Council
Date: 5 December 2011

Portfolio Holder Presentations

Report of the Leader of the Council (Page 2-5)
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment (Page 6-7)
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement (Page 8-10)
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance (Page 11-12)
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing (Page 13-14)
Report of the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning (Page 15-17)
There have been a number of positive developments since the last meeting of Full Council. I would like to brief members on. Most obvious to the town’s future is that WNDC confirmed £8m of funding on 15th November for the new bus interchange. This investment is fantastic news for the town and a good step forward for the redevelopment of the bus station / Grosvenor Centre. On Monday 21st November, Cllr Hadland and I also met with Legal & General to discuss this and the way forward with the development of the Grosvenor Centre.

I have also had meetings on 7th November with David Cardoza at Sixfields, and Leon Barwell and Tony Hewitt at The Saints, and discussions are progressing well. I intend to meet with them regularly to support their aims for the future.

On 21st November I visited Downing Street to meet with the Prime Minister. This was a great opportunity for me to raise many of the issues and concerns we face in Northampton at the highest level of government, and some of the exciting opportunities for the town.

Christmas is one of the most important times of year for our town centre economy, and this year NBC has joined with the Royal & Derngate, Northamptonshire Enterprise, Northamptonshire County Council and the Town Centre BID to plan and coordinate a programme of events and promotions to attract shoppers to Northampton.

The Christmas lights in the town centre were officially switched on at 5pm on Saturday 26th November. The town centre decorations have been paid for in part by local businesses this year, led by the BID. This year Northampton has, a 60ft tree, its biggest tree ever, as the sparkling centrepiece in the Market Square, and other trees, all at least 30 ft high, which are at All Saints (50ft), outside The Guildhall and in Abington Street. There are also another 150, four-foot-tall Christmas trees, all lit with solar lights, outside business premises all around the town.

A new promotional website has also been launched with our partners which is a one stop shop for information about shopping, events, restaurants, theatres and everything going on in Northampton this Christmas.

The website can be found at: www.christmasinnorthampton.co.uk
The website also reminds visitors that parking costs have been cut in time for Christmas, with free parking for up to an hour in the three most popular car parks, and free parking on Sundays in all town centre car parks.

Sadly, everyone will be aware of the tragic events that happened at Lava and Ignite on Wednesday 19th October which caused two young women to lose their lives. Once again I offer my condolences to all those affected by this tragedy, and would like to thank the officers and members of the Licensing Committee who acted so swiftly to deal with the situation, and are assisting the police with their investigations.

Since the last Full Council meeting I had the pleasure of announcing that the Olympic Torch will be coming to Northampton on 2nd July, which is great news for the town only a few weeks ahead of the games beginning, and will give everyone a chance to get involved in Olympic fever.

The Night Run took place in Northampton on 29th October and raised nearly £2,000 overall for the British Heart Foundation. It was a fantastic night for the town with over 500 people taking part in the event.

On the 22nd November the Borough Council was honoured to welcome the 9th/12th Royal Lancers Regiment to a reception at The Guildhall following their parade through the town centre. I am sure all members will join me in thanking them for their service and welcoming them back from their tour of Afghanistan.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone for making Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday dignified events through which to remember and honour our town’s war dead.

**Community Safety**

3 Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and 1 Interim Order were obtained during the month of October. Two of these were in relation to prolific street drinkers, and is part of this administration’s commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour and making our town safe and pleasant place for residents and visitors.

In partnership with Northamptonshire County Council the Bridge Street Closure was put in place to help with public safety over the Halloween weekend.

Operation Lapland has been launched as an addition to the Police ‘Nightsafe’ scheme leading up to, and covering Christmas.

In support of the International Day Against Hate Crime pledge boards were put on display at Westbridge and in the One Stop Shop.

Operation Stay Safe was undertaken on 24 October to provide support for vulnerable young people.
Human Resources

Work is continuing on the HR efficiency programme, which includes the HR restructure that has now been completed. A HR on-line system and HR Helpdesk have been launched that are receiving positive feedback from line managers. The next steps are to support managers on the e-appraisal system in preparation for the 1st year of performance management.

Borough Solicitors

The Shared Legal Service Pilot with East Northamptonshire Council is beginning to develop the data on which the Business Case for a full shared legal service will be based. The Borough Solicitor is on target to present the Business Case in January 2012 with a recommendation that the full shared service start in April 2012.

Litigation

The protection of the majority from the few that flout the law is enforced actively through the department through the criminal justice system.

Since 26th September NBC has prosecuted 3 people for Benefit Fraud, one was conditionally discharged, one fined £150 and one given a 24 month conditional discharge.

Four people have been prosecuted for incorrectly disposing of their waste, three were fined a total of £550 whilst the other was given a 250 hour Community Order and ordered to pay £469 towards the cost of cleaning up the mess they had caused.

In two cases possession and Anti Social Behaviour Orders were obtained, in the first a couple have been banned from entering the area in which they were causing a nuisance for two years whilst in the other the court banned the person from the area where they had been causing a nuisance for five years and from drinking in public for the same period.

A Possession Order was obtained against a Council Tenant who had sub-let their tenancy without permission, in this case the court also ordered the person to pay outstanding rent of £519 and a possession was obtained against a trespasser on council property.

Litigation is however not always about the Council taking action. Recently the Litigation Team concluded a long case in which the Council had been sued for a considerable sum. Not only were they able to successfully resist the claim they have been able to obtain a court order for £58,000 towards the Council's costs of defending this action.
Information Governance

The number of FOI requests being received by NBC is at an all time high, with more having been received in the first ten months than were received in the whole of 2010. The department continues to respond to these requests within the statutory time limits and is supporting key initiatives such as data transparency.

David Mackintosh
Leader of the Council
Environmental Services

Members of the public will soon receive a leaflet advising them of their Christmas refuse and recycling collections. The leaflet also provides information on the forthcoming food and textile collections that will be gradually rolled out from the end of January through to March 2012.

On 28th October, Sarfraz Farooq, formerly the operator of Flava Wellingborough Road, was sentenced to 250 hours of Community Service and costs totalling £1490 for offences of fly tipping in March 2011. The administration takes a zero tolerance approach to fly-tipping and will continue to focus on prosecuting those responsible for abusing our town in this way.

There have been three recent prosecutions for breach of section 46 Waste Receptacle Notices with fines of £150 and £250 and costs of between £250 and £415, which again demonstrates the administration’s zero tolerance approach to the problem.

The Best Bar None awards evening for the town’s best run licensed premises took place on 22nd November. The administration believes Northampton Borough Council has an obligation to promote and recognise responsibility amongst the town’s licensed premises as part of a safe and vibrant nighttime economy.

The Licensing Team have been heavily involved in the license review process following the incident at Lava and Ignite on the 19th October. The investigation is ongoing and a further review hearing was held on the 14th November. Representatives of the Administrators of Luminar provided the Committee with an assurance that the licence for Lava and Ignite in Northampton will not be reinstated. Northamptonshire Police are undertaking a full and thorough investigation into what happened and Northampton Borough Council will continue to help them in any way it can.

Consultation in relation to the feasibility of introducing upper and lower age limits for Hackney and Private Hire vehicles is now underway.

Northampton Borough Council has been ranked 354 out of 1301 organisations in the UK for the work it has done to successfully cut its carbon emissions. The Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme applies to large non energy intensive organisations within the public and private sectors. The purpose of the scheme is to help reduce the UK’s carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 (against 1990 emissions).
John Caswell
Deputy Leader of the Council
Portfolio Holder for Environment
Community Centres

The Borough Council joined local community organisations and community centre users at the Camp Hill centre on 19 October to celebrate Cabinet’s approval of new management arrangements for three further community centres, St James, Semilong and Camp Hill which is the first of the ‘self-managed’ centres to make formal proposals to take on full responsibility for their centre. St James centre will be managed by the Doddridge Centre, familiar to local people as providing facilities and services to the community. The management committee of the Alliston Gardens centre have applied to run the Semilong Centre, which will complement their existing activities in that part of town. All three organisations were represented at the celebratory tea party.

On 23 November Cabinet approved a further proposal, for the well established ‘Need to Know Shop’ to manage the community centre at King’s Heath. The Need to Know Shop has been active in that area for several years, providing a range of community services and advice, and is well placed to bring new impetus to the running of the community centre.

Neighbourhood Working

A programme of partnership working with Northamptonshire County Council and the Police is being piloted in the North Area of the town to educate parents and deter them from inconsiderate and dangerous parking around schools at “school run” time. This is backed up by the threat of enforcement action. To date three events have been run at All Saints, Boothville and Cedar Road schools and an ongoing programme is planned at 10 other schools.

Community Panels are being set up to enable Northampton Borough Council to apply for the Community First funds on offer to four areas of the town from Department of Communities and Local Government through the Community Development Foundation.

Funding has been secured to run the very successful junior wardens scheme in six schools this school year and is being pursued for a further five.

The new Neighbourhood Co-ordinator for the South/West Area, Jenna Parton, started work on Monday 31 October
Events

Our Christmas programme launch included the switching-on of the Christmas lights on a 60’ Christmas tree in the Market Square (which is the largest the town has had). This, together with the 50’ tree on All Saints, 40’ trees and a 150 4’ trees on shop fronts around the town centre is giving Northampton a sparkling feel.

The Town Centre Christmas launch was on the 26th November, with two festive Frost Fairs on Sunday 27th November and Sunday 4th December with workshops, gifts, dancing and carols. Visitors can also take advantage of free Saturday and Sunday parking, and one hour of free parking introduced earlier in the year.

A free rock climbing, abseiling and extreme activities event for young people was held in the Market Square on 19th November, and involved the Northampton Volunteering Centre, Northampton Association of Youth Associations, Service Six, the Community Partnership and the Change of Scene project.

Night Run Northampton, the UK’s first dedicated night running event, took place on Saturday 29th October as part of this year’s Igniting Ambition Festival in the lead up to the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Culture & Heritage

The 98th Annual Town & County Exhibition opened in October and will continue into December. The Northamptonshire Town & County Art Society have been holding their annual exhibition at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery since 1915, at 96 years perhaps constitutes the oldest Borough Council relationship with an external partner.

Plans to modernise Northampton Museum and Art Gallery went on display on 8th November. Funding has come from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and Northampton Borough Council’s capital fund, and will allow for new lighting, flooring and redecoration.

Northampton Leisure Trust

Northampton Leisure Trust is providing new, exciting health & fitness opportunities and initiatives for its customers and the people of Northampton. Good quality leisure facilities make a vital contribution to the health and wellbeing of Northampton’s residents, and the administration continues to closely monitor these facilities following their transfer to the leisure trust.

The Forum Cinema continues to perform extremely well, with attendances continuing to increase. An exciting and varied programme of films in December and during 2012 will ensure this trend continues.
Northampton Leisure Trust is currently providing professional advice and support to Duston Parish Council in relation to the development of Duston Sport and Leisure Complex.

**Brandon Eldred**  
Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement
Finance

On 23rd November, Procurement hosted 2 half-day conferences titled “How to do Business with the Council”. Guest speakers included the Leader, the Chief Executive and external partners, Due North (the Council’s supplier of an electronic tender system) and SCAPE (the East Midlands Property Alliance (EMPA) Framework Agreement Managers). The Council is targeting local Small, Medium Enterprises and it was an opportunity to let businesses in our area know how about all the good work we are doing to support them. It also gave us an opportunity to give local businesses a better understanding of how they can do business with us both directly as main contractors and indirectly as part of the supply chain. It is important that the local business community are informed that we, as a Council, support the local economy and do everything we can to help them within the regulations.

Our external auditors have signed off all grant returns for 2010/11 including the HRA subsidy claim and Housing Benefits Subsidy claim, all well within statutory deadlines.

A new VAT helpline contract has been agreed with PWC; this will provide the Council with savings for 2012/13 onwards and will ensure that the Council receives sound day-to-day VAT advice.

The continuation budget has now been finalised and work is continuing on the overall draft budget which will be presented to Cabinet on 21st December.

Revenue and Benefits

*Single Fraud Investigation Service*

We have now received a response on the recent consultation related to the future of fraud teams across local Government. The consultation asked Local Councils to look at a range of options including staff from Councils remaining employed locally or transferring to the Department of Work and Pensions. The majority of Local Authorities that responded felt that staff should still be employed by them whilst undertake the wider fraud role for the DWP under a SLA. By leaving employment and location unchanged this option would allow Local authorities the flexibility to redeploy resource to meet their priorities if required.
Whilst we do not know the final decision, we will continue to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions on opportunities to participate in any transitional arrangements in supporting a Single Fraud Investigation Service.

ICT & Facilities

The ICT Team along with Customer Services were successfully re-awarded the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation which is a prestigious Cabinet Office Award. Once again the service has full compliance (The only Council to date to have passed with no partial compliances).

The Web Improvement and Development Roadmap was agreed at Management Board which will lead to major improvements to our website including the facility to develop “microsites” for initiatives such as the Enterprise Zone and the Museum.

A new Intranet has been launched giving an improved source of information to all our staff with features such as a People Directory, improved search and updates and Blogs from the Chief Executive therefore improving our Internal communications.

The Installation of Wireless connectivity for customers and visitors to the Guildhall has been completed. Initial feedback is very positive.

50 Terminals have been installed for employees which use the latest technology for desk tops and will save a significant amount of energy thus reducing energy costs. Further roll-out to other areas is progressing well. Additionally we have made a change to our server network which allows us to switch off storage capacity during the night, again reducing energy costs.

Alan Bottwood
Portfolio Holder for Finance
We are currently analysing the consultation responses from tenants on the de-pooling proposal. We have had approximately 1,000 replies. De-pooling involves separating out rent and service charges so that tenants can see clearly what their weekly payment covers.

A group of tenants are finalising their training to become Tenant Auditors so that they can assess the effectiveness of the way we deal with anti social behaviour on housing estates. They are planning how they are going to approach the audit and are preparing a satisfaction survey and mystery shopping.

Work is progressing well on the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This is necessary to support the government’s new housing finance regime which comes into force in April 2012. Under the new rules, the Council will be able to keep all the money it receives from rent. The subsidy system will end and the Council will also be able to borrow for housing up to a limit set by government. Proposals will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

The Strategic Business Review into the housing DSO repairs service is underway and the service is being analysed for costs, performance, satisfaction and overall effectiveness.

The Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP) will be starting on site shortly. Once agreements have been approved by the Council and E-on, letters will be distributed to customers whose properties will receive energy efficiency measures, to help them reduce their energy bills.

The legal agreements for Robinson House have now been agreed and demolition of the existing building will take place shortly. Planning permission has been submitted and we await a decision. The plans will transform the site and provide 17 very much needed affordable family homes.

The consultation period for the Financial Inclusion Strategy started on the 24th October and in the first 2 weeks of a 12 week consultation period we have received over 41 survey responses back, which is a good response rate so far. The consultation is due to end in February 2012.

We have received the Louder than Words Charter Mark Accreditation after demonstrating commitment to providing the best possible practice to our deaf and hard of hearing customers and employees. An audit was carried out on the 30th September when we were assessed against 10 quality standards and were found to have met all 10 standards. The Charter Mark is awarded for 3
years, however, an annual self-assessment is required to ensure that the standards are being maintained.

Mary Markham
Portfolio Holder for Housing
Town Centre Operations

In October the administration introduced one hour of free parking and free Sunday parking to help encourage visitors to come to Northampton and help local retailers by encouraging economic growth in the town centre.

All the refurbishment works on the Grosvenor & St Johns multi-storey car parks were completed in time for shoppers to use this Christmas. This, together with the free parking every Sunday and free parking on Saturdays in December in the Mayorhold car park, will all helped to create a more festive experience in the town centre.

The Northampton free parking offer is being widely advertised to attract more shoppers into the Town Centre and Market Square.

Northampton Town Centre Limited

The BID is working closely with local businesses and partners to promote visiting and shopping at Christmas in Northampton town centre. The local media, website, and signboards were used to help market and promote the town. Together with the installation of 150 x 4’ Christmas trees and solar lights on shop fronts around the town centre, the Christmas feel is there for all to see.

The BID continues to improve the environment with the refurbishment of some of the street furniture around the market square; helping the night-time economy by funding two additional street wardens with Pub Watch.

The website www.christmasinnorthampton.co.uk has been launched to promote festive events and information in Northampton, and has been jointly set up by Northampton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Northamptonshire Enterprise, Town Centre BID and the Royal and Derngate.

Planning

Following the successful bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government for 'front-runner' status for Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council to participate in the pilot for neighbourhood planning, new bids have been submitted with Castle Partnership for the community led regeneration scheme in Spring Boroughs and Blackthorn Good Neighbours. Consultation
on the Central Area Action Plan focussed changes commenced on 10th November and will run until 22nd December. It is anticipated that the results will come back to Cabinet in February.

As part of delivering the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone, consultation with businesses about the proposed Local Development Order in St James will take place until 9th December 2011. Feedback will help inform the drafting of the LDO for the area. It will be necessary to have more than one LDO to reflect the different characteristics of parts of the Enterprise Zone.

**Assets**

The 150th anniversary of the Guildhall was a great success with over 100 people every day visiting the exhibition and having a tour of our building.

The celebratory dinner was a great success with many compliments from attendees who enjoyed a wonderful evening, which included a talk entitled “150 years of Northampton”.

**Regeneration**

There has been significant progress on the development of the Bus Interchange on the site of the Fishmarket.

Design work has proceeded swiftly, and a preferred initial layout has been selected. Consultation with user groups has started. In addition to the bus bays, waiting areas and public toilets, there is also provision for additional business space to provide retail and other uses. It is important that this important landmark building should do justice to the town. Construction should start mid 2012 with completion one year later.

WNDC has resolved to make £8 million available to facilitate Stage Coach’s move from Greyfriars, and the development of the new facility. The County Council is financing the design work, and the Borough Council will be investing up to £3 million in the project, to ensure that the best possible building is provided.

This development fulfils a commitment made by the Council to remove a constraint to the development of the Grosvenor Centre extension.

Progress on the Grosvenor project is accelerating, and Legal and General have appointed the team to take forward the design and technical work necessary for submitting a planning application in July 2012.

**Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone**

The Strategic Board has been appointed, and has met for the first time to discuss the draft implementation plan to be shared with DCLG. Membership of the Board, chaired by Dr Ann Limb, chair of SEMLEP (South-East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership) includes representatives of all the partner organisation involved in the promotion of the Zone and its benefits.

**Innovation Centre**

This exciting project is making good progress, and the Planning Application has been submitted.

**St Johns**

Negotiations for both the Student Accommodation development and the Hotel development are making good progress.

**Tim Hadland**

Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning