



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 25th January, 2016

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced the draft Local Government Settlement for consultation on the 18th December. The draft Settlement follows the Autumn Statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and is the key document to implement the latest Comprehensive Spending Review and the Chancellor's statement.

The draft Settlement reduces the spending power of the Borough Council over the next four years by approximately 10%. The draft Settlement and in due course the final Settlement, will be considered by Cabinet in formulating the budget to be proposed to Cabinet on the 22nd February.

BUDGET

The Council's draft budget was agreed for consultation by the Cabinet on the 17th December. I look forward to hearing the views of the public on our proposals. The draft budget contains new investment in key services to deliver the commitments of the Administration to respond to changes in demand alongside savings to ensure that the Council continues to manage its finances prudently. The draft budget also shows the forward position, and the extent of the financial challenge facing the Council in the future years.

The County Council has also published its draft budget which contains significant reductions. The implications of these proposals are being assessed by officers as far as is possible and any financial implications that we are aware of will be included in the budget brought to Council in February.

COMBINED AUTHORITIES

The County Council has proposed making savings in their budget through closer working between authorities in the form of a combined authority arrangement. They state that such an arrangement would achieve savings of £4 million to the County Council in 2016/17.

This Council believes that Councils and other public bodies should work together to deliver services in the most effective and value for money manner. The Borough Council has a range of service partnerships with other Boroughs and Districts and with the County Council. We have also proposed further areas in which we could work in partnership with the County Council or where we could provide services on behalf of the County Council. Should they wish to further these discussions we are always open to proposals to do so.

The County Council has not provided any detail as to what they would propose in terms of a combined authority arrangement. The seven Borough and District Councils are working closely together on this matter and I am meeting regularly with my fellow Leaders.

US AMBASSADOR VISIT

I was pleased to meet the US Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Matthew Barzun, when he visited the Guildhall on the 8th January. Mr Barzun was given a short tour of the Guildhall and had tea with the Mayor. He met a small number of key business people and was presented with a gift on behalf of the Borough Council, kindly donated by Church's shoes.

SIXFIELDS

The Audit Committee, on the 18th January, were discussing the review that the Council has required of the processes and procedures involved in loaning funds to Northampton Town Football Club. Discussions are also taking place with the Council's external auditors in relation to their independent review and with the Police in relation to their enquiries responding to the Council's complaint.

A project group has been established to drive the development of the land to produce a return to the Council and work is underway to pursue claims related to the funds loaned and the liquidation of both County Developments (Northampton) Limited and 1st Land Limited.

BIG SLEEP-OUT

On the 29th January I will be taking part in the Big Sleep-Out alongside many other volunteers. The sponsored event is organised annually by the Northampton Hope Centre, of which I am a Trustee, and is the charity's biggest fundraiser of the year. The event this year will be held at the County Ground.

This is the fourth year I have taken part in the Big Sleep-Out and although it can be tough I feel honoured to be a part of it. Experiencing a little of what it means to be homeless and spending the night talking to people who were either homeless or have been homeless is a real eye-opener. Homelessness can affect any one of us and so it is important to keep raising awareness and taking part in events like this.

I would encourage members to sponsor me or anyone else taking part.

**CLLR MARY MARKHAM
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**