



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 10th September 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

As you will be aware, seven of the eight councils voted in favour of submitting a proposal to the Government regarding future unitary councils, and it has now therefore been submitted.

This means that the real work starts now, in shaping councils that can be financially viable and sustainable, and that deliver services to our residents well. In my view, our frustrations over what brought us to this point are therefore best put behind us, to allow a firm focus on how we work towards two councils that deliver good services for our residents. The risks of failing to do this are too great, and so I am committed to making sure that this is achieved.

The work that is being done at Northamptonshire County Council, including by the Commissioners, to achieve balanced finances and to reduce costs is vital to this, in addition to which an Improvement Board has been established. I will be contributing as a member of this board, and ensuring representation on behalf of Northampton.

My future reports regarding unitary local government will include an update on the work of the Improvement Board, the first meeting of which is due to take place on 6th September.

A significant amount of time is taken up by the unitary work for both myself and the Chief Executive, which for me includes both formal and informal discussions with Leaders across the county to ensure we retain a common view of what our key requirements for unitary are. In addition, I continue to have discussions with our MPs to ensure and insist that we get their support for the engagement that we need from Government for service reform. I am hopeful that meetings with Departments of Health and Education will take place in the near future, as new ways of working in these areas are crucial.

The working group looking at Town & Parish council issues has met, resulting in an agenda item for full council to consider on a Community Governance Review.

Economic Development

On 25th July, along with the university, the county council, and other partners, the council signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese city of Dalian to develop and promote trade between Northampton(shire) and Dalian. As an old industrial town that is beginning to enjoy a reinvigoration as a centre for high-tech and performance engineering, including plans for a brand new motor racing track, Dalian also has special government policy benefits that make it a fairly unique opportunity for Northampton businesses to take advantage of trading with the Chinese market. This link has the full support of the UK government, and we look forward to it developing further for the benefit of local businesses, and for the inward investment opportunities that we hope it will bring.

Other Activity

Whilst many of the things I have been involved in are referenced in more detail in colleagues' cabinet member reports, some of my other recent activities of particular note include:

- Meeting with the Lord Lieutenant to discuss a variety of initiatives that he is supporting and which we will be working with him on, including those related to heritage promotion
- International men's day, I was very glad to be involved in the initial meeting to begin planning this, and extremely impressed to see the approach being taken to highlight both the challenges and support available around deep, underlying issues, particularly in the area of mental health
- Meeting with the Heritage Lottery Fund, both regarding the completion of Delapre Abbey, and the potential for further projects
- Meeting with potential investors to the town
- Attending the Merchant Navy Day commemorations and the flying of the Red Ensign
- Participating in the Knife crime launch
- Discussions with both of our Business Improvement Districts, including accompanying the Brackmills BID team as they joined the Flood Investigator in his investigations into the recent flash-floods, and the impact it had on them.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council