



NORTHAMPTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

### SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – The Move of the University of Northampton

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review: The Move of the University of Northampton

The purpose of the Review is to review the impact on the town and local areas; including student accommodation

#### CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

- 1 Please provide information of the work being undertaken by:

The University of Northampton, Northampton Borough Council (NBC), and other partners to support the relocation of the University (*specific organisation to be put to the specific expert advisor e.g NBC to the Cabinet Member*).

*The Northampton Town Centre BID (Business Improvement District), with other key stakeholders, has been involved in the final planning stages of the UoN move to Waterside from late 2017 through 2018, Throughout this period we worked closely with colleagues, including the University, to understand the potential opportunities and challenges that may be presented by the new Campus and a large cohort of students and staff. In particular, the Town Centre Task Force group acted as a liaison point to discuss progress and issues as they developed culminating in the opening of the Campus and the first freshers week which, unusually, took place in the Town Centre on Market Square providing a clear example to traders of the potential of this new and significant target market. Also, we have established a close working relationship with the Students Union base at the Platform in Georges Row.*

- 2 Please provide your opinion on the social, cultural, physical, economic and environmental effects of the move of the University. *Please can*

*you aim to keep your response to this question to a maximum of 250 words*

*It is still very early to try and establish specific opinions as the students (and staff) have needed time to “bed down” in the new facility and for students in particular to find their way around the town and discover what it has to offer.*

*From a social and cultural perspective having a younger and diverse cohort of this size in the town can add to the vibrancy of the area. A major initiative should be to get as many students as possible to connect into local community and cultural events so that “town & gown” is seamless.*

*The Campus as a physical entity is impressive and gives a nice balance of contemporary and modern architecture set against the history and heritage of a Market town. It is important that there is a metaphorical “bridge” between the Campus and town so that both can feed from one another. Better signposting and access between the two area’s would help enormously.*

*Economically footfall seems to have strengthened from the south entrance to the town but needs to be better monitored. Freshers showed the potential power of the student group. Anecdotally staff seem less inclined to visit the town centre. Traders need to be more relevant to these groups as there is money to be spent.*

*Environmentally there seems to have been little impact apart from around St.Johns Hall of Residence.*

- 3 Please provide your views on the positive impact and challenges, across the various areas of the town, in respect of the move of the University. (NB the various areas such as town centre, Bedford Road, Far Cotton, Beckett’s Park, Avenue Campus, Park Campus, Kingsthorpe village will be included in this core question to the relevant expert advisor)

*Positive Impacts: For the town centre it is is the sheer number of people engaged in the University within close proximity to the town who could be spending with our local traders. The Campus in its self can be an attractor for the town and we need to recognise the need to present a welcoming and functional centre that is attractive to this audience (and their parents/sponsors) so that both can be successful. Other major positives are building closer working relationships with both the Academic and Management groups at UoN as we share similar goals and there is a vast reservoir of talent and knowledge that we can utilise to help with our re-generation/event/community idea’s -not least in capturing the enthusiasm and energy of young, talented and committed students with direction from highly qualified*

*academics. The opportunity to use the University to re-focus the town's activities to the South/west rather than North/East is something worth more considered attention.*

*Challenges: Overcoming a perception that our offer isn't strong enough to attract spend into town -particularly from staff. Getting traders to understand that students do have significant spending power and are an attractive alternative at a time when consumer purchase behaviour is changing and impacting bricks and mortar traders.*

*The area around St Johns Halls of residence does give rise to some concern as there have been a number of "incidents" and there are growing concerns of a drug culture gaining a foothold. To nip this in the bud there needs to be a more visible Police presence to support the UoN Policing group and the Community Safety teams.*

- 4 Do you have any other information, concerns or suggestions you wish to raise in relation to the move of the University of Northampton?

*We are already well connected and are focussed on working more closely with UoN to provide a town that will help them attract higher qualified intakes and that in turn will spend in the local centre rather than on-line or out of town.*

*It is important that this purchasing capability is underpinned by a genuine team approach to engaging the students and staff of the UoN into the daily fabric of life in the town and creating events and initiatives that build real strong ties between the traders and businesses located close to the campus and the students and staff.*