



## Report of the Leader of the Council

### Northampton Borough Council

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018

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

#### Unitary Status

At its extraordinary meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May, I made the commitment to the council that we would form a Cross-Party Working Group to ensure we achieve the best for Northampton from the local government reorganisation to unitary. I can confirm that this has been done, and that the Group has already met twice. The agreed objectives of this group are:

- 1) To help consider, develop and shape the Council's contribution in relation to the joint submission to the invitation from the Secretary of States to submit proposals for unitary governance in Northamptonshire.
- 2) To consider any other matter and provide advice to the Leader and Cabinet with regard to local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire.
- 3) To facilitate elected member engagement throughout the process
- 4) To facilitate and inform elected members on decisions required

The work now begun by the Group includes identifying the 'Key Asks and Red Lines' for Northampton in a unitary proposal, and this work includes looking at ways that other towns have kept what matters most to them as they enter a new unitary. The six areas under which 'asks and red lines' are being considered are;

- Civic
- Governance
- Infrastructure
- Political
- Operational
- Strategic

Subject to the council's debate on the motion regarding carrying out a local public consultation to compliment the formal consultation, we would aim to ask residents for their views on the 'key asks, red lines' such 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.

The Group has also worked with the Chief Executive to plan briefing and workshop events for Members, so Members are asked to note the following in their diaries:

#### 1. Briefing session on local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire:

*Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June at 2pm and Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm*

This will be presented by George Candler, Chief Executive, who will take members through the work undertaken. In particular the session will highlight the consultation documents that will go live on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> June. The sessions will be the same, repeated twice, so members only need to attend one session.

**2. Workshop with elected members to seek their feedback on the consultation:**

*Preferred date for NBC: Tuesday 19th June (second date: Thursday 21st June) – both at 6pm.*

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 feed into the consultation process in your role as elected member at the Borough Council.

**3. 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.

**4. 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

The Chief Executives of the eight councils are meeting weekly to progress the work, alongside PWC and Opinion Research Services, with the eight Leaders meeting with them fortnightly, but this will all be outlined in more detail by the Chief Executive at the Members briefing on 11<sup>th</sup> / 12<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Independent Chair of Audit**

I am delighted to confirm that Mr. Ian Orrell has been appointed to the position of Independent Chair of the Audit Committee.

The Cross-Party Appointments Panel was extremely impressed by both of the final candidates that they met, and I am certain that under an independent chair the committee will be successful in its work.

Ian Orrell has a great deal of experience of local government finance at a senior level, and I am certain that his enthusiasm and obvious natural style to work with colleagues in a supportive and involving way will be of benefit to the members of the committee. We extend a warm welcome to Ian, who has chosen to observe one Audit Committee meeting, before then taking up the chair at the following meeting.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn  
**Leader of the Council**