

**Council**  
**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement & Safety**

*Improve our town centre*

**Car Parks**

'Pay on Foot' improvements to the St.Michael's and St.John's multi-storey car parks are proceeding with capital works nearing completion. These will be followed by a period of testing. This is a clear improvement for our customers. Negotiations are almost complete on the final stage of the adoption of one of the Edgar Mobbs Way car parks. Income from car parks is currently higher this year than the same period in 2006.

**Town Centre Partnership**

Membership of the Town Centre Partnership has grown strongly and is now well in excess of 100, with the Leader of the Council chairing. As well as an increasing number of the town's major companies, membership is growing among the smaller traders who can benefit from joining together (as, for example, the St.Giles' Street Traders). The Partnership has a strong relationship with WNDC to ensure that future development recognises the views and contribution of this group.

**Shopmobility**

With the current closure of the Greyfriars car park it has been necessary to find an alternative location for the Shopmobility service for people with disabilities. We are in discussions with Shopmobility regarding the possibility of converting a space within the Mayorhold car park which we expect will provide the quality of facilities required.

*Make Northampton people proud of their parks, open spaces, leisure and cultural heritage*

**Balloon Festival**

This year's Festival included a variety of new attractions which contributed to its inclusive, 'family' feel. Now on an improved financial footing we will be able to plan for the future with some reliable data. A working party has been established to review the objectives of the Festival, with a view to making recommendations about next year's event.

*Safe, clean neighbourhoods for people to live in/Enforcement and engagement*

**Leisure Centres**

Despite increases in charges the number of visits to leisure centres in the first quarter of this year has proven similar to last year's, whilst direct debit sales have grown enormously. Visits to the museums are also similar to last year, although the number of organised school visits has dropped, a matter we are currently investigating.

The self assessment exercise against the national 'Towards an Excellent Service' standard has been very valuable and identified a high quality, customer-focused service. From this work and the findings of the recent Overview and Scrutiny study, a

comprehensive strategic review is beginning, to include assessment of the town's needs, options for meeting those needs and how culture and leisure fit into this council's and wider objectives.

### **Community Safety**

Performance on crime shows a welcome downward trend for burglary, robbery and vehicle crime (theft of and theft from motor vehicles), all of which are significantly lower than at this point last year. Violent crime is, however, currently rather higher than last year. All four crime types are above the very stretching target levels set in 2005. Anti-social behaviour incidents are now tracked monthly, and show approximately a 5% reduction on last year.

### **Safer Stronger Northampton Partnership (SSNP)**

The SSNP has recruited its first Director, Tony Hurrell. Short term priorities have been agreed as house burglary, vehicle crime, town centre violence, robbery and anti-social behaviour. Each of these is being actively tackled through its own multi-agency task group, of which the Borough Council chairs two. These task groups are concentrating on short-term practical actions focused on particular neighbourhoods. Longer-term causal factors will be tackled through theme groups on environmental improvement, drugs, persistent and priority offenders, and children and young people. The SSNP is discussing the proposals to create an integrated support unit bringing together key people currently working for various agencies into one location, with the new Director.

### **Health and Safety**

A new structure has been implemented for managing health and safety to provide clarity as to where arising issues should be resolved. Performance management has been strengthened through enhanced reporting at both corporate and departmental level, and the number of reported incidents has shown a pleasing reduction of more than 5% compared to last year's figures. An internal audit report recently made a number of recommendations which are now being addressed, but found no high risk issues in the management of this function.

## *High standards of service*

### **Customer Services**

38 Local Performance Indicators (LPis) are in place to measure and monitor monthly performance within Customer Services. We have consequently identified a number of improvements needed, including: reducing One Stop Shop (OSS) & Revenues & Benefits (R&B) waiting times; increasing customer satisfaction in OSS (measured quarterly); and complaint handling.

Ongoing work is in progress to increase performance in these areas. A capital project appraisal has been submitted to purchase a queue management system which will provide live management information data enabling accurate analysis and monitoring of performance and demand.

### **Partnership working**

We are continuing to work in partnership with other local authorities as a member of the Institute of Customer Services. We are currently exploring partnership working to achieve NVQ level 2 qualifications for NBC staff.

Brendan Glynane  
20<sup>th</sup> September 2007