



## Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 2 November 2015

### **Councillor Community Fund**

A 100 grant payments have been made from the Councillor Community Fund since April 2015. At the end of September the total amount awarded was £38,357.68, providing support to a wide range of local voluntary organisations and local projects.

### **Community Grants**

The grant year July 14 – June 2015 saw 21 grant payments being made, totalling to £55,518.45. Since the grant year beginning July 2015, 5 grant payments have been made, totalling £14,307.36 from the £50,000 pot. The Community Grants panel continue to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss and consider all applications.

### **Community Centres**

The Our Place project continues to progress. Meetings have been held with all community centres involved and their action plans have been refreshed and updated.

### **Events**

The Abington Park Bands in the Park season finished in mid-September after another successful summer season which offered a wide variety of performances on Sunday afternoons and were enjoyed by thousands of visitors to the park.

The Council supported many events throughout late summer including NN4Eight (Far Cotton), Festival of Water & Operation Dredge (Beckets Park), Umbrella Fair & Rainbow Run (Racecourse), Northampton Half Marathon (town centre and surrounding areas) and the St Crispin's Street Fair.

The council is working on a number of key future events including Diwali Celebrations, Remembrance Day, Christmas Light Switch-On, Christmas Trees & Lights and the Christmas German Market.

### **Culture & Heritage**

September saw the opening of 'Stitching Magic' which showcased work by members of the Northamptonshire Branch of the Embroiderers' Guild. The 150<sup>th</sup> exhibition is continuing to be popular with both young and old, many of them recognising 'Alfie' from the days of Gordon Scott's shoe shop in Abington Street.

'Whose Round Is It?' opened in early October and looks at the part the brewing industry has played in a town that still has over 70 pubs. The private view saw guests have a taste of the 150<sup>th</sup> 'Museum IPA' brewed by museum staff under the expert tuition of staff at Phipps Brewery along with a number of sponsored pub snacks. Gift packs and etched glasses are on sale in the shop in time for Christmas.

Looking forward, the Northampton Town & County Art Society opens in late November – the exhibition will feature work from talented graduates and non-members alongside the best of Northamptonshire artists.

'A Look Back at Northamptonshire' was a sell out – the archive films from around the county were presented by the Northamptonshire Film Archive Trust and made a net profit. Further film shows are planned for 2016.

Abington Park Museum saw a 'Collector's Day' take place in October – owners and groups were invited to share their collections with the public. Looking forward, the fourth Christmas Craft Fair at Abington is planned for later in November, it is anticipated that all stalls will be sold out at this popular event.

October and November see further talks from the series entitled 'Object in Focus' which explores objects from the collection in more detail. Over 60s talks continue to attract a wide audience and subjects range from 'The History of Wills' to Paintings of the 14<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Autumn half term workshops and storytelling take place at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery and Abington Park Museum saw a 'Haunted Halloween' event and saw many children in fancy dress. A Creative Writing Workshop took place in September led by the 'Creative Writers at the Museum'. Ukulele workshops led by Sara Spade continue to be held over the period September to November.

August saw volunteers offering 695 hours of their time to various projects and events at the Museum. In addition, the Virtual Shoe project funded by the Arts Council England commenced in April and 186.5 hours were completed by volunteers assisting with the photography of the shoes during August.

## **Customer Services**

### ***Great News – DWP Work Coach Referral Scheme***

Recent improvements have been made to the Work Coach 'Back into Work' referral scheme within the OSS and the introduction of a dedicated appointment line for the Work Coach has resulted positively with them seeing an increase of customers for advice on job searches, CV advice, training opportunities and work experience.

In a bid to maximise take-up of the Work Coach service and make it easier to make referrals, we have now created a dedicated hotline (01604 838655) for referrals, which will be manned 9.00am-5.00pm, Monday to Friday. The new improved referral process will mean that the Work Coaches attend the One Stop Shop every Tuesday morning (9.30am – 12.00 Noon) and every Thursday afternoon (1.00pm – 4.00pm). The dedicated hotline has proved to be successful resulting in a fully booked diary helping at least 10 customers a week gain advice on how to get back to work.

**Councillor Brandon Eldred**  
**Cabinet Member for Community Engagement**