

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of Scrutiny Panel 3 – Northampton Post Unitary

Draft Version 1

1 Purposes

- 1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to look at Northampton, (being mindful of the potential Unitary Authority), giving particular consideration to how civic pride and ceremonies can be protected

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding and overview of the civic pride, events and ceremonies (compiling a formal list) that currently take place within the Borough of Northampton
- To gain an understanding of how Northampton's civic events and ceremonies are marketed
- To understand the role of the Mayor of Northampton
- To understand the roles of both the previous Northampton Borough Council and other partners in civic events and ceremonies within the borough
- To consider how the pride and history of the Borough and the Guildhall can be preserved and enhanced as part of any new Unitary Authority.

- 1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

- 2.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2018/2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in March 2018 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 3 to undertake the review – Northampton Post Unitary. An in-depth review commenced in June 2018 and concluded in May 2019.
- 2.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair); Councillor Paul Joyce (Deputy Chair); Councillors Mohammed Aziz, Sam Kilby-Shaw, Jamie Lane, Danielle Stone and Graham Walker. Lee Mason and Morcea Walker were co-opted to the review.
- 2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority – Improving our Governance.

2.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

3 Evidence Collection

3.1 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data, including:

Presentation to set the scene: a summary of the civic pride, events and ceremonies that currently take place within the Borough of Northampton and information; links with communities, role of the Mayor

- Relevant Legislation, for example the Localism Act 2011
- Statistics: including:

Number of Mayoralty events, civic ceremonies etc.
Supporting Charities (previous Mayor's)

Best practice external to Northampton/Case Study examples

Internal expert advisors:

- Ø The current Mayor of Northampton
- Ø Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
- Ø Chief Executive

External expert advisors:

- Ø Representative of the Northampton Rotary Club
- Ø Freeman of the Borough
- Ø Expert Historian
- Ø The Chairman, Committee, Mayor's Fund for the Housebound
- Ø Lord Lieutenant's Office
- Ø High Sheriff's Office
- Ø Previous Mayor of Northampton
- Ø Representative of All Saints Church, Thomas White, Blue and Orange School
- Ø Chair, NIFF
- Ø Town Clerk from a Town Council, such as Sutton Coldfield, Chester

- Site visits - various Town Councils

3.2 Background reports and information

[Presentation to set the scene](#)  PDF 82 KB

3.3 Core Questions

3.3.1 The Scrutiny Panel devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a cycle of meetings (Copy at Appendix B).

3.3.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Scrutiny Panel held on September 2018,

Mayor of Northampton (2018/2019), Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council Northampton Borough Council, previous Mayor of Northampton

3.3.3 Salient points of evidence:

The Mayor of Northampton contributes clearly and positively to the aims of the Council.

During the twelve month Mayoral term the civic head will attend hundreds of events to promote the town, support local charities, work alongside the local community and act accordingly as first citizen of the Borough. The Mayor's office has a large number of long standing traditions which the modern Mayor adheres to.

In order to preserve tradition, councils continue to host civic ceremonies of their predecessors. Civic ceremonies are often the public face of the civic office and must, therefore, be carefully and imaginatively prepared. Set out below are a few of the ceremonies/functions that virtually every council organises.

- **CHURCH SERVICES** – Local authorities organise an official church service for the Mayor each year. The Northampton Borough Council service is named 'Mayor's Charity Sunday Service' and is held a few weeks following the election of the Mayor.
- **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY** – It is common for the Mayor and council to attend a service on Remembrance Sunday; these are normally held at the local war memorial. Northampton Borough Council mark both Armistice Day and also Remembrance Sunday and work with the County Council and the Civic Church to arrange this.

- **CIVIC FUNERALS** – The Mayor will normally attend a funeral formally only if the deceased was a former Mayor/Consort/Mayoress, serving member of the council or significant figure in the Borough. Northampton Borough Council ensure the Mayor’s Office informs all other members of the details so they can attend alongside the Mayor to pay their respects.
- **CIVIC BANQUETS AND CIVIC BALLS** – A civic banquet or ball must not be of benefit to the office but must show a clear benefit to the people of the town or the Mayor’s chosen charity. Northampton Borough Council host one Charity Ball a year for the Mayor’s chosen charity however we also have a ‘Heart of the Community Awards’ event where we will invite the unsung heroes of the town to meet the Mayor and collect a certificate for their efforts in the Borough.
- **ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING** – Every council will hold an AGM in which the incoming Mayor/Chairman is elected by the rest of the council. The Mayor’s Office will organise the structure of this event and this will normally take place in the month of May. The chosen civic head will then chair all Full Council meetings until the end of their term.

In Northampton the Mayor will host a number of civic ceremonies annually such as the following:

- Feb/March – Mayoress/Consort Tree Planting Ceremony
- March/April – Heart of the Community Awards
- Third Thursday in May – Mayormaking 2018
- 29th May – Oak Apple Day
- Approximately 30th June – Armed Forces Day Parade
- June/July – Mayoral Charity Sunday Service
- October – High Sheriff Crown Court Service
- Nov – Remembrance Sunday Parade
- Nov – Mayor’s Gala Dinner
- Dec – Mayor’s Fund for Housebound

Oak Apple Day and the Mayor’s Fund for the Housebound are specific to the Borough of Northampton. Oak Apple Day or Royal Oak Day, is observed annually on 29 May, to commemorate the [restoration](#) of the [English monarchy](#) in May 1660 when King Charles II came to the throne following the English Interregnum overseen by Oliver Cromwell. The name reflects the then future King’s famous hiding place, when he sought refuge from his roundhead enemies in an oak tree, following the 1651 battle of Worcester. The day celebrates the generosity of King Charles II, who donated over 1,000 tons of timber to reconstruct the church and halved the town’s taxes for seven years following the Great

Fire of Northampton. The Mayor of Northampton has been honouring the tradition for many year's now which is heavily supported by the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire.

The Mayor's Fund for the Housebound was originally known as 'The Mayor's Fund for the Bedridden', was set up about 90 years ago, although reference to gifts to the bedridden at Christmas has been found in correspondence relating to the Poor Children's Christmas Dinner Fund 1908, when John Brown was Mayor. A letter of that date states 'An innovation was made last year by sending gifts to the bedridden, which gifts, and the kindly spirit promoting them, were deeply appreciated by the recipients.' There has now been a century of this kind of initiative in our Borough.

Civic Ceremonies can also be requested and will be held at the Mayor's discretion. These events will be the following:

- Honorary Recorder Ceremony
- Honorary Aldermen Ceremony
- Hereditary Freemen Ceremony
- Honorary Freedom Ceremony
- Exercising Freedom of the Borough Parade
- Commemorative events within the Borough and nationally

During the centenary of WWI the Borough has hosted a number of civic events to mark the occasion such as commemorating the life of Walter Tull and Edgar Mobbs and also last year honouring the family who lost their lives in the Northampton Zeppelin Raid. The Mayor's Office marked the presentation ceremony for the USHAKOV medal in 2015 as well as commemorating the anniversary of VE Day in 2015.

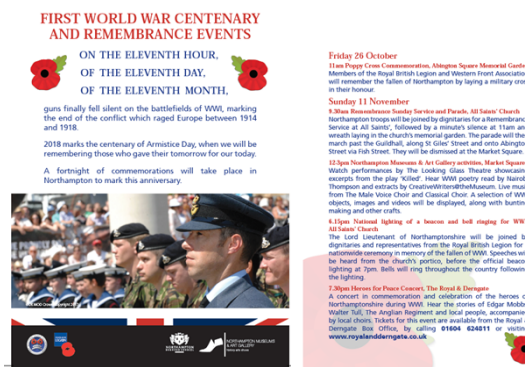
In addition to these civic events the Mayor heavily supports the local community by marking the following events annually.

- 27th January – Holocaust Memorial Day
- 5th March – Tibetan Flag Raising
- 8th March – International Women's Day
- 12th March – Commonwealth Day
- 25th April – ANZAC Day
- 17th May – International Day Against Homophobia
- Approximately 25th June – Armed Forces Flag Raising
- 11th July – Remembering Srebrenica
- 9th September – Merchant Navy Day
- October – Black History Month
- 19th Nov – International Men's Day
- 1st Dec – World Aid's Day
- 3rd Dec – International Day for People with Disabilities
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Northampton Borough Council has the longest and most complete list in the country of Mayor's dating back to 1215. The Mayor of Northampton is believed to have been in existence from 1189 however the full list is believed to have been lost in the great fire in 1675.

Northampton Borough Council's communications team and Mayoral Office work closely together in order to promote the civic events and ceremonies throughout the town. In recent years the additional element of social media has been incorporated into the promotion of events.

The protocol for a typical event would be that the Mayor's Office will manage the event organisation with the relevant parties. The Mayor's Officer will then meet with the communications team and share as much information as possible for them to market the event. A press release will go out as standard however larger events such as Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday will include promotional material which the communications team assist in the production of. An example of this is the leaflet for this year's Remembrance Sunday event which is shown below:



The communications team will seek quotes from the relevant parties and inform all local media who will then get in touch for further interviews and photographs.

As well as the traditional form of a press release events pages will be created on the Mayor's Facebook page as well as posts about the upcoming event for the public to attend. Figures shown in the last quarter alone show posts reaching over 3,000 people. On average the figures show that each post is reaching on 1,205 people which is an extremely quick and effect form of communication.

Northampton Borough Council have their own Facebook page and will share civic events to over 6,400 people who follow their page.

The history of the Borough and the Guildhall are incredibly important to preserve and celebrate and the Borough Council prides itself in the way it has and continues to do this through the ongoing investment into the Guildhall as well as promoting civic events as detailed in this report.

As Northampton Borough Council has now approved the proposal to move towards a unitary model of local government it has already recognised the importance to continue and protect both the Guildhall and the civic traditions and activities. With that in mind Council agreed in July 2018 for a community governance review to be undertaken with a view to the creation of a new Town Council for Northampton.

One advantage of forming a Northampton Town Council is that it can retain a mayor, the historic and ceremonial regalia, artefacts and other items of interest that currently belong to the Borough Council.

A further report has been discussed at Council on the 10th September 2018 which outlines the Terms of Reference to be followed in undertaking the review. It is this work that will ultimately ensure both the Guildhall and the civic events continue into the future under the stewardship of the Town Council, after the new unitary authority is formed.

The Mayor as the first citizen of the Borough speaks for both the council and the community. Though the Mayor hosts the civic ceremonies and functions within the town it is the staff and officers of the Borough council who organise all events held within the Borough – with the discretion of the Mayor.

The Mayor's Office will work with a wide range of departments within the council to host the civic events. The best example of this would be Remembrance Sunday as this is one of the largest events held in the Borough on an annual basis. In order for this event to run smoothly the Mayor's Office must ask for the assistance from the following:

- Town Centre Management – In order to hold the military parade and civic procession the town centre manager will organise for the security to be in place and the risk assessments to be completed ahead of the event.
- Environmental Services – Prior to the event being held in the memorial gardens of All Saints' Church the environmental services team and wardens will allow access to the gardens and clean them before the service, planting fresh flowers and poppies for the occasion.
- Guildhall Office – The Mayor will host dignitaries in the Parlour prior to the procession, a salute will take place outside the front of the

Guildhall where staff members will set up a dais in order for the Lord Lieutenant, Mayor and Commanding Officer to stand.

- Communications Team – The Communications team will inform members of the public of the events taking place on both Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday
- Community Engagement Team – This team will interact with community groups who may wish to lay wreaths and also aid promotional support by putting the Mayor's Office in contact with the Armed Forces Covenant for additional help.
- Market Management – The military parade will assemble on Market Square before holding stalls in aid of the Poppy Appeal
- Borough Secretary – The budget of the event will be met within the civic allowance for the year
- Members Office – Leaders office and the political assistants will send regular reminders to the members to ensure they're clear on the running of the event and to ask any questions prior to the day.

Without the assistance from all of the departments within the council the event could not go ahead. Northampton Borough Council officers and staff have supported the Mayoralty fully at the council and every Mayor thanks them at Christmas by inviting them to the Parlour. It is a small token of gratitude to thank everyone for the hard work they do behind the scenes.

The formation of a Northampton Town Council will ensure the historic and ceremonial regalia, artefacts and other items of interest that currently belong to the Borough Council are preserved and secured.

In terms of the museum, as part of the community governance review, it will be determined if the museum and its artefacts move to the new unitary authority or to the new Town Council. In the meantime, the current approach of the preservation of museum artefacts will continue and be further enhanced once the new museum development is completed.

There are many other festivals, events and celebrations across the Borough that are organised by a range of organisations that the Borough has supported.

Lord Lieutenant's Office

Key points of evidence:

- There is a need for fuller promotion and marketing both within Unitary Councils and in London.

- There is a need to make link with Surprise campaign – Excellence in Food and Drink in Northamptonshire is 2019 campaign
- American connections should be enhanced with the shoe and leather industries
- The role of partners in civic events and ceremonies within the borough includes:
 - Chivalry – Lord Lieutenant
 - Northamptonshire Community Foundation is very good
 - The University of Northampton is very good and should be expanded
 - Education in the Borough should be celebrated
 - Musical education is extremely good and should be strongly featured (NMPAT)
- There is a potential for excellence but it is not fully developed yet. If more development takes place, preservation, security and sustainability should be enhanced.
- It is imperative that it is ensured that the Leather Museum is a firm feature and fully linked in as are the related City Liveries and Guilds. We need to ‘seduce’ these bodies to make a major investment, not just as partners but as co-owners. Similarly, links with the National Museum of Justice in Nottingham should be further explored and secured.
- Northampton’s key links to King John and the Magna Carta should be considerably expanded and this is more than just visitor boards around the Castle. There are other events in history that should also be further developed such as the Danish invasions which led to considerable movement around the centre of Northampton.

Office of the High Sheriff

Key points of evidence:

- Northampton is the established venue for The High Sheriff of Northamptonshire’s Courts Service, a high profile ceremonial occasion which can be traced back centuries.
- The High Sheriff is appointed by the Crown. The primary role is to look after the High Court Judges. The High Court does not have a formal admin. Office. There is no funding for the role of High Sheriff. It is an unpaid role.
- Sessions House is owned by Northamptonshire County Council which is an enviable asset as are the Guildhall, and Civic Church. They are a compact

suite of buildings that offer a story line. It would be good for there to be a joint education project with Nottingham who courts and a National Museum of Justice.

- This annual church service at All Saints' Church, Northampton is a significant civic occasion which, among other things:-
 - Recognises and celebrates publicly the vital work of all those involved in the administration of Justice (including the enforcement of law and order) in the County.
 - Offers an opportunity for the High Sheriff (on behalf of the Sovereign) and those representing the communities of the Borough and the County to express their gratitude for this work.
 - Provides an occasion when those involved in the administration of Justice) can reflect on and recommit themselves to their purpose, with the support of the communities they represent.
 - Offers a unique occasion for all the agencies involved in the administration of justice to connect and converse (network) with each other and with those who represent the communities of the Borough and County.
 - Enables the Borough and the County to provide hospitality to distinguished visitors (including senior Judges and High Sheriffs of other counties) and present Northampton and Northamptonshire's credentials in a highly favourable way.
 - Represents the historical convention of a church service provided for a visiting High Court Judge, which would herald the opening of the Assizes.
 - Supports (through gifting) a relevant charity or charities operating in the County

The event will be commonly attended by, amongst others:

- High Court/Court of Appeal/Supreme Court Judges
- Locally sitting Judges: Circuit and District Judges
- Magistrates
- HM Coroner
- The Chief Constable
- Members of the Bar
- Solicitors
- Other legal professionals
- Senior clergy (all denominations), including the Chancellor of the Anglican Diocese, Bishops and the Dean of Peterborough Cathedral

Guests include:

- HM Lord-Lieutenant,
- The Mayor and Councillors of the Borough
- Deputy Lieutenants of the County and visiting High Sheriffs of other counties
- Representatives of County, District and other local authorities of the County

- Representatives of other agencies within the Justice system (eg Probation Service, Victim Support etc)
- Representatives of other agencies in the county (eg Chief Fire Officer)
- The 'suite' of heritage buildings comprising the Guildhall, the Judges Lodgings, the Sessions House and All Saints' Church, their configuration and their relationship to each other provides a unique and unrivalled context for hosting the historically significant Courts Service. Their preservation has significant value for both pride and history of the Borough and County.
- The High Sheriff's Courts Service is held with the kind permission of the Mayor of Northampton (it is included as a Borough event for public liability insurance purposes) and the Borough has conventionally offered facilities at the Guildhall for the Reception which has traditionally followed the Service. For its part, the County Council has conventionally offered the facilities of the Judges Lodgings/Sessions House and has supported the occasion with the requisite Road Closure. All Saints Church provides the venue for the Service and the Northampton & County Club on George Row is commonly the venue for an invitation dinner which follows the Reception at the Guildhall. Northamptonshire Police assists with managing the road closure for the Processions (from Guildhall to Lodgings to Church and back).
- The High Sheriff (variously with the assistance of the Under Sheriff) arranges other events in Northampton during a shrieval year (from April to March). These will include:
 - The High Sheriff Declaration ceremony (usually held in Open Court at the Combined Courts Centre, Lady's Lane)
 - Hospitality events arranged by the High Sheriff for those involved in the civic and charity life of the county (invitation receptions and dinners)
 - Lectures arranged in conjunction with the University of Northampton (by invitation)

Freeman of the Borough

Key points of evidence:

- The Trustees of the Freemen of Northampton attend all Mayoral civic engagements within the borough, specifically Mayor Making, Mayoral Charity Sunday, Arms Services, Oak Apple Day, Crown Court Service and Remembrance Sunday. The Freemen provide the Sword Bearer for all Civic processions and when required the Mace Bearer.

- There is a need to make more use of IT Media and networking with kindred organisations such as Chamber of Trade, Rotary, Youth Organisations, Theatre, English Heritage, National Trust.
- There is a need to keep the Mayoralty and civic functions and ceremonies. Encourage the general public of Northampton and beyond by greater publicity and networking as previously outlined to attend these historic occasions. By using the jewel of Northampton i.e. the historic Guildhall, as a focal point for visitors to attend and processions to start and finish from. Thus enhancing the public's perception and pride in the town and further enhancing the role of the new Unitary Authority within this structure.
- The Borough of Northampton was created by Royal Charter and hence will continue to exist even after the Borough Council is dissolved. All Civic Regalia to be retained for use in Civic and Mayoral functions as the Borough of Northampton will continue to exist as will its heritage, even if the Borough Council does not.
- The collective role of all partners in civic events and ceremonies within the Borough is to enhance, publicise and support Northampton in all aspects of the civic events and thus encouraging tourism and commerce into Northampton for the greater good.
- There is a need to share more information regarding the functions and history and make it more available to the general public by publicity. Make the Horrible History of Northampton displayed last August in the Grosvenor Centre a permanent display.

Rotary Club of Northampton and Mayor's Fund for the Housebound

Key points of evidence:

- The Rotary Club of Northampton has long association with the Mayors Fund for the Housebound. It has supported the Mayors Fund since its inception and wishes it to continue in its existing format supporting Northamptonians within the existing Borough boundaries. The Club hopes that the Northampton Mayoralty will continue in the future. Historically, Northampton has been the major county town and the centre of the County
- Cheques for £25 are being given out this year to the housebound. There is strict criteria to assign the cheques which are hand delivered. Names of individuals that are housebound are provided by NPH, Age UK, Duston Old Peoples Association, Community Law and the Salvation Army. The History of the Housebound Fund lays with the Mayor and is funded by charitable donations.
- The Mayoralty of Northampton is very important

- There is a need to involve diverse communities more
- A Charitable Trust could be set up for the Mayoralty.

All Saints Church, Northampton

Key points of evidence:

- Insofar as All Saints' Church is involved, events have both a borough and a countywide significance. For Northampton Borough Council, Oak Apple Day, the Mayor's Charity Sunday, Remembrance Day, and events with Northampton Freemen would be particular highlights. For the County, the High Sheriff's Service, events around interfaith Remembrance, St. Crispin's Day, and a few others. These often have variable timings.
- Marketing of events varies according to the event – sometimes very well, sometimes hardly at all. The marketing often focusses on a dry account or list of events to take place, and would benefit from a narrative introduction, particularly where those are repeat events. The thematic focus of, for example, each Oak Apple Day or Remembrance Day could well feature higher, including reference to relevance to Northamptonians living today or the influence events in the past have upon our present and future. Northampton is sometimes unaware of its rich history, leaving quiet assumptions all too often hanging in the air.
- Northampton has a remarkable story to tell, which in recent times has been obfuscated by the need to progress or by issues to do with the lack of progress. The narrative of Northampton at present, which has been told around the world, is of an unarrestable decline which while exceptional has been used in a general narrative on the state of the United Kingdom. Northampton's centrality in England meant that it was a key point for both Viking and Norman invaders, leaving us with the perception that he who aspires to rule England must first rule Northampton. In modern times Northampton North, and to a lesser extent Northampton South, has been thought of as a bellwether parliamentary constituency, successfully predicting the party of government for twelve successive elections. Despite its centrality, it has all too often been forgotten: the removal of the University during the reign of Henry II, the backing of the Parliamentarians during the Civil War, and British industrial decline brought great hardship to the town, and yet each of those key events left deep impacts which are visible in the modern town. The fragments of former eras have not always been respected, and the Borough is generally slow to act when the need for preservation arises.

- In a situation where fewer statutory responsibilities rest upon the shoulders of those seeking to discharge the Charter of the Corporation, there is a real opportunity to build a relationship beyond the Guildhall walls with others who also wish to preserve and celebrate pride in Northampton. It begins with a telling of the story of this place that rises above the tendency to tell our history in order to lament what we have irrevocably lost. It begins with a Civic Life and Leadership that can successfully put to bed controversies that otherwise keep repeating on us (cf. Sixfields, cf. the Hardingstone Eleanor Cross, cf. Northgate Bus Station): dissatisfaction needs choking off at source by timely, well-resourced and well-led development.
- As the new Unitary system develops, it may be that fewer statutory services are fulfilled at the Guildhall, taking away from it the social footfall of those who need to visit it. This could provide the opportunity for the Guildhall to invest itself fully in Northampton's Cultural Quarter, driving forward more value-added, social impact work. As I have said before Northampton seems to present as a powerful vehicle, but with an engine whose sixth cylinder continually mis-fires: getting the intangible to work for us would really drive Northampton and add power to our progress.
- Modern history begins after the Great Fire in 1675, and the brokering of a new social contract as well as a new town. The Reconciliation gained with the crown through the intercession of the Earl of Northampton of the age, meant that the redevelopment was driven and represented a high ambition. The patronage of the Church, having resided before the Reformation with the Prior and Convent of St. Andrew, passed from Lord Cromwell to others before ending up in the hands of the Mayor George Raynsford and the Burgesses of Northampton. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 removed the right, as it sought to end "*an exclusive system, to uphold local, political and religious party feelings, [which is] destructive of that confidence which ought always to be reposed in those who are intrusted with control, judicial or otherwise, over their fellow citizens*". Baron Overstone and Lady Wantage would be the Corporation's successors as patron, before it passed to the Lord Bishop of Peterborough and the Royal Foundation of St Katharine at Ratcliffe. Nevertheless, a close – sometimes too close – relationship developed, and All Saints' maintains one of England's diminishing number of Corporation Pews, set almost awkwardly in the Nave of the Church, where seats are permanently kept for the Mayor and the members of the modern Corporation. Thought has been given, mostly by others, as to what would happen if there was no appropriate person to occupy these seats in the new dispensation, but the maintenance of it – and the evolving close relationship All Saints' Church has developed with the Lieutenancy of Northamptonshire, has – at least at present – secured much 'civic religion' in the heart of the town. It was queried if there is no need for such civic celebration at a central place of worship, what the

purpose of All Saints' Church would be amid a town centre – and a wider Borough – that now has many places of worship of varying provenance.

- From time to time incumbents and clergy at All Saints' Church have provided an ad-hoc or official chaplaincy to the Mayor and other civic dignitaries and have played a full part in the planning process for many of significant moments in the civic year insofar as they are related to All Saints'.
- All Saints' Church and the Town and County War Memorial, which falls within its land and precincts, should be numbered among the assets of the Borough of Northampton. Though manifestly independent, they are necessarily dependent on the Borough if their present pattern of life is to be sustained. In the case of the War Memorial (designed by the Cenotaph designer, Edwin Lutyens, and which properly belongs to Northampton and Northamptonshire), it is important that it remains a sacred place dedicated to the many thousands who left Northamptonshire over the course of the 20th and 21st century never to return home. Much of the responsibility for their preservation rightly belongs to the congregation that meets there day-by-day and week-by-week, but they deserve to sense that the Borough, and whatever successor authority comes into being, shares their commitment to the place and to the 'plant'. Recent changes to parking regulations, and interminable dispute with Northamptonshire County Council, have made a measurably negative impact, making the task harder. While there is an appreciation that this is a burden borne by all who work or live in the town centre, it ought to be understood that the vocation of a Parish Church, even more so for a Civic Church, is distinctive and demanding. It is dishonest to say that it is like any other business. Further, the decision to displace rough sleepers from the commercial districts of the town centre, left many of the churchyards full of people taking refuge – with the consequent disruption and desecration of gravespace that often follows with this. That churches did not wish to be as hard-hearted as to perpetuate displacement, at least not without a decent alternative solution already in place, meant rough sleeping in churchyards became unmanaged – seeming even more so to members of the general public than to do those directly involved. It almost seemed as if churches were being punished for making the claim that displacing rough sleepers without provision of a viable, realistic alternative lacked human kindness.
- All Saints' Church, as a site, must develop. Its last major reordering took place in the 1830s, and parts of its infrastructure are well overdue for renewal. While 2019 will see renovation to the café at the Western end, and a programme of works to safeguard the fabric, it more broadly needs to understand what the town and what the Borough expects of it and thinks of it. The setting of ambitious expectations will aid its better serving the place in which it is set. Like many other heritage assets, where the Borough is able to offer direct encouragement and aid, much will be achieved.

- There are restrictions within licensing that can impact on events. For example: a series of exchanges had with NBC planning officers when *Northamptonshire Surprise* (wanted to erect advertising banners on the façade of All Saints’, gave the impression that many obstacles lay in the way of using Northampton’s most iconic church to advertise Northamptonshire more generally.

Chair, Northampton Interfaith Forum (NIFF)

Key points of evidence:

- The Chair of NIFF is aware of Holocaust Memorial Day, Mayor Making, Remembrance Day; others include “Diwali”, The Hindu Festival of Lights, Niff are working with Buddies of Becketts to hold a “Mela” Festival of Friendship in Becketts Park this July to bring Northampton’s communities together.
- It is expected that Northampton Representatives elected to serve on the proposed Unitary Authority will ensure the best interests of Northampton are served and will ensure civic pride, ceremonies and events are protected. Maybe the Town Show could be brought back to life with civic pride being promoted.
- Previously, NBC employed an “Events Team” based at Cliftonville house who organised the Borough events and did a very good job of marketing. The residents of Northampton need to get behind this with a dedicated team of employees and/or volunteers to ensure this happens,
- A media campaign would help.
- There is a need for wholehearted Support regarding civic events.

3.6 Desktop research - Best Practice

3.6.1 Examples of best practice informed the evidence base of the Review from a variety of sources:

Shrewsbury Town Council

Shrewsbury Town Council was established in 2009. Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council was abolished and the Unitary Shropshire Council created. Previously, Shrewsbury had been unparished.

Shrewsbury Town Council has a population of over 72,000. It is the second most populous Parish Council in England. The most populous being Weston Super Mare with a population of 76,143.

Councillors and Staff

Shrewsbury Town Council comprises 17 Councillors. Elections take place every four years.

The Town Council is chaired by a Mayor who has the support of a Deputy Mayor. The Mayor is elected each year at Annual Council.

The Town Clerk is the senior Officer of the Town Council and there are around 60 other members of staff, some full time and some part time officers. The staffing structure includes:

- Project Officer
- Technical Officer (Playground and horticultural)
- Technical Officers (Arboriculture and Sports Recreation areas)
- Asset Management Officer
- Administrator and Admin Assistants and Finance Administrator
- Youth Community Worker
- Youth Workers
- Officer Manager
- Committee Clerk
- Communications Officer
- Mayor' Secretary
- Mayor's Officer/Driver
- Facilities cleaner

The Town Clerk is responsible for the day to day management of the services delivered by the Town Council. The Town Clerk is also responsible for ensuring that the decisions made by the various Committees are actioned.

Assets and Functions

The assets and functions of the Town Council include:

- Allotments
- Community Centres
- Public Conveniences
- Churchyard
- Open Space
- Park/Gardens
- Recreation Ground/Play Area/Sporting Facilities
- Woodland
- Bus Shelters
- Street Lighting
- Youth Services

The Town Council is responsible for over 400 street lights in Shrewsbury. They are identified by an 'F' on the lamp. If they have a 'Z' they are the responsibility of Shropshire Council.

Partnership Working

Shrewsbury Town Council partakes in both Shrewsbury in Bloom and Britain in Bloom.

Shrewsbury Town Council is twinned with Zutphen. Since 1977 there were formal twinning links with Zutphen, in the Netherlands. Every year the Mayor, Town Clerk and others from the Town Council go to Zutphen and vice versa. This is organised by the Twinning Committees.

Shrewsbury Town Council is part of Team Shrewsbury. The partnership was launched in 2014 and the partnership leads on a programme that aims to tackle a range of local issues. It is reported that Team Shrewsbury is about equipping and empowering local people to identify and solve local problems.

Team Shrewsbury comprises representatives from:

- Shrewsbury Town Council
- Shropshire Council
- West Mercia Police
- Shropshire Fire & Rescue service
- Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID)
- Shrewsbury Shopping Centres
- Safer Shrewsbury
- Shrewsbury Street Pastors
- University Centre Shrewsbury
- British Transport Police

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council was established in 2015. It was formed following a consultative postal ballot. 70% of the votes supported the establishment of a Town Council.

An interim Town Council was formally created on 1 March 2016, with the first 24 councillors being elected in May 2016 representing 4 wards. Town Councillors are elected every four years, with the next election due in May 2018.

In 2011 the census population was 95,901, which had increased by 6.7% since the census in 2001.

The Town Council is entirely funded through a precept on the council tax charge made by Birmingham City Council. The 2018/19 budget sets a total precept of £1,832,982 that

equates to a council tax charge of £49.96 on a band D household.

Councillors and Officers

Sutton Coldfield has eight wards with 24 Town Councillors.

The Town Mayor and the Deputy Town Mayor are elected each year at the Annual Town Council Meeting. The Town Council also appoints a Leader whose job it is to assist the Town Clerk in the day to day running of the Town Council.

The Town Council has a Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, Finance and Admin Assistant and Admin Assistant for the Mayor.

Assets and Functions

The Town Council has a variety of powers and duties accumulated over time through legislation and include:

- provision of allotments and cemeteries
- the award of grants to the community
- the promotion of entertainment and the arts
- planning (where the Town Council is a statutory consultee)
- recreation
- traffic calming
- the care of war memorials

Birmingham City Council is responsible for providing most local authority services in the town including:

- waste collection
- education
- highways
- transport planning
- social care
- housing
- libraries
- leisure and recreation
- environmental health

Milton Keynes Town Council – CMK Town Council

CMK Town Council is the Parish Council for the city centre. The Parish is divided into three Wards:



The parish was created in 2001, and had a population of 1,272 according to the 2001 census. It is now reported to cover over 3,000 residents and 1,000 businesses.

The work of CMK is funded through a parish precept tax. In 2017-18, CMK and Campbell Park households will pay an average of £64.40 precept tax to support its work. It is reported that this is below the average parish precept (£72.38) levied by other parishes of Milton Keynes. This compares with an average of £1,470.75 council tax per household to support of the work of Milton Keynes Council (which also provides most of the local services throughout the borough).

Councillors and Officers

The Town Council has 8 elected councillors – 3 from the West Ward, 3 from the East Ward, and 2 from Campbell Park Ward. The Town Council is chaired by a Councillor. All CMK Councillors are unpaid volunteers and do not receive an allowance.

The Staffing Structure includes:

- Clerk for the Town Council
- Communications Officer
- CMK Warden – employed jointly by CMK and Milton Keynes City Centre Management. The Officer is responsible for the monitoring of the public areas.

Assets and Functions

Milton Keynes Council (MKC) is the council for the whole borough of Milton Keynes, representing about 250,000 residents. MKC provides most of the local services for residents, from street lighting and road repairs to social services and council housing.

CMK Town Council's work focuses on influencing the borough council (MKC) to deliver better services and to make better decisions for our residents (on local development proposals and licensing applications, for example). It is reported that it also partners with MKC on a number of projects to improve the quality of life for our residents.

3.8 Site Visits

3.8.1 The following site visits took place on 9 August 2018:

Raunds Town Council

Raunds Town Council has a population of 8,641 (2011 census). It has a budget of £450,000 from the precept.

Councillors and Staff

Raunds Town Council comprises 12 Councillors covering 2 wards.

In 2005 Raunds Town Council decided to elect a Mayor rather than having a chairman of the council. The Mayor is elected each year at Annual Council. A Deputy Mayor is also elected and they are expected to take over from the Mayor in the following year. However, it is possible for the Mayor to be in Office for longer than one year. The Mayor does not have robes or a mace but does have chains of office.

The Mayor Chairs the Council which meets monthly, with the exception of August. The Town Council also has consultative Committees.

The Clerk is the senior Officer of the Town who is supported by two Assistant Clerks and an Officer Administrator. There are also a number of caretaking staff. The Clerk is responsible for the day to day management of the services delivered by the Town Council.

Civic Events

Three key events are held annually:

- Civic Service
- Burns Night Dinner
- Wine Tasting

Other events are held that the Mayor partakes in including:

County Fayre

Christmas Lights

Remembrance Day

Halloween Party

Bonfire Night

The Mayor's Charity for 2018/2019 is the Stoke Association.

Assets and Functions

Raunds Town Council is currently working with NCC as part of its Independent Library process with a view to purchasing the building and supporting a local community group to run the library. It has responsibility for the management of lots of green space, which includes a dog park.

Higham Ferrers Town Council

Higham Ferrers has a population of 8,000 (2011 census.) It has a budget of £365,000 from the precept.

Councillors and Staff

There are 16 elected Councillors who serve a four year term. All Councillors are voluntary and no allowance is received. The Mayor has a budget for civic functions and an annual allowance of £1,500.

The Mayor is elected each year at Annual Council. A Deputy Mayor is also elected and they are expected to take over from the Mayor in the following year. The Mayor wears full robes, there is a mace and chains of office. The Clerk is also expected to robe up for Council and other events. Robes are worn at four meetings a year. Higham Ferrers also has a Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; the rationale being that it helps business continuity.

Other Committees:

Planning

Policy and Resources

Environment and Recreation

Personnel Committee meets on an ad-hoc basis.

The Clerk is the most senior role of the Council. The Council also employs an Assistant Town Clerk, Admin Officers x 2, Admin/Finance Officer, Parks and Open Spaces Warden x 2, Mayor's Sergeant and Town Hall Cleaner.

There is also the role of Town Manager funded by Section 106 monies. 25% of the Town Manager's time is dedicated to Higham Ferrers.

Civic Events

Annual events include:

Mayor making

Civic Service

Carol Service – the Mayor leads the procession

Mayoralty Charity events
Remembrance Day
Christmas event – Opened by the Mayor
Christmas Service

The Mayor's Charity for 2018/2019 is the Air Ambulance.

Assets and Functions

Assets and functions of Higham Ferrers Town Council include:

Town Hall
Farmers' market
Cemetery
Open spaces and play areas – including a skate park and football pitch, tennis courts and MUGA
Public toilets
Churchyard
Grass cuttings
CCTV

Higham Ferrers Town Council is working with a Community Group regarding taking over the local library. It is envisaged it will be housed in a porta cabin located on a car park, run by a Community Group. Higham Ferrers is twinned with Hackenberg in Germany. Twinning visits take place annually. One year the Mayor of Higham Ferrers visits Hackenberg and the following year the Mayor of Hackenberg visits Higham Ferrers.

3.9 Background Information

3.9.1 Clarification of Roles

Mayor's Serjeant

As detailed in the book "The Borough of Northampton, its Guildhall and Civic Traditions" written by RJ Morris:

"There is no longer a Mayor's Serjeant (a position held until his final retirement in 2006 by Alan Hughes, who was robed on formal occasions.) The Mace is now carried by the person who is also the Mayor's Chauffeur."

The role of Mayor's Serjeant exists in other Local Authorities:

Example

Lancaster City Council

The Posts of Mayor's Serjeant and Town Serjeant have been in existence since 1193. Although now ceremonial posts, they originally were there to protect the Mayor and the Aldermen and Councillors of the District.

The Serjeants each carry a small silver gilt mace and it was intended that these would be used to beat off anyone who tried to attack the processing party. These maces are still carried by the two Serjeants and dressed in their traditional cloaks and hats, they take part in the Mayor's Sunday Parade each year when the Council takes the Mayor to Church for a blessing for their Mayoral Year ahead and the Mayor leads the Council back to the Town Hall. The appointment of the Serjeants is made on a yearly basis at Annual Council.

Civic and Mayoralty Officer

Key roles include:

- To manage and coordinate all Civic/Mayoral functions and related activities on behalf of the Borough Council and co-ordinate such events with the County Council
- To help to provide a high quality administrative, secretarial and appropriate support to enable the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and their escorts to perform their civic duties, and to ensure that the Council's other civic and twinning activities are delivered successfully
- To act as Advisor and Personal Assistant to the Mayor

Mayor's Chauffeur

The Post is covered by two individuals. The key role is to be the Mayor's Chauffeur taking him to Civic/Mayoral functions and full Council. To maintain the upkeep of the Mayoral car to include re-fuelling and servicing and ensure all related documentation is up to date. To act as Macebearer as appropriate, which entails wearing a ceremonial outfit and carrying the Mayor's Mace.

4 Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 Overview and Scrutiny ensures that it adheres to the Council's statutory duty to provide the public with access to Scrutiny reports, briefing notes, agendas, minutes and other such documentation. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels are

widely publicised, i.e. on the Council's website, copies issued to the local media and paper copies are made available in the Council's One Stop Shop and local libraries.

- 4.2 The Scrutiny Panel was mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking this scrutiny activity so that any recommendations that it made could identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. This was borne in mind as the Scrutiny Panel progressed with the review and evidence gathered.
- 4.3 So that the Scrutiny Panel obtains a wide range of views, a number of key witnesses provided evidence as detailed in section 3 of this report.
- 4.4 Details of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken can be located on the Overview and Scrutiny [webpage](#).

5 Conclusions and Key Findings

- 5.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:
- 5.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that both the Mayoralty and Civic tradition is very important within the town. The Mayoralty should be retained at the Guildhall. The Scrutiny Panel felt that a Charitable Trust could be set up for the Mayoralty.
- 5.1.2 The Scrutiny Panel realised that Oak Apple Day is a Borough Council tradition and was traditionally held at dawn on 29 May each year. It fell on a Sunday one year and was moved to 12 noon. There is a need for this event to be recaptured by the Borough. It is an important Borough event. Over the years a number of civic events have disappeared, it would be the opportune time to reintroduce some of these for example May Day celebrations.
- 5.1.3 100th birthday acknowledgements are expanding and this now comes under the remit of civic Mayors.
- 5.1.4 The Mayor's visit to hospitals on Christmas Day really cheers patients and staff up, especially on the Children's ward.
- 5.1.5 Evidence highlighted that the Mayor of Northampton has key roles during his Mayoralty year including:
- The Mayor is the Chair of the Housebound Fund

- The Mayor is the President of Town Twinning
- The Mayor is the President for St John's Home
- Honorary Freeman take place just once every civic term – The Panel queried what would happen in terms of Unitary.

- 5.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that there is a need to ensure that the Mace is retained in Northampton's Museum, in the borough and that all silver assets are made secure.
- 5.1.7 It was noted that the punch bowl that is kept in the Mayor's Parlour, was presented to a former Mayor when he had a child whilst in Office.
- 5.1.8 Evidence received highlighted that expert advisors providing information to the Scrutiny Panel all felt strongly about the retaining of the Mayoralty and Civic events.
- 5.1.9 The Scrutiny Panel queried who would lead on Hereditary Freeman Services in any potential Unitary Authority.
- 5.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that not many towns have Mayors going back 800 years.
- 5.1.11 The Scrutiny Panel conveyed the view that it hoped that there would be a Town Council, with a Mayor. It was commented that assets would be protected by Town Council.
- 5.1.12 The Scrutiny Panel commended the book "*The Borough of Northampton and Its Guildhall and Civic Traditions - RJB Morris*". The book contained a lot of very important information.
- 5.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the marketing of the Mayoralty via the website but felt this could be done more proactively such as leaflets at places such as the train station and libraries. The Mayoralty needs to be published more. Social media could be used more too.
- 5.1.14 Evidence gathering demonstrated that the High Sheriff is appointed by the Crown. The primary role is to look after the High Court Judges. The High Court does not have a formal admin. Office. There is no funding for the role of High Sheriff. It is an unpaid role.
- 5.1.15 It was noted that when the previous Mayor's Serjeant had retired, the role had not been replaced. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful there

be an Honorary Mayor's Serjeant, possibly an Alderman or former Councillor. There would be no cost to such an Honorary post.

6

Recommendations

- 6.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to look at Northampton, (being mindful of the potential Unitary Authority), giving particular consideration to how civic pride and ceremonies can be protected.

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding and overview of the civic pride, events and ceremonies (compiling a formal list) that currently take place within the Borough of Northampton
- To gain an understanding of how Northampton's civic events and ceremonies are marketed
- To understand the role of the Mayor of Northampton
- To understand the roles of both the previous Northampton Borough Council and other partners in civic events and ceremonies within the borough
- To consider how the pride and history of the Borough and the Guildhall can be preserved and enhanced as part of any new Unitary Authority.

Scrutiny Panel 3 therefore recommends to Cabinet that, Post Unitary:

- 6.1.1 The Mayor of Northampton is retained and a Charitable Trust is set up for the Mayoralty. The Mayoralty is retained at the Guildhall.
- 6.1.2 Should a Town Council be established, the Town Council should be located in the Guildhall, along with Mayoralty and its regalia.
- 6.1.3 It is ensured that the Mace is retained in Northampton's Museum, in the borough and that all silver assets are made secure.
- 6.1.4 Oak Apple day is a Borough Council tradition and it should be recaptured by the Borough. This would be the opportune time to reintroduce some of civic events that have over time disappeared, for example May Day celebrations.
- 6.1.5 Other key roles of the Mayoralty are protected, including:
- The Mayor is the Chair of the Housebound Fund
 - The Mayor is the President of Town Twinning

- The Mayor is the President for St John's Home
- Honorary Freeman take place just once every civic term

6.1.6 The introduction of the roles of Major's Serjeant and Town Serjeant , as Honorary roles, for example an Alderman or former Councillor are investigated.

6.1.7 Publicity and marketing of the Mayoralty is good; but it should be widened further to include proactive use of leaflets at locations such as the train station and libraries and more use of Social Media.

6.1.8 Cabinet is informed that it is the aspiration of the Scrutiny Panel that Northampton is a city of culture by 2025.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6.1.9 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.