordability, availability and access has not been actioned. I have therefore objected to the proposal and requested that the disposal of these sites for development be refused.

## **Developer Contribution Standard Charge**

The Cabinet has responded to WNDC's proposal for a standard charge (roof tax). This will apply to residential and commercial developments to fund the infrastructure needs of the growth agenda. In supporting the principle, we are seeking the council's full involvement in further developing the proposal. We are also asking that proper account is given to the needs of parks and green space infrastructure, as well as the costs of cemeteries, allotments and waste collection to support a growing population.

## **Former Blueberry Diner site**

The Council has advertised for a developer to work with us on providing a new high quality building close to the new entrance to the Derngate Centre. It will offer new facilities for those visiting the theatre and new opportunities for businesses in catering of in the creative sector. We look to appointing a developer by the end of the year.

## **Car Parks Strategy**

The Council has commissioned White Young Green to develop a car parking strategy. It will take account of the needs for town centre parking as the town grows, and how current car parks can be further improved. Colleagues from throughout the council are supporting this work, together with partners from the County Council and local businesses. The strategy should be complete by October 2008.

## **Sixfields**

The Council is seeking the authority of the Government Office for the East Midlands to change the Local Development Scheme. This will allow a

masterplan to be developed for Sixfields instead of an Area Action plan. With the co-operation of local stakeholders, proposals for regeneration at Sixfields could be completed more speedily, and could subsequently be incorporated within the LDF.

### **Concessionary Fares**

Approximately 24,000 cards have now been issued. Currently approximately 200 additional applications are being processed per week. The considerable problems associated with card production and distribution now appears to have been resolved. Overview and Scrutiny have been asked to assess the extent to which the statutory scheme should be amended to allow for variations in times that cardholders could use the bus services.

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

The recruitment process for the Director of Planning and Regeneration and Head of Planning has commenced, with the closing date following advertisement now passed. It is anticipated the roles will be filled by October at the earliest.

An internal appointment has been made to the Building Control Manager post. He was previously the team leader within the service.

**Cllr Richard Church**

**July 2008**

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment**

**Street Scene**

The train in Abington Park was installed on the 26<sup>th</sup> June to replace the one destroyed by vandals. The new train was generously donated by Child First Nursery of Moulton and is already proving very popular. The children have named the train "Runaway Rosie" as this was the most popular suggestion. Relocation costs associated with the move were met by generous contributions of £5000 from Councillor Maureen Hill and £1000 from local Café owner Tony Ansell.

Volunteers from Friends of the Latter Day Saints have re-painted all of the play equipment in Abington Park as well as cleaning out the stream that runs through the spinney.

An opportunity was taken at the recent Northampton Carnival to consult on the Becketts Park Master Plan. Around 150 people visited the stand and put forward their suggestions on the proposals.

All bedding plants have now been planted throughout the town resulting in numerous positive comments and feedback from residents of the borough.

The new service level agreement is now in operation with the ELVIS (End of Life Vehicle Impound Scheme) partnership. In May, this resulted in 100% of abandoned vehicles being removed from locations across the borough within 24 hours of report. This is the first time that this level of performance has been achieved and has a real impact on our customers and reduces further issues of anti social behaviour, such as arson.

We have just launched "Postcards from the parks" for the second year running in partnership with the Chronicle and Echo. This competition awards a prize for the best photograph taken in one of Northampton's parks.

**Waste Management**

We recently collected our 100<sup>th</sup> tonne of glass from the trial kerbside collection area. Options are now being developed to identify how this service can be rolled out across the rest of the borough.

The changes in the refuse and recycling collection days to a number of properties across Northampton was implemented on the 16<sup>th</sup> June and has

proved to be very successful. Over ten thousand customers have now had a change in their collection day. Notification of changes was communicated by several different methods ranging from letter drops and stickers to door knocking of individual properties and displays at the Saints Show. The success of this has meant that the changes have generated minimal additional enquiries and missed collections although there have been stand by crews to deal with any such event.

### **Carbon Management Programme**

A new sustainable development officer, has been appointed to take forward the council's carbon management programme.

### **Crypto sporidiosis**

Staff in environmental health have worked closely with Anglian Water and colleagues at the Health Protection Agency following the recent issues regarding water. With staff from housing they have helped to get the message out and ensure that bottled water reaches the most vulnerable.

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

A joint project with the county has commenced to review and improve the way disabled facility grants are awarded. An additional technical officer post has been advertised but there have been some difficulties recruiting to it. Further work is being undertaken to identify whether there are suitable skills in the authority that could be utilized in the short term.

**Cllr Trini Crake**

**July 2008**

**Council**  
**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Performance**

**Performance Management**

Annual outturn report produced for all 2007/08 indicators. This will be made available to all Councillors in advance of the 21<sup>st</sup> July. A summary report is being assembled today (3/7/08) and this too will be available well before the 21<sup>st</sup>. The requirement for a Best Value Performance Plan has been removed this year, replaced by the minimum requirement to produce outturn data and a statement on contracts. This was completed successfully by the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June, placed on the Council's website and downloaded to the Audit Commission electronic data capture system.

Work is progressing on an Annual Report highlighting the performance over the past year. This will provide a narrative of our performance against the Council's priorities over the past year and will be available by the end of the month of July.

Preparation for the new National Indicator set is well underway. Consistent with other Northampton councils, we will report against the new indicator set in October for the first time. We will continue using the majority of former Best Value Performance Indicators in order to track our progress and improvement.

Performance Plus implementation continues. Phase 1 was successfully completed on schedule – this relates to the implementation of the Regeneration Service onto the new system. An evaluation of Phase 1 is underway in order to identify the learning from that phase for application to subsequent phases. A report will be taken to Management Board setting out recommendations for further roll-out to other service areas once the evaluation is complete.

**ICT**

No significant issues to report in relation to ICT projects.

A local restructuring of the ICT department has been completed and a series of new posts recruited to. The aim of the changes is to strengthen 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line customer support – in particular the PC Support Team for the roll-out of the PC

replacement programme, and Helpdesk where we are extending the hours of operation to reflect increased operational hours in service areas.

## **Elections**

The service has recently successfully administered the Parish Poll for Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish. The poll did provide the opportunity to test out new polling station equipment designed to simplify the close of poll procedures.

## **Land Charges**

During May Land Charges responded to 608 search requests 78% of which were personal search requests.

## **Information Management**

Information Management have drawn up the scope for a review of the Council's Publication Scheme. The Council is required by regulation to review it's publication scheme in the current financial year. An internal audit of the way in which the Council deals with the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Act requests it receives has been carried out and a draft report is awaited. The services are committed to the implementation of any recommendations made in the report.

During May Information Management dealt with:

Freedom of Information requests	21
Environmental Information Regulation requests	2
Data Protection Act requests	4
Section 29 requests	32

## **Legal Services**

The Legal team continue to work with colleagues on large and important projects including the Grosvenor and have successfully prosecuted on a range of matters.

In the last three months the following prosecutions have been initiated:

In conjunction with the Licensing Team - Flagging operations 14

Benefit Fraud	6
Litter Offences	11
Trespassers	2
Planning enforcement	1

### **Standards**

The Monitoring Officers reported to Standards Committee on 16th June on the Local Determination of Conduct Complaints, which is the new process by which complaints against councillors are considered by the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer has created a Manual of the procedures to be followed under the new arrangement and will be arranging training for Members on the new arrangements and the procedures shortly.

**Cllr Brian Hoare**

**July 2008**



## **Council**

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008**

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

As members are aware, this Chamber signed off the Draft Statement of Accounts on 30<sup>th</sup> June, along with the Annual Governance Statement. This is in accordance with the timings as prescribed in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

Our external auditors, KPMG, have already commenced an initial review this week prior to commencing the audit in late July.

Following a successful recruitment round, recent appointments to the finance department include a replacement for the Divisional Account post, Accountant, Project Accountant and trainee positions. These will ensure that the progress made so far by the Finance Section will continue, with resilience and succession planning in mind.

An appointment was not made to the post of Risk and Business Continuity Manager, however an interim officer has been appointed for a period of at least three months and commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> July. This will ensure that the Council does have a planned and managed approach to risk and business continuity.

The finance department therefore is now fully resourced.

Budget Monitoring for 2008/09 has commenced with the first reports being presented to Cabinet in July. At this early stage at period two (May), through robust monitoring processes, emerging pressures have been identified and work is now underway on actions to mitigate these.

I am pleased to confirm the completion of an Agreement to Lease of approximately 1.738 hectares of land at Lings wood (off Lings Way) to the Indian Hindu Welfare Organisation last week. The agreement provides the organisation with a site to construct an £12 million community complex to be known as Northampton Kutumbh which when complete will be available to all.

A report is to be taken to Cabinet on 14th July outlining the conclusions of the Delapre Options Appraisal Report commissioned by the Delapre Abbey Building

preservation Trust through consultants Purcell Miller Triton. Although further work is identified as being required it does outline a vision and way forward for the restoration and secure future for the Abbey.

The refurbishment works to the former council offices at Fish street are now complete. This has allowed for the relocation of the Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership which includes NCC, Police, PCT and NBC. Officers from the police and NBC are due to move to refurbished accommodation in next two weeks. Partners jointly funded the works.

The necessary public advertisements have been placed in connection with the proposed disposal of Archway Cottages in Abington Park, by way of a lease, in order to facilitate their refurbishment to a standard suitable to their listed status.

**Cllr Malcolm Mildren**

**July 2008**