

Council
Monday 23rd July 2007

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Consider the future of the planet in everything we do

Carbon Management Programme

On 6th June 2007 Ming Campbell joined me to launch the Carbon Management Programme for Northampton Borough Council in conjunction with the Carbon Trust. The programme is aimed at reducing the council's 'carbon footprint' and will involve an audit of all the Council's carbon-emitting activities including its use of IT equipment, its vehicle fleet and energy consumption. The audit will also identify value for money savings that the authority can make. A strategy has been produced detailing how the authority will meet its target of becoming carbon-neutral by 2020. This has been submitted to the Carbon Trust and is awaiting ratification.

Northamptonshire Waste Partnership

I have attended a number of meetings of the Northamptonshire Waste Partnership and with other partners to emphasise the Borough Council's renewed commitment to dealing with waste. I am currently considering specific proposals for dealing with kitchen waste and increasing the efficiency in collection and disposal of household waste, on which I will report back in due course.

Improve our town centre

Litter Campaign

The recent campaign against litter, which saw the arrival of penguins in Abington Street, was extremely successful and well received, and as a result we are looking to run another campaign some time next year.

Sheep Street Toilets

The Sheep Street toilets were identified for closure in the budget cuts imposed by the previous administration, however, they remain open at the present time. The toilets in Abington Park remain open, and we are reviewing future provision. We remain committed to ensuring that facilities are available at key locations in the town.

APSE Seminar

I recently attended a seminar run by Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) sharing best practice on waste and streetscene, although I am pleased to say that Northampton Borough Council has already implemented many of the suggestions made by APSE.

Safe clean neighbourhoods for people to live in

Smoking Ban

The national smoking ban was successfully implemented in Northampton on 1st July, with measures put in place to enable full compliance with the legislation including new bins in Abington Street and wall-mounted ashtrays.

Neighbourhood Wardens

We have reversed a budget cut of £150,000 under the previous administration and are now looking to recruit staff to 2 vacant posts within the team of 15 neighbourhood wardens, and I would like to reiterate my commitment, and that of my colleagues, to building on the success of neighbourhood wardens, having spearheaded the introduction of the scheme in 2004/5.

Travellers

At 6th June meeting of Cabinet I gave a report on options for managing the Ecton Lane Travellers Site. Cabinet resolved to agree a tendering process to seek long term management of the site based on a 25 to 99 year lease, which will allow the council to divest capital costs associated with ongoing repair and improvement works to the site whilst ensuring the site is sufficiently maintained for residents' needs and retaining ownership of the site and negating any risk of increased illegal encampments around the town.

Disability Grants

Having begun in administration with a backlog of grants to be processed, I am pleased to report that all urgent cases have now received their disability grants. In the interests of achieving best practice for the future, where the authority is unable to offer assistance to applicants, officers are currently working on producing information on other sources of funding and assistance within the local area.

Property Maintenance

I am pleased to report that the number of empty council properties has decreased significantly from around 90 a year ago to 35 now. I do, however, acknowledge that the number of empty properties can fluctuate and for this reason I will continue to monitor this figure and drive continuous improvement in this area.

Trini Crake
10th July 2007