

Council
Date: 3 December 2012

Cabinet Member Presentations

Report of the Leader of the Council

Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment

Report of the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing

Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 3 December 2012

Earlier this year we announced our intention to look at the options around joining Local Government Shared Services as a way of saving money on back office functions that could then be redirected into front line services. This is progressing well and the business case for shared services has now been before Cabinet.

The elections for the new role of Police and Crime Commissioner were held on 15th November. The Borough Council will be working with the new commissioner to do all we can to help make Northampton a safe place for visitors, residents and businesses.

On 3rd November we were honoured to take part in the ceremony at the Guildhall to award the Freedom of the Borough to the 9th/12th Royal Lancers. I am sure all members will join with me in thanking them for their sacrifice and dedication to duty in the service of our country.

I attended a conference at the Ministry of Defence on 6th November with the Cabinet Member for Housing to look at more ways in which the Borough Council can help support our Armed Service personnel. In addition to establishing an Armed Forces Community Covenant here in Northampton, I have written to local business leaders to ask for their support. The Borough Council is also now working with Rewards for Forces, a local company that provides discounts and benefits to current and former members of the armed forces.

I was also honoured to officially attend the Remembrance Sunday service at All Saints Church, and attend a separate event at Abington Square to remember those who gave their lives during the Korean War. The memorial at Abington Square has recently been renovated by the Borough Council.

On 24th November I took part in Strictly Northampton at The Royal and Derngate in support of Macmillan Cancer Research. It was a very successful and enjoyable evening, and I would like to thank everyone who donated to this worthwhile cause and supported me along the way.

Work on the Northampton Alive projects is continuing at a fast pace and we now have cranes on the skyline over the Town Centre. Regeneration projects currently underway include the archaeological works at Castle Station, construction of the new cinema at The Royal and Derngate and demolition of the old Fishmarket. On 9th November I attended a tour of the St. Johns development and building work is progressing

The Northamptonshire Healthcare Summit was hosted by St Andrews Hospital on 21st November to discuss and develop the town's healthcare sector as part of the Northampton Alive project.

World AIDS Day was marked on Saturday 1st December at the Guildhall.

Members of the award winning Northampton Youth Forum and other community groups visited The Guildhall on 17th October to meet with me and tour the One Stop Shop to find out more about local services. The visit was part of Local Democracy Week which aims to let people know more about how local democracy works and how they can get involved and shape services provided locally.

A team of ghost hunters picked Delapre Abbey as the place they wanted to spend Halloween this year. I joined the UK Haunted team along with a small group including members of Friends of Delapre Abbey for the evening. The event was organised to help raise the profile of the Abbey as we try to bring an increasing number of new events to the venue.

Community Safety

The twelve-month rolling total for all crime has reduced by 2.5% so far in 2012/13. This has been primarily due to strong performance tackling violence offences with a reduction of 4.6%, and a continuing reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour of 8.3%. All four sectors of Northampton continue to record a reduction in overall crime year to date, particularly the areas of Northampton East and Northampton North.

Legal Services

The agreement to enter into shared legal services with East Northants District Council was signed on 22nd October and is now fully operational.

Litigation

Litigation since the last meeting of Full Council includes:

The Borough Council has been prosecuting a health and safety case involving an individual who lost a finger during a work accident. The company have pleaded guilty on three charges and the Magistrates felt the maximum punishment of a £60K fine was insufficient and referred it to the Crown Court for sentencing on 14th November.

An unlicensed scrap metal dealer has been fined £1000 plus £500 costs for fly-tipping .

One case of benefit fraud resulted in the defendant paying back the full overpayment and accepting a caution.

Democratic Services

Arrangements for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Northampton Borough Council Members' Code of Conduct and of Codes of Conduct adopted by Parish Councils' is now publicly available on the website.

Councillor David Mackintosh
Leader of the Council



Cabinet Member Report for Environment

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 3 December 2012

Environmental Services

As a result of the independent review of the environmental services contract, a detailed action plan has been developed to quickly address the issues that were identified. The council is working closely with EMS to ensure matters of concern are put right without further delay. The service continues to improve but will need to be closely monitored for some time to come to ensure the positive trend continues.

We have been carefully monitoring the situation regarding Ash tree disease. Unfortunately it is very difficult to take any precautions because as is an airborne fungal disease, but we are monitoring the Ash trees in our parks and are following the guidelines issued by DEFRA and the Forestry Commission. Anyone with concerns should call the Forestry Commission on 01420 23000 or email ddas.ah@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Environmental Health

A grant of £65 000 has been received from DEFRA towards the cost of Air Quality Action Planning work.

A member of the public has been successfully prosecuted for operating as a waste carrier without the necessary registration. He was fined £1000 with legal costs of £500 and a victim surcharge of £15. The case resulted from a fly tipping incident in the Kings Heath area.

Licensing

Multi agency checks and flagging operations are ongoing, with five drivers being caught illegally plying for hire in recent weeks. 23.5% of the Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles checked were found to have defects. We are currently working with the taxi and private hire trade to introduce nationally recognised inspection standards.

Carbon Management

The Authority has recently submitted an application for recertification to The Carbon Trust Standard, and are currently awaiting details of the Borough Council's position in the Carbon Reduction Commitment league table.

Councillor John Caswell
Cabinet Member for Environment



Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 3 December 2012

Councillor Community Fund

Applications are being received regularly, and during October twelve applications were received totalling £5,784. The applications cover a wide range of local initiatives, allowing elected Members to make a positive impact on the areas they represent and to empower local residents to be active in their communities.

Events

Over 40,000 people came into Northampton to enjoy the St Crispin's Street Fair. The Administration brought the event back after almost a decade away as part of its commitment to helping local businesses by attracting more visitors into the Town Centre. We are currently in consultation regarding next year's event.

The Borough Council is working with our partners the Grosvenor Centre, Royal & Derngate and the BID in a coordinated programme of festivities and promotions for this Christmas. Events include a Frost Fair, Christmas Carols, Christmas Cabins, an ice rink on the Market Square and even more trees around the Town Centre than last year.

The 2012 Diwali celebrations took place on the Market Square on 10th November. The celebrations are now in their eleventh year and engage many different schools and community groups from across Northampton.

A free Halloween event for children was held at Abington Park bandstand on 27th October, which included face painting and a scavenger hunt. The event was organised by Northampton Borough Council's Park Ranger for Abington Park.

The Shoe Heaven pampering event was held in the Shoe Lounge at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery on 7th November. The event included foot massages from Concept 6 and henna foot tattooing by Nisha Mejer, plus live music from string duo Fedora Strings.

The Northampton Town & County Art Society is presenting its 99th annual exhibition at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery between 20th October and 8th December. Most of the works on display are for sale, and entry to the museum is free.

On 26th October Northampton Museum and Art Gallery was transformed to host performers, musicians, story tellers and more. For one night only each gallery space became home to different acts as the whole building was filled with some of the best local talent.

A free open day to mark the official opening of Duston Sports Centre took place on 20th October. The new centre has a state of the art gym, main hall for sports and a studio which runs fitness classes.

On Monday 12th November the Express Lift tower was lit up in red, white and blue lights to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the nationally known landmark.

Culture & Heritage

The Museum was successful in its application to the Arts Council England Designation Development Fund and has achieved a grant of £47,000. This will be used to increase audiences engaging with the shoe collection and raise awareness of the collection through pop-up displays at National Trust properties. It will also raise the museums research and academic credentials by exploring how to display shoes.

We welcome the Northampton Arts Collective to their new home at Number Nine 'NN' Guildhall Road, and wish them all the best in their new location in the Cultural Quarter.

Community Engagement

The referendum on the Community Governance Review took place on 15th November, and the results will now be considered by Full Council.

Community Centres

Sixteen community centres are now in the hands of local voluntary and community organisations, plus one parish council. Two further centres, Lodge Farm and Far Cotton, transferred in November.

Customer Services

A recruitment drive was held in September which will bring the Customer Services team up to full strength. The new staff started in early November.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

3rd December 2012

Finance

Work is continuing on the 2013/14 budget with finance supporting directorates in critically reviewing their budgets.

A Budget Management Project has begun. This project will transform how we monitor budgets in future years and outline how we will work with budget managers from across the Authority.

Work has been completed on responding to a technical consultation of the new Business rates retention scheme. The new arrangements will start from 2013/14.

The business case for entering in shared services went before Cabinet on 14th November.

Revenue and Benefits

We have finished consulting on a replacement local scheme for Council Tax Benefit. The Government is replacing the existing national Council Tax Benefit Scheme in April 2013 with Local Council Tax Support to help people who are unable to pay their Council Tax. This is part of the Welfare Reform Act that is also looking at how different benefits are funded. People in Northampton were asked how they think the new local Council Tax Support scheme should be funded.

HR

Current sickness levels are unacceptable, and we have been putting together ambitious measures to bring levels down. Sickness absence is being monitored and reviewed more rigorously, and managers are receiving training to help them manage sickness levels and attendance at work.

There will be a new wellbeing programme providing one to one help for people to stay in work or return to work as soon as possible. Wellness Recovery Action Plans will enable employees to return to work after a spell of long-term sick due to mental health (stress/anxiety or depression) and musculoskeletal.

In October free Flu Vaccinations were made available to Borough Council employees for the second time. 157 employees took advantage of the vaccination.

Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Finance



Cabinet Member Report for Housing

Northampton Borough Council

3rd December 2012

In October Northampton Borough Council signed up a Community Covenant to promote closer ties between our town and our military, and on 6th November the Leader of the Council and I attended a conference at the Ministry of Defence in London about ways in which local authorities can help service personnel, ex-service personnel and their families as part of our Armed Forces Community Covenant.

Consultations on the Sheltered Housing Review, New Tenancy Strategy and changes to the Allocations Policy have now finished. A report on the Sheltered Housing Review went to Cabinet in November. All of the comments and feedback on the two remaining consultations are currently being reviewed and will come to Cabinet in December. A communication plan has been agreed so that staff, councillors, our partners and customers are all fully briefed on the potential impact of the proposed changes.

The Borough Council, in partnership with the Community Law Service, supported Big Energy Saving Week in October. The aim of the national campaign was to help people to cut their fuel bills and get all the financial support they are entitled to. Drop-in sessions were held in the One Stop Shop and 131 people were given help and advice and a number of free energy saving products were given out.

At the beginning of November new housing officer arrangements came into effect. Housing Officers will now remain dedicated to a specific area for a minimum period of twelve months.

Several events were organised to give tenants the opportunity to find out more about the Housing Options Review into the future ownership and management of council homes in Northampton.

The Borough Council has been selected to work as an Innovation Area in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council and the relevant Health Agencies in Northampton, as part of the Department for Communities and Local Government's Homelessness Strategy. Five Innovation Areas have been established across England to undertake work to address the needs of customers who are homeless with dual mental health and drug/alcohol addiction.

I am delighted to report that Kirsty Ionescu has been awarded the Local Authority Woman of the Year 2012. The award is in recognition of her partnership work with private landlords in Northampton through her role as Accommodation Officer in the Private Sector Housing Team. It is excellent that Kirsty's skills and abilities have been recognised on the national stage.

Councillor Mary Markham
Cabinet Member for Housing



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 3 December 2012

Town Centre Operations

As part of this Administration's commitment to support local businesses and create a more vibrant Town Centre, in October we announced that from the beginning of November until December 2013 rents for permanent traders on the Market Square will be reduced by 25 per cent. This move is in response to a call for more support for traders which came from the independent Market Advisory Group which we set up earlier this year to look at ways to improve the vitality and continued viability of the Town's historic market.

I would like to thank the members of the Market Advisory Group, its chairman Raymond Everall and my colleague Cllr Jonathan Nunn for their continued efforts.

The one hour free parking offer has continued to increase in popularity with over 100,000 motorists taking advantage of the scheme between April and October. To support Town Centre businesses over Christmas, we have announced free parking in the Mayorhold Car Park on the five Saturdays leading up to Christmas (beginning on the 24th November) and free parking in all council car parks on Thursday nights from 3.00pm starting from the 22nd November.

We have been working with BT to develop a WiFi service for the Market Square which can be used by traders and visitors. This will give free access to a wide range of BT customers and BT partners including 02, EE, Vodafone, Tesco Mobile and Orange. There will be a few customers who cannot access the service for free but discounted vouchers will be available.

Regeneration

Archaeological work was carried out at the new Castle Station site ahead of the construction of the new train station. On 23rd October the Leader of the Council and I visited the site and spoke to the archaeologists undertaking the work.

The Outline Business Plan for Project Angel has been completed and Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet have agreed to take the project through to procurement, and ultimately construction. This work has progressed with the support of the Borough Council and could bring up to 2,000 jobs into the Enterprise Zone and Town Centre by 2016.

At the St. Johns development infrastructure work is proceeding well to provide improved access for several Town Centre Enterprise Zone development sites.

At a Project Officers meeting arranged by CLG, it was reported that Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone is one of eight in the country that have commenced development, one of eight that have secured pre-lets and one of eight that have put an Local Development Order in place to date.

The Friends of Delapre Abbey have recently secured with the Borough Council support, £47,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to employ a Community Engagement Officer. This role will be in addition to the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the main project.

In early December work to demolish the Fishmarket commences, prior to construction of the new Bus Interchange starting in the New Year.

The Borough Council has entered into a short term occupational Agreement with Kier for 36 Guildhall Road where they are using our property as interim Site Offices for the University Student Accommodation contract. This brings an unused building into occupation, and in addition Kiers are providing substantial repairs and maintenance to our buildings in return. The Leader of the Council and I were able to visit the site as part of the Open Sites project on 9th November, designed to stimulate interest in careers in the Construction Industry. Progress is impressive, and the building is already reaching first floor level.

The Borough Council is providing support to The Royal & Derngate theatres through a funding Agreement for new cinema, work on which has just begun.

The SEMLEP Board has agreed on the principles of the use of Business Rates uplift from the Enterprise Zone. Importantly, first call on the uplift will be on Enterprise Zone costs and investment including repayment of Growing Places Fund investment in the Enterprise Zone.

Planning

It is intended the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy submission document will go to the meeting of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee scheduled for 20th December, with the responses to the final round of consultations, prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

Refurbishment of the Northamptonshire Korean War Memorial has been completed. The Memorial letters were re-cut and re-gilded with additional known names added and moved to more secure and sheltered place on Abington Square. The work was completed in time for the annual Memorial Ceremony on 8th November, and was particularly appreciated by the veterans present. The new War Memorial for those from Northampton who lost their lives in active service since 1947 was delivered and placed in Abington Square in the following few days

The Hunsbury Hill Fort Archaeological Management Plan has been commissioned jointly with English Heritage from Oxford Archaeology, and is expected to be finished by next April.

Invitations to tender for the Northampton Faith Facilities Audit have been distributed. The audit is to inform the preparation of the new Northampton Local Plan and will look at the existing provision and any future needs. The Inter Faith Forum is closely involved with the preparation of the brief and will be assisting the Council in the preparation of the audit.

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning