



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET - 11 SEPTEMBER 2019

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – IMPACT OF THE MOVE OF THE UNIVERSITY
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Impact of the move of the University.
- 1.2 All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:
 - 2.1.1 That the University of Northampton is asked to investigate the possibility of using an empty unit in the town centre to showcase the University.
 - 2.1.2 That frequent liaison with Community Groups continues; and the public is encouraged to use the facilities on offer at the University.
 - 2.1.3 That the University of Northampton is asked to confirm that it will finance the Parking Permit Scheme for Thomas Chapman Grove and Malthouse Close and to also confirm that it can provide a form of parking enforcement for this Parking Scheme.
 - 2.1.4 That the University of Northampton is asked to investigate the installation of a noise barrier between the student accommodation and Thomas Chapman Grove and Malthouse Close.

Recommendation to the Northampton BID and University of Northampton

- 2.1.5 That the BID, University and NBC look into ways of generating initiatives to bring community uses of empty buildings in the town centre.

3.1 Background and Issues

- 3.1.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2018/2019, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in April 2018 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 2 to undertake the review – Impact of the move of the University. An in-depth review commenced in May 2018 and concluded in March 2019.
- 3.1.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Graham Walker (Chair); Councillor Sam Kilby-Shaw (Deputy Chair); Councillors Jane Birch, Gareth Eales, Penny Flavell, Dennis Meredith and Danielle Stone. Jane Bunce, Director of Student and Academic Services, University of Northampton, was co-opted to the review.
- 3.1.3 This review Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Shaping place and driving growth.
- 3.1.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Background data, including:

- Presentation to set the scene:
 - Work currently being undertaken regarding the move of the University
 - Number and areas of student accommodation
- Statistics:
 - Financial data
 - Students
 - Footfall

Internal expert advisors:

- Cabinet Member for Housing and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, NBC
- Ward Councillors, NBC
- Town Centre Manager
- Cabinet Member for Community Safety, NBC
- Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the Community Safety Team
- Environmental Health and Licensing Manager
- Head of Assets and Regeneration
- Private Sector Housing Manager

External expert advisors:

- Head of Protecting Vulnerable Persons, Northamptonshire Police

- Representatives from the University of Northampton and the Student Union, University of Northampton
- Manager, Student Homes, Northampton
- Letting Agencies, Northampton
- Executive Director, Town Centre BID
- Director, PubWatch
- Residents' Associations, groups such as Friends of Parks Groups etc.

Site visit(s): student accommodation, University of Northampton campus

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Accommodation and Parking

- 4.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that student accommodation is putting pressure on the housing market in the town centre. Parking was another main concern that had been raised by the public; however, the Scrutiny Panel welcomed the work that was undertaken to rectify this by the Highways Authority. It was realised that St John's MSCP car park has reached capacity on numerous days over the past year, the University has not had an impact on this car park at this time.
- 4.1.2 Evidence received showed that from the move of the University prices of houses may be driven up by the increased demand but also agents are struggling to fill the HIMOs in the area that students have moved away from. Enforcement of HIMOs is good. Where there is an Article 4 Direction in place this restricts approved HIMO numbers to 15% of properties in those areas. Multi Agency meetings are held to ensure good quality rental properties are promoted.
- 4.1.3 Parking spaces was acknowledged as adequate. There are over 1,900 spaces. It was welcomed that discussions are ongoing about an additional park and ride car park; but should one be introduced it was realised that this would not be immediately.
- 4.1.4 Evidence gathered showed that there is adequate staff parking (758 spaces) on the University site and they are also being encouraged to car share.

Impact on Footfall

- 4.1.5 The potential increase to the footfall for the town was commended.
- 4.1.6 It was recognised that student numbers are similar to previous years just in different locations, they would still have used the town centre, when located out of town; however, there has not been a change to the number of licensed premises in Kingsthorpe currently but change has occurred around use and type rather than the number of licensed premises.

Safety Measures

- 4.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the measures that the University had put in place regarding safeguarding and safety, in particular around the University Night club and the additional five Police Officers, paid for by the University. There are robust partnership arrangements in place.
- 4.1.8 It was welcomed that the University is working with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP.)

Traffic Flow

- 4.1.9 The Scrutiny Panel realised that there is a need to widen the footpath opposite St John's and Beckett's Park. It was further realised that on the first week of the opening of the new University there were some challenges, but there are meetings on-going that continued to make sure the reason for any challenges was ascertained and the best way they can be managed. The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that such meetings had taken place and continued to take place.
- 4.1.10 It was noted that there are cycle routes in the town but the Scrutiny Panel felt that these should be promoted and students encouraged to cycle.
- 4.1.11 The Scrutiny Panel was concerned regarding buses and traffic flow on the Bedford Road. It was confirmed buses had been running this route for some weeks. It was queried whether the traffic lights needed altering to cope with the traffic. The Scrutiny Panel was aware that the Highways Authority has put in improvements to Bedford Road.
- 4.1.12 It was confirmed that the traffic lights, at Bedford Road are managed by urban traffic control and these can be altered. Certain drivers are blocking exits and causing tailback. Victoria Promenade is where the majority of foot traffic takes place – over bridge – Victoria Promenade and into town centre.

Impact on the town

- 4.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the students are a benefit to the town and the University is an excellent facility.
- 4.1.14 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the move of the University is having a positive effect on the town, across many sectors including culture, retail, heritage and leisure whilst acknowledging there will be an inevitable impact on the area that students move into and the area they leave behind.

Community

- 4.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel noted that in Berlin there is a huge youth centre for age 8-25, it offers a range of services, youth parliament etc. It was felt something similar would be

fabulous to introduce in Northampton. There is also the need for a Women's Centre in the town and the need to find a way to communicate with all community groups.

- 4.1.16 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed that the University and partners are looking to put in a bid for Government funding to make a difference in the town centre. Graphic design students from the University are liaising with the BID regarding showing their work and speaking with existing traders.
- 4.1.17 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that Buddies of Becketts (BOB) has been working with the University from the outset. A good relationship has developed. There is a need for such a relationship with the Buddies of Far Cotton.

Site visit

- 4.1.18 From the information and evidence obtained from the site visit, the Scrutiny Panel was impressed by the high standard of the facilities provided and the excellent finish; the Halls of Residence will provide an excellent facility for students. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the new site is an asset to the town, providing facilities for all to use, such as the café and restaurant. It was also pleased that the site is a community site and during the visit, people walking their dogs through the site were observed. The Scrutiny Panel was pleased that students will receive both safety talks from the University and personal safety talks from the Police upon their arrival.

Completion of evidence gathering

- 4.1.19 As evidence gathering progressed the Scrutiny Panel realised that things are working better, at start of this Scrutiny Review there had been major concerns, as the Review progressed the Panel has noticed changes over a period of time, e.g. residents' meetings at the University. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be good for University to attend residents' meetings, particularly Far Cotton. It was acknowledged that the University is working to rectify problems as they arise.

5. Options

- 5.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 6.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to the Council's response to the recommendations regarding the impact of the move of the University. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6.2 Resources and Risk

6.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

6.3 Legal

6.3.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.4 Equality

6.4.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

6.5.1 The Committee received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.1.4 of this report.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Impact of the Move of the University (March 2019)

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 30 April 2019

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