



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 9th July 2018

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

Unitary Status

The Cross-Party Working Group, to ensure we achieve the best for Northampton from the local government reorganisation to unitary, has continued to meet regularly, and has given consideration to such subjects as:

- 'Key Asks and Red Lines' for Northampton in a unitary proposal, including looking at ways that other towns have kept what matters most to them as they enter a new unitary.
- A Community Governance Review to consider the role of a Town Council
- The pros and cons of the Committee system rather than the Cabinet system in a new unitary council
- The important role of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work on civic pride and tradition.

Our own local, Northampton consultation has gone live now, to compliment the formal consultation, asking residents for their views on such key things as civic matters, the name of a new council, level of representation, infrastructure priorities, local area working, continued support for the Voluntary Sector, a Town and further Parish Councils, etc. Please encourage residents to take part and complete the brief questionnaire, so we can really be clear what matters to the people of Northampton in terms of events and activities but also the wider traditions that we celebrate here in the town.

This questionnaire and can be found at: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NorthamptonLife

The official consultation document and questionnaire for the unitary proposal can be found at: www.futurenorthants.gov.uk

Thank you to those Members who attended the briefing sessions on unitary and on the consultation process. As a reminder, the following two dates are important to have in your diary:

1. Workshop with elected members on the outcomes of the consultation and final proposal of a unitary council

Preferred date Monday 20th August at 6pm (second date Tuesday 21st August).

This will be an opportunity for elected members of NBC to meet with ORS (Opinion Research Services) who are undertaking the consultation on unitary proposals and hear the outcomes of the consultation. Members will also hear from PWC who will be presenting the final draft proposal on unitary councils and to seek feedback from members before finalising the report.

2. Council meeting to approve (or not) the proposal:

- *Weds 29th August at 6.30pm*

This will be a full council meeting to consider the final proposal on unitary government alongside a covering report

In addition to the Member briefings that have taken place, a further set of Staff briefings were delivered on 25th & 26th June, giving all staff a full update on the current situation and an opportunity to ask any questions.

In order to keep this work progressing well, all eight of the council Chief Executives continue to meet weekly, with all eight Leaders joining those meetings fortnightly.

The Chief Executive and I are also holding a series of meeting with NCC Cabinet Members and Senior Officers, focused on our place-shaping ambitions, and aimed at ensuring the right balance is struck between the services and NCC owned properties that are important to the town, versus NCC's financial pressures.

Economic development

Meetings with key businesses have recently included a discussion with Metro Bank, who anticipate their Abington Street branch opening in the late autumn, bringing what seems to be a very popular customer offer to the town, as well as smart new premises.

Along with the Chief Executive and Head of Economic Development, the Mayor and I were very pleased to welcome the new owners of the BHS building to the Guildhall for a very constructive discussion that I believe has set the tone for a positive partnership to look at the most beneficial future use of this site.

In a meeting with M&S, with support from Andrew Lewer MP, we were unfortunately unable to convince M&S not to close their Northampton town centre branch. Whilst we were glad to hear of the success of their Sixfields food outlet, and of their three filling station outlets in the town, the thorough way in which they presented their overall plans for their business, and the difficulty in making their Northampton store fit that strategy, made it clear that this decision was not being taken lightly, and had been considered very carefully.

The Chief Executive and I met with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss NBC's ongoing role in supporting the Chamber and local businesses, and separately attended a Roundtable Event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and Legal & General, also attended by key local businesses. Arranged by the British Chambers of Commerce, Legal & General are visiting a number of UK towns and cities, exchanging ideas and views on the future of town centres, and sharing their experience through their £1 trillion of institutional and retail investments.

Growth Agenda

A great deal continues to progress in relation to the Regional Growth Agenda, and I have attended a further meeting of the Central Area Growth Board, along with Leaders from across the central area of the Oxford – Cambridge corridor.

In addition, I was asked to take part in a panel discussion regarding the Government's Industrial Strategy at the Built Environment Event, attended by an audience of 500+ from the public and private sector.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council