



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 11th December 2017

Since my last report to Council, I have continued to work with the Cabinet, Members, Directors, and Officers across all areas of the council. Many of these activities and issues are referred to in Cabinet colleagues' reports, but other areas include those below.

Unitary Status

Whilst over the past year the possibility of Unitary Local Government in Northamptonshire has appeared at times to be unlikely, I can report that the subject now seems to be very much back on the agenda. The member Workshop with Deloitte, who will be describing the work that they have carried out on behalf of the Districts and Boroughs within Northamptonshire, will take place on 23rd January at 6.00pm, and I would therefore strongly urge all Members to attend the workshop.

Governance

The Interim Chief Executive has begun his review of Governance processes, most particularly assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the formal Boards and meetings that take place internally.

Staffing and Council Officers

The recruitment process for the permanent Chief Executive position is well underway, and it is currently scheduled for an appointment to be made towards the end of January. Whilst a number of other changes to areas such as staff conditions have been actively discussed, these will be formally revisited/ actioned following a permanent Chief Executive appointment.

Strategic Economic Plan

The council, and myself, continue to play an active part in SEMLEP, and on 8th November the 2017 South East Midlands Strategic Economic Plan was launched in Northampton at the Innovation Centre.

The Strategic Economic Plan sets the ambition and strategic economic direction for the South East Midlands to 2050, focusing particularly on the next 10 years. It details priority areas of focus for investments and actions to support the fundamental elements behind the successful growth of economy to achieve the doubling of GVA by 2050.

At the launch event in November the discussion included opportunities and challenges for growth, what actions SEMLEP, together with partners from across the public and private sectors will take as well as programmes and investments SEMLEP will deliver to achieve the area's ambitious growth targets.

Other Activity

I was delighted to visit Quinton House School recently, and to see how the school manages to balance the running of a successful school with the preservation of a set of beautiful old buildings, owned by the council, and am glad that we are working with them to assist their further growth plans whilst maintaining the historical integrity of the buildings.

I was delighted (but not surprised) that Cllr. Anna King was recognised for her hard work through the LGiU and CCLA's Councillor Achievement Awards, which were held at the Guildhall, London recently. It was a pleasure to accompany her to the awards ceremony, which was attended by over 200 council leaders, chief executives, councilors, MPs and other stakeholders. Many congratulations to Cllr. King for this recognition, from an initial field of over 90 nominations.

Regarding rail transport, during the past month we have met with the new rail franchise operator to discuss all areas connected with rail services from Northampton, and also with rail specialists and representatives of the junction 15 rail freight proposal. As well as ensuring that residents' concerns over rail freight terminal development are raised, it has been important to understand rail line capacity, to ensure that passengers to and from Northampton have access to the best possible service.

I was delighted to participate, along with around 30 other volunteers, in the Rough Sleepers count recently, and amazed to learn that of the 13 rough sleepers identified by the count, 9 were already known to staff of NBC or the other agencies involved. This is a complex issue, but the rough sleeper count has made a good contribution to furthering our intelligence to tackle it.

I was proud to be amongst NBC colleagues and others to mark Remembrance Day, and to see how many other people turned out to mark it.

Other meetings and activities have included meetings with Auditors, local businesses, the Royal & Derngate theatre, the Northamptonshire Sports Awards, Leaders and Chief Executives of other councils from the county, and, in some cases regarding infrastructure, Leaders from a number of neighbouring counties.

I have also recently held another meeting, open to all NBC staff, allowing them the opportunity to discuss or ask questions about any issue. We had a room full at this latest meeting, which was also attended by the Interim Chief Executive, and as always was a strong reminder of the commitment that our fellow colleagues show to the council and to Northampton.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council