



Report of the Acting Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7th November 2016

Social Lettings Agency

The Council is pleased to continue its efforts to launch the Social Lettings Agency in January next year. The agency is being developed with the support of the National Landlords Association and local independent landlords and will offer leasing and property management services to landlords, including those with empty properties or houses in need of improvements. Additional benefits include guaranteed rent, pre-referenced tenants and longer term tenancies.

Emergency Night Shelter

The Council is proud to say that planning proposals for an emergency night shelter to provide overnight accommodation for rough sleepers have been approved. In June, more than 30 local agencies pledged to work together to tackle rough sleeping. Working collaboratively, they produced 'together we change lives', a strategy outlining how the multi-agency approach will offer support to those facing homelessness in Northampton.

The temporary shelter will be established in the former British Rail Social Club, on St Andrew's Road. The building will ultimately become part of a project to celebrate Northampton's heritage but in the short-term will form a key element of a new strategy to tackle homelessness in the town.

Northampton in Bloom Awards

A ceremony was held at the Guildhall on 13th October to honour keen gardeners from schools, business and streets and houses right across Northampton. There were more than 70 entries into the Northampton in Bloom awards, which contributes to the Borough's entry in the East Midlands in Bloom competition. Among the record number of participants this year, were 11 schools, 24 community or residents' associations, 9 pubs/business, 11 gardens at private homes, as well as parish councils and allotment associations.

National Infrastructure Commission

The National Infrastructure Commission visited Northampton and Milton Keynes on Wednesday 19th October. The party consisted of the Lead Commissioners on the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford growth corridor project, Sadie Morgan and Bridget Rosewell.

They visited Northampton in the morning, providing us with an opportunity to demonstrate the Town's important place in the regional economy, share our aspirations with them, illustrate the growth that has already taken place, and stress the importance of infrastructure to our being able to fulfil further growth expectations. We joined them again later for at Cranfield for a roundtable discussion with businesses and SEMLEP Board members. The Commissioners felt they had been

presented with a good overview of what has been happening in the two towns, their visions for the future, and examples of what has made our areas so successful.

Northampton Association of Youth Clubs

I was delighted to join the NAYC for their Annual General Meeting on 17th October at King's Park. The informative and exciting evening included reports of their year's activities through the Youth Club network and in their Action Centres.

Business Event for St. James / Enterprise Zone Businesses

The council organised an event, kindly hosted by Longthorne Guns on 19th October, enabling us to hear directly from the local businesses that attended how they feel about operating from the area, and what challenges they feel they face. There was significant interest from businesses to the idea of them forming a group that would allow them to discuss and address any problems in their area, and we have undertaken to support them in this.

Waste contract

The Council is in the process of considering the way ahead with its environmental services, ready for when our current contract arrangement with Enterprise Managed Services Ltd, part of the Amey Group, comes to an end in June 2018. We have worked with industry experts to consider the options for delivering waste services, which has led to three short-listed options, which are 1) bringing the service back in-house, 2) setting up a local authority-owned company, or 3) continuing to contract out the service and going back to the market to tender for a new contract.

Each of the three options has been examined in detail, looking closely at costs, benefits and risks, and all three options are likely to cost more than the current contract. The exercise itself has been examined by our Internal Auditors; PWC, and with the analysis now complete the results will be reported to Cabinet on the 16th November.

Councillor Development

A very informative briefing recently took place for Councillors on Treasury Management, and was quite well attended. In addition, the Councillor Development Group has met again to consider the results of the Councillor survey on future Training, and a training program is being put together. Arrangements have also been made for Councillors to review the way in which they access their council email, and to ensure that all Councillors are aware of the range of options available for this.

Other Activity

Other things that I have had the pleasure to be involved in or attend on the council's behalf recently also include:

- The SEMLEP board meeting
- Dementia Walk, as part of our journey to make Northampton a dementia friendly town

- Meeting with the Town BID, as well as attending their business breakfast event
- Visiting Derby's Cathedral Quarter BID, to learn about the successes that they have had in improving their area, including meeting with representatives of their Board and Derby City Council
- Leisure Trust awards evening, to join their celebration of those who have achieved and participated in sport, including the honour of presenting the 'Get Active' award for health improvement on behalf of the council
- Northampton Partnership Homes AGM, and meeting
- Community Foundation Awards, recognising some of the wonderful groups that operate across the town and wider county.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Acting Leader of the Council



Cabinet Member Report for Finance

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7th November 2016

Finance

Cabinet approved the Council's Efficiency Plan at its meeting on 28th September and this was submitted to Government. The Efficiency Plan is an important document as firstly, it enables the Council to access the Government's offer to provide a minimum guaranteed level of resources for the next four years which will provide greater certainty for financial and service planning. And secondly, it provides clear strategies setting out how the Council plans to close its £7m funding gap in its General Fund over the next 5 years. These strategies include generating economic growth in the borough, being more commercial and being more efficient.

Whilst a significant milestone has been achieved in establishing and approving the Efficiency Plan the big challenge will be for the Council to implement and deliver it. The annual budget process will be an important part of the delivery of the Efficiency Plan. The budget process for 2017/18 is well underway and draft proposals will be published at Cabinet in December 2016 for consultation.

Revenues & Benefits

Collection

LGSS continue to deliver a robust approach to collection, balancing the requirement to remain on target with our in year collection rate as well as reducing the level of arrears. To date LGSS have delivered an ongoing increase to arrears collection.

The consultation for the 2016/17 Council Tax Reduction Scheme commenced on the 10th October and will run until the 6th November. This is Northampton Borough Council's discount scheme to help people on low incomes pay their Council Tax. The options being considered are:

- No change (contribution remains at 29%)
- Reduce the maximum amount of CTRS from 71% to 63%.
- Reduce the maximum amount of CTRS from 71% to 55%.

The introduction of the CTRS scheme has placed a pressure on in year collection of which is being reviewed closely as the recovery timetable progresses.

Enforcement Agent Contract

The recently awarded contract is now up and running and the Council is now using Rossendales, JBW, Dukes and Bristow & Sutor to collect outstanding monies to NBC. These debts include Business Rates, Council Tax, Former Tenant Arrears, Overpaid Housing Benefits and other sundry debts. There will also be residual accounts remaining Equita and Rundles, where customers have entered into arrangements to pay, but these will reduce in number over time as the cases come to a natural conclusion.

Bank Transfer

LGSS has fully supported NBC with the successful migration of Northampton Borough Council's bank account from HSBC to Barclays which went live as planned on 3rd October 2016.

Councillor Brandon Eldred
Cabinet Member for Finance



Cabinet Member Report for Community Safety

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7 November 2016

Community Safety

Semilong/Regent Square Week of Action took place with many public engagement events across the area, a self-defence class for women, youth engagement event, environmental improvements by Community Payback and Neighbourhood Wardens and ended with a community day at Alliston Gardens Youth and Community Centre. The Week of Action is a springboard for ongoing Multi Agency work in the area.

Killing with Kindness event was held in partnership with the police outside Sainsbury's on the Wellingborough Road, Thursday 22nd September which is a hot spot for begging. The general public were engaged with to try and educate them not to give money to beggars but support them by giving food or supporting the many charities in Northampton who are there to help them.

Supported the Police and Fire Service with a Safety Event in the Grosvenor Centre on Saturday 24th September, engaging with the general public about personal and property safety.

The report on the Public Spaces Protection order will go to cabinet for approval in November. Subject to approval and the completion of the remaining parts of the process, the order will go live early in the New Year.

Events during the Hate Crime Awareness Week were well attended. New Hate Crime SPOCs have been recruited throughout NBC & NPH and received training along with refresher training for existing SPOCs.

In partnership with Northamptonshire Police, Northampton Borough Council are exploring an opportunity to develop a pilot role that will see the combination of the Neighbourhood Warden and PCSO duties. It is currently in the early planning stages, but the aim is to establish a one year pilot post based on the Blackthorn area. This role will be supporting the targeted partnership work taking place on this area.

Councillor Mike Hallam
Cabinet Member for Community Safety



Cabinet Member Report for Environment

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7 November 2016

Environmental Health

The Primary Authority Partnership with Poundland is now fully operational. NBC is providing support and assured advice on Health and Safety and Food Hygiene and is coordinating support to the company from Trading Standards and Fire and Rescue.

The consultation on the Low Emissions Strategy has come to a close. Officers are currently collating the responses and will be developing an action plan working alongside Scrutiny panel 4 to take the Strategy forward.

Environmental Services

The project to look at the delivery options for the re-provision of environmental services has reached its conclusion. Three delivery options were robustly evaluated against cost and quality/risk to enable cabinet to select what they consider to be the best way forward for the future of environmental services in the Town. A decision is expected to be made at the 16th November meeting of Cabinet.

The configuration of the services have yet to be finalised and will be guided by the public consultation that has taken place and the recommendations of the market.

Northampton in Bloom

The Northampton in Bloom awards took place on 13th October celebrating the contribution of community groups, schools, residents' associations, businesses, individuals, parish councils and allotments to this annual competition which in turn contributes to our success in the East Midlands in Bloom competition in which we attained a silver gilt award. 200 people attended the ceremony and 75 certificates were awarded. The dedication of the residents of Northampton to this competition is invaluable and participation increases year on year. Particular thanks needs to go to sponsors who help to make this a competition even more special.

Litter Bins

The additional litterbins for the Town Centre have been delivered and will be installed over the next couple of weeks. They are for Sheep Street, The Drapery and Abington Street. They will be strategically located at litter hotspots to improve the cleanliness of the Centre. They have ashtrays on the top, as one of the prominent litter issues we currently have is with discarded cigarette butts.

Councillor Alan Bottwood
Cabinet Member for Environment



Cabinet Member Report for Community Engagement

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7 November 2016

Councillor Community Fund

Since the beginning of April 2016, 156 Projects, totalling £68,089.42 have been supported through the Cllr Community Fund.

Partnership Support

Service Level Agreements have been finalised for all 29 organisations that have been funded through the Partnership Grant for 2016-17. In addition, both Citizens Advice Bureau and Community Law Service have signed 3 year service level agreements.

The process for 2017-18 will run from January – April 2017. Applications will be able to be submitted from January 2017. We will be holding a showcase event on Monday 16th January 2017, this will be similar to the event we did last year, an opportunity for the organisations we funded for 2016-17 to showcase what they have been delivering, 6 months into the grant. We will also incorporate the training into the event for the partnership grant process, for organisations that are looking to apply for 2017-18.

Community Centres

We now have 22 people who have registered to volunteer and 5 people who have been given volunteer roles, specific to the community centres. A number of our registered volunteers will take up gardener roles, as part of the gardening project, which is being developed by Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire and the Community Centres, to tidy up the surrounding community centre garden spaces.

Forums

The Youth Forum supported with the Guildhall Heritage Tours, during the weekend of 11th September, which were a great success, 60 people went on the short tours with the youth forum, fantastic feedback received from all that attended.

Hate Crime Awareness Week was held week commencing 10th October. We had an inter forums event, held in the Guildhall, with 70 attendees, representing organisations and communities across all our forums, to raise the awareness of hate crime. We had 5 people sign up to become hate crime champions at the event.

We also held a LGBT Hate Crime Awareness event at All Saints Church in conjunction with NREC, which was well attended and many community organisations.

Planning for International Men's Day which will be held on Friday 18th November in the Market Square continues. We are encouraging men to come along for a free health check and get information on various services that are available within the town to support men. We will be there between 11-2pm and will have performances from the male voice choir, singing for breathing and football delivery sessions by the Cobblers.

We also continue to plan and make arrangements for International Day for Persons with Disabilities, Saturday 3rd December and World Aids Day on Thursday 1st December.

Events

The council has supported event organisers in delivering the St Crispin's Street Fair (22 – 25 October), Diwali Celebrations (29 October) and Poppy Run (6 November) in the town centre and Abington Park.

This year's Fireworks Display on Saturday 5th November was a huge success with thousands of people watching a magnificent display.

This year's Christmas light switch-on will be on Saturday 19th November followed by two Frost Fairs on the 27th November and 4th December respectively, along with a parade which leaves Market Square at 3.45pm followed by the Santa Run in Abington Park on the 11th December.

The Christmas Craft Den will be opening on Saturday 26 November, Father Christmas will also be opening the grotto for the first time that day. Workshops will be running every weekend before Christmas (excluding Christmas Eve), and every day Monday 19 – Friday 23 December.

Northampton Lumiere including the lowdown lantern parade, will take place on Sunday 4 December

The council is working with the Chinese community to help support and deliver the 2017 Chinese New Year.

Culture & Heritage

October saw an exhibition entitled 'The Neglected Watercolourist – The Life and Work of TL Shoosmith' showcasing work by one of Northampton's major artists. The exhibition opened with a preview and launch of a new book on the artist by George Butlin and is on display at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery until 20 November. Linked to the exhibition is a series of five watercolour workshops for adults programmed during September & October

In partnership with the staff from the University of Northampton, September and October saw the second series of art history lectures take place at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery. Attendance is growing steadily since the first series was introduced in the summer of 2016.

Three Over 60s talks in October and November were fully booked.

October half term holiday activities for children were held at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery and based around watercolour and leather stamping workshops. A Collectors Day took place at Abington Park Museum later in the month.

A Haunted Halloween day of fun with scary craft activities was held at Abington Park Museum and continuing the season, a one man performance of Dracula took place at Abington Park Museum at the end of October.

Museum Expansion Project

Preliminary works for the museum expansion project continues. Progress includes:

- Cost engineering exercise underway to review Feasibility Report costings
- Interviews for architects and exhibition designers undertaken and final selection made.
- Appointment will be made when Feasibility Report is signed off.
- Handover of Gaol Block from NBC still on track to enable mobilisation on site. Work is due to start in April subject to vacant possession of the former gaol block being delivered to NBC.
- Stage One of Business Planning – Operating Environment report in first draft
Document assesses operating environment of museum functions and comprises three elements: situation analysis, quality standards and setting objectives.

Museum Trust

- Detailed planning work for Trust continues which can still be utilised if the trust model is not pursued.
- Project Board established to oversee project development
- Stage One of Business Planning – Operating Environment document in first draft.
This work is a crossover with the museum extension project and allows different governance models to be assessed and consider options for the museum operating and financial plan.

Customer Services

First for wellbeing and Voluntary Impact Northampton have joined our partnering agencies and are holding weekly drop in's within the OSS.

First for Wellbeing - "Our overall mission is to build a social enterprise with continuous learning and innovation at its heart; an organisation which provides access to a range of holistic wellbeing services and which strives to become the best in the UK for improving wellbeing outcomes. First for Wellbeing is driven to improve and support the wellbeing of our customers, colleagues and communities".

Voluntary Impact Northampton works to improve the quality of life for all of Northamptonshire's communities by supporting voluntary and community action across the county. This helps increase confidence and knowledge helping people take the step towards paid employment.

Councillor Anna King
Cabinet Member for Community Engagement



Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7 November 2016

TOWN CENTRE

Parking

The overall parking figures for the first six months of the year April – September saw 1,327,945 car park users which is an increase of 44,574 (3.5%) based on 2015 figures.

The free Saturday parking offer for the six months of the year April to September saw 214,844 car park users which is an increase of 11,956 (5.9%) based on the 2015 figures.

The reopened St Giles St and Castilian Street will now have two hour free parking, bringing them into line with the rest of the Town Centre Streets, and our own off-street Car Parks.

Footfall

Town Centre footfall shows an increase over the previous year of 585,724, 7.6% for the first six months. This is very much better than national trends. We have had a constructive meeting with the Town Centre BID to combine business statistics to provide valuable information for existing and potential business owners.

PLANNING

N/2016/0790 – A planning application for the development of a special school for 100 pupils at the former Bective Middle School site at Whiston Road was approved in principle by the Planning Committee on 6th Sept, subject to a S106 agreement.

N/2015/1454 – A full application for the development of the site for 235 no. dwellings including restoration of the clock tower at the former St Crispin Hospital site, Berrywood Road was approved in principle by the Planning Committee on 6th Sept, subject to a S106 agreement.

N/2016/0412 – A planning application for the development of two warehouse and distribution units (Class B8) with total floor space of 47,000 sq. m at the land south of Bedford Road, off Liliput Road was approved in principle by the Planning Committee on 6th Sept, subject to a S106 agreement.

N/2016/0383 – A planning application for the change of use of the former British Rail social club to a night shelter for a period of two years was approved by the Planning Committee on 27th Sept.

The Northampton Local Plan Part 2 Options consultation is currently underway and closes on 2 November 2016.

The Northampton Green Infrastructure Plan has now been completed and is available on the Planning Policy section of the Council's website. The Green Infrastructure Plan forms part of the evidence base for the Northampton Local Plan Part 2. It identifies the role of green infrastructure within the Borough including how and where we can improve it. In addition, the Plan provides guidance in relation to green infrastructure for developers who submit planning applications within the Borough.

Four war memorials have recently been included on the Statutory List of protected buildings – Duston, Dallington, Great Billing and Weston Favell. Historic England has embarked on a five year project to add 2,500 war memorials to the Statutory List commemorating the role of communities during conflict and marking the centenary of the First World War. The four recent additions are part of this project – all are Listed Grade II. Last year Great Houghton was included on the list and the Town & County War Memorial listing was reviewed and amended to Grade I as part of the same project.

REGENERATION

St Giles Street

Works to Phase 2 was completed on 22nd October 2016 which is six weeks ahead of schedule, in time for Christmas trade, and the road has reopened.

A few minor works will be completed shortly, including planters with specimen trees at the Fish Street junction.

I am most grateful to the team that made this possible, and to the businesses that have lived with the disruption that such a scheme inevitably causes.

We held a very successful Autumn Fair on Saturday 22nd, with a wide range of independent businesses taking part, including many from St Giles Street.

St James Mill Link Road

There is good progress with land acquisition from Network Rail.

The design has been finalised and we expect works to be onsite during 2017

We arranged a breakfast meeting for St James Mill Road businesses with a view to setting up a group to address concerns and ambitions for the area. It was kindly hosted by Jim and Elaine Stewart of Longthorne Gunmakers.

Vulcan works

The planning and listed building consent applications for the development of a creative industries hub have been submitted to the Planning Department.

Greyfriars

A series of technical meetings are underway with the developers to both agree the Heads of Terms and to undertake the detailed design of the scheme.

We aim to present the final Heads of Terms to Cabinet in January 2017.

Delapre Abbey

Some unavoidable technical issues have delayed the opening of the Abbey to early 2017. The main contract will be completed in the near future, to be followed by commissioning of services, installation of the interpretation displays, catering fit-out and

staff recruitment and training. We shall continue to work closely with the Trust as we move forward.

Councillor Tim Hadland
Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise & Planning



Cabinet Member Report for Housing and Wellbeing

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 7th November 2016

Northampton's Emergency Nightshelter

I am delighted to confirm that, since my last report in September, excellent progress has been made to convert the former British Rail Sports & Social Club into a temporary nightshelter.

Planning permission has been obtained for a temporary change of use, Cabinet has approved the necessary funding and we are hoping that, with the help of volunteers and local businesses, all of the building work, refurbishment and redecoration will be completed by the end of this month.

The provision of an emergency nightshelter will play a vital role in helping us to end the need for people to sleep rough in Northampton. It will also ensure that, when someone is sleeping rough, or is at risk of sleeping rough, they can immediately be offered a place to stay that is safe, warm and dry while they engage with the services best placed to assess and address their needs.

For many people, the nightshelter will provide them with an invaluable 'stop gap' that meets their immediate needs when they have become homeless at short notice and while they are helped to make their own housing arrangements. For others, it will provide somewhere safe to stay while they await a move into Oasis House or one of Northampton's other supported housing schemes.

On 10th October, a public appeal was launched for help with refurbishing, redecorating, equipping and staffing the new nightshelter. During the first 2 weeks of the appeal, we had received offers of help from more than 100 volunteers and local groups – including businesses that want to support this initiative as part of their corporate social responsibility – and we are now planning a series of environmental improvement projects, for November, in Spring Boroughs and St James.

Anyone wishing to support the nightshelter (by becoming a volunteer or donating equipment, furniture or money) should visit the Northampton Nightshelter webpage on the Council's website:

www.northampton.gov.uk/northamptonnightshelter

Northampton's Rough Sleepers Count

Although arrangements are in hand to carry out another Rough Sleepers Count in Northampton this year – and we had originally planned to hold the Count in November - it is essential that we prioritise our time and efforts in getting the emergency nightshelter up and running.

It is intended, therefore, that the Rough Sleepers Count will take place early in December.

Call Care Team to shape national practice

To ensure the viability of Call Care, its management team has increased the range of services that Call Care provides and has generated income from other organisations across the County.

The expertise of the Call Care Team has been recognised at a national level by invitation to a Telecare Services Association working group to prepare a code of practice for response services.

Improving Northampton's private rented sector

At a Rogue Landlords Conference – hosted in London by Inside Government on 27th September – the Head of Housing & Wellbeing and the Private Sector Housing Manager described the Council's approach to tackling criminal, rogue and irresponsible landlords.

Northampton's approach generated a lot of interest from the conference delegates, including representatives from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who subsequently invited the Head of Housing & Wellbeing and the Private Sector Housing Manager to meet with senior civil servants on 19th October to explore ways in which the Council's innovative, intelligence-led approach could be rolled out across the country.

The meeting at the DCLG was very successful, and the civil servants are extremely keen for Northampton to play an active role in learning events and the development of national guidance.

Article 4 Declaration & Additional HMO Licensing Scheme

Work has started on a project that is designed to establish whether or not there is a need for an Article 4 Direction (resulting in the withdrawal of permitted development rights) and/or an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme (placing an obligation on owners and landlords to license their HMOs and comply with the licensing conditions) in and around the Far Cotton area.

Officers from Housing and Planning will be collecting supporting evidence (through desk top research, targeted door to door surveys, online questionnaires, meetings with residents' groups and interviews with stakeholders, including ward councillors) and consulting with everyone who is affected by the Article 4 Direction and the HMO Licensing Scheme.

On completion of the evidence gathering, consideration will be given to the merits of making an Article 4 Direction and/or introducing an Additional HMO Licensing Scheme.

Social Lettings Agency

The appointment of a private sector lettings specialist – to provide us with the extra capacity required to help us set up the Social Lettings Agency – has enabled us to make excellent progress in developing a viable and sustainable operating model and a comprehensive business case.

The Social Lettings Agency will support the Council's efforts to improve housing standards and management in the borough's private rented sector, bring empty homes back into use, prevent homelessness and reduce the number of households living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Northampton Partnership Homes AGM

On 21st October, I attended the Annual General Meeting of Northampton Partnership Homes in Kings Heath. It was a pleasure to meet with tenants, staff and members of the Board, and to congratulate and thank them for all of their hard work during the past year.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing