



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 6th November 2017

Firstly, I would like to welcome to the council Cllr. Luke Graystone and Cllr. Paul Joyce, following the Nene Valley and Eastfield by-elections.

Since my last report to Council, I have continued to work with the Cabinet, Members, Directors, and Officers across all areas of the council. Specific items include those below.

Interim Chief Executive & Staffing

I am delighted to report (although Members will I am sure have seen for themselves) that our Interim Chief Executive has quickly got to grips with the role, and has made a positive impact on many areas of the council. These areas include two of those which I have mentioned in reports to council in the past; the need to build strong partnerships with other key organisations around the town, both public organisations and private, to drive the town ahead, and the need to make the working environment one in which our staff colleagues feel inspired to contribute ideas to deliver the best possible service we can for our residents. The recent Customer service week was a great opportunity to celebrate many of the ways in which individuals and teams deliver great service, and I enjoyed the tremendous positivity that the events around it generated.

Unitary Status

To move Deloitte's work on this towards completion, a range of risks and 'what if' scenarios have been explored in more depth, which means that the work is mostly done but not quite complete.

However, I am glad to report that Deloitte now feel that they are in a position to deliver a Member workshop to familiarise Members with what they have done, and their analysis of the options and impact of Unitary Authorities in Northamptonshire. Members will therefore be receiving notice of the workshop, which is likely to take place at the end of November or in Early December.

Governance

Our Auditors have expressed the view that our Governance procedures may now be due for review. Most particularly, as part of the Governance Action Plan, a significant number of formal groups and boards have ensured that the council adheres to good governance as a priority, and these groups and boards have also ensured that good governance has become better engrained in the council, but it is now important to ensure that our procedures are not inefficient or adding additional layers to progress. With a strong background in Monitoring and Governance, and seeing our processes with fresh eyes, our Interim Chief Executive is well placed to undertake a review of this, and so is now beginning that review.

Infrastructure

Following my previous updates on this, our full submission has now been made to the National Infrastructure Commission. The step in this process is that our submission will be considered, and we will then have the opportunity to open a dialogue with the consultants that the NIC have engaged to challenge and strengthen the case that we have put forward.

I have also been involved in meetings with other leaders from SEMLEP area Councils and the region, in shaping our plans for infrastructure across the wider region.

History & Heritage Project

Our Historians Group has met again, and we are making good progress with our work on identifying those historical assets that we might best promote to increase the visitor economy.

Traveller Encampments

We have met with the Countywide Traveller Unit and the Police on two occasions now regarding this issue, and progress is being made on new ways of dealing with problems that arise as a result of encampments, including the use of a wider range of regulations and legislation.

Other Activity

Our St. James Mill Business Group is progressing well, with a further meeting held on 20th September including briefings and speakers from the Police, about enhancing Broadband facilities, and regarding local infrastructure.

I was pleased to attend the Town centre BID AGM, and have had additional meetings with the BID, and also met with a number of businesses who are new to the town, as well as other potential investors.

It was a pleasure to meet recently with our Youth Forum, whose opinions and involvement is, like all our Forums, important to help us in shaping what we do for the town, and I was glad to be present for the commemoration of the Zeppelin bomb in St. James, which I felt to be a fitting tribute to those who lost their lives through this, but also a celebration of the wartime resilience of Northampton people. The Leisure Trust's Northampton Sports Awards, and the Northampton in Bloom Awards were both wonderful occasions, and great illustrations of the participation and involvement that goes on in the town, and in which the council has an important role to play.

Meetings regarding the Enterprise Zone have included the recent EZ Board meeting, and also meetings regarding specific projects.

I have also been pleased to meet with Northampton Partnership Homes, and to attend their AGM, and engagement with other key partners has included meetings with the County Council and the University.

**Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council**