

Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council
Northampton Borough Council
Monday 4th November 2019

As Deputy Leader of the Council, I have continued to play an active role in the establishment of a Unitary Council and the transition to it, while continuing to support the Leader and Cabinet colleagues across a variety of areas within the council. I can report on some of my specific responsibilities as below.

Market

We are preparing the Market for the Christmas season. On 23rd November we have the Christmas lights switch on. The Frost Fair, that is nearly sold out, will take place on 1st December, with the usual parade and entertainment. There will also be entertainment on the Market Square on Saturdays throughout December, except for the last Saturday before Christmas.

Councillor Development Group

The Councillor Development Group met on 23rd September 2019.

- Councillors have requested a further briefing on Islamophobia, but potential / identified providers have not advised their availability or scope of work.
- Councillors and Officers attended the East Midlands Scrutiny Conference in October 2019.
- The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Gangs and Knife Crime Scrutiny Working Group are attending a national conference on this topic in December 2019.
- Councillors and an Officer are attending the National Centre for Public Scrutiny Conference in December 2019.

Further training sessions discussed by the Councillor Development Group are currently being investigated:

- S106 – What it is and how Members can become involved and engaged.
- Gangs and Knife Crime – information and video material shown to schools by the police to be provided to Members.
- An information session on LGBTQ.
- An information session on Building Control / Planning Enforcement and the services provided.

Since the last meeting of this Council training / briefing sessions have been held regarding Local Government Reorganisation, Greyfriars, and the Report It app.

Further briefing sessions that have been arranged are as follows:

- **28/11/19 - Town Centre Master Plan** - Member briefing to be delivered by relevant officers. One session at 6pm in the Jeffery Room.
- **12/12/19 – Local Government Reorganisation** – to be delivered by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. One session at 6.00 pm in the Jeffery Room.
- **18/03/20 – Local Government Reorganisation** – to be delivered by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. One session at 6.00 pm in the Jeffery Room.

Sessions have been scheduled on a three-monthly basis.

Can Members wishing to attend any of these events please inform Tracy Tiff as soon as possible.

Borough Secretary - Legal Department

Our Legal Services successfully resisted two judicial review applications and an appeal to the High Court in relation to benefit disputes involving one vexatious litigant.

Legal also secured a two-year extension to the vexatious litigants General Civil Restraint Order, meaning that if they want to commence any civil proceedings before June 2021 in any Court they must get the permission of a specific High Court Judge.

Street Lighting

At the time of writing, the contract with Balfour Beatty Street Lighting Ltd to undertake a scheme of column replacements and lamp renewals to this Council's street lighting assets across the Borough is being finalised within Balfour Beatty. Once finalised the materials to complete the works will be ordered and works will commence as soon as possible thereafter.

Rail Issues

The East West Rail Consortium met on 17th September 2019 in Cambridge.

The Transport & Works Act Order for the Western Section of East / West Rail is imminent. Some planning applications relative to the development of the section have been submitted. Issues raised by Natural England are being addressed and resolved. The Bletchley Flyover has been stripped of all its railway assets - track, signalling and ballast - and engineers are assessing the structure for its future use. Buckinghamshire County Council have secured land for the Winslow Station Car Park. The full business case for the section is planned to be completed and submitted in the first quarter of 2020. Relationships between HS2 and East / West Rail are excellent.

Timetable modelling is continuing. However, while Northampton is featuring much more on the agenda as a destination and on the routes being discussed, Network Rail aren't modelling Northampton into routes as DfT have not specified that East / West Rail is to serve the town. Consequently, I'm trying to arrange a meeting with DfT and Network Rail.

Work on the Oxfordshire Rail Corridor Strategy is continuing, and in terms of inter-regional connections, the study supports direct services to Bristol, Swindon and Northampton as a means of improving connectivity.

Bedford Borough Council presented the meeting of the Consortium with a paper setting out how that council sees the economic benefits of the links / connectivity between East / West Rail and the Midland Main Line. The paper discusses developing Bedford Station into an Interchange Hub connecting the North & East Midlands with the South West & East Anglia. Bedford Borough has a strategy to make the most it can of the opportunities East / West Rail has to offer, but I'm afraid Northamptonshire doesn't. We've therefore met with an officer of the County Council, the Transport Authority, offering to assist and work with them in developing a strategy.

Now that Roxhill has been granted permission to develop a Rail Freight Terminal at M1 J15, we will need to consider how we respond to the consultation on the Rail Central application, when it is re-submitted, regarding rail freight capacity relative to the increased passenger services we seek for Northampton.

I and an officer will be attending an event of the West Coast Partnership, a partnership established by the new franchisee, First Trenitalia, operating main line services on the West Coast Main Line replacing Virgin Trains. The event is in Birmingham on 8th November.

Governance Review

The second round of consultation relating to the Community Governance Review and the proposal to create a Town Council for Northampton Borough Council began on Friday 27th September and will run for 6 weeks, concluding on Friday 8th November.

Two options are laid out in a supporting document, which anyone wishing to respond should read first. There is also a link on the Borough Council's website to the questionnaire. Anyone can respond and an independent firm (Opinion Research Service) have been commissioned to do the work which also includes a residents' telephone survey as part of the wider consultation.

Full details can be found at:

<https://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/200024/consultation-and-feedback/2406/northampton-town-council-consultation>

Running separate to the Community Governance Review is a separate consultation on proposals to create Community Councils in Far Cotton and Delapre, Kingsthorpe, and an extension to the existing Duston Parish Council. This consultation is being done via individual letter drops to residents living in those respective areas and full details were delivered to peoples' homes on the weekend of the 19th and 20th of October. Residents have until 15th November to either send their views in using a pre-paid envelope, or via a dedicated email address.

The outcomes of both consultations will be shared at a future Cross-party Working Group meeting, before a final report comes back to Council before Christmas.

Councillor Phil Larratt
Deputy Leader of the Council