



Report of the Leader of the Council

Northampton Borough Council

Monday 14th January 2019

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

Unitary Status

The new Government Commissioner has begun his work at NCC, with the task of looking at Children's Services. Given both the vital importance of this service area in Northampton, and the large proportion of resources that it will form as part of the budget for a possible new unitary council, I feel that the presence of this additional Commissioner is a positive, and the Chief Executive and myself now have an introductory meeting in the diary with him.

Economic Development

I attended a Cross Corridor Leaders Group, comprising local authority leaders from across the whole of the Oxford to Cambridge area. This group is overseeing work being undertaken on three key areas – 'Productivity', 'Place', and 'Connectivity'. With Northampton being on the northern geographical edge of this area, it is important that we remain closely involved in this initiative and benefit from the opportunities that it will bring. I've long felt that the phrase 'corridor' is not a helpful one, as it implies somewhere to just pass through, and am pleased that lately that term has tended to be replaced by the phrase 'Arc'. Although still perhaps not ideal, this at least is consistent with what this initiative should deliver; although without doubt infrastructure such as road and rail are vital, ensuring that existing communities are maintained and supported to grow in a thoughtful way, and that economic growth delivers prosperity and jobs, are also vital.

On 11th December I was glad to meet with the representative of the Department for International Trade who supports the Midlands Engine initiative, to explore ways for working together and ensure that Northampton benefits from potential opportunities.

Park & Ride

I was delighted that we were able to work with the University to allow the public to use their Park & Ride in the run-up to Christmas. As a short test, the numbers that used the service were in the hundreds rather than in the thousands, but given that new Park & Rides normally require sustained promotion and advertising, the test seems to show that there is a potential demand, and that, at times of peak town centre traffic, this should become a key part of the town's transport mix giving visitors an attractive, alternative option to bringing their vehicle right into the town centre.

Other Activity

Whilst many of the things I have been involved in are referenced in more detail in colleagues' cabinet member reports, some of my other recent activities of particular note include:

- It was a pleasure to visit the Environmental Teams at Westbridge, and following their hard work throughout this year, to join Cllr. Hallam in wishing them all a Happy Christmas as they logged on to start their shifts.
- Meeting with the organisers of the Northampton Music festival, to make sure that the council is supporting this great event as best it can. (This year's Music Festival will take place on Sunday 16th June.)
- I was pleased to finally get the chance to meet with the Directors of Goodwill Solutions, and to take a tour to see and understand the work that they do including their Learning Academy, and how they help so many people move their lives forward.
- On 21st December I was very pleased to visit Little Cross Street, and join in the marking of the completion of the new homes there. The homes themselves are extremely well designed and built, reflecting as they do modern techniques, as well as input from residents as to what they felt was needed. The transformation of the environment in that part of our town as a result of the work that partners such as local residents and Northampton Partnership Homes have undertaken together is so very good to witness.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council