

## Cabinet Member Report for Regeneration & Enterprise



Northampton Borough Council

Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

### ECONOMY AND ASSETS

#### *Economic Growth and Regeneration*

##### The Northampton Economic Growth Strategy

The Northampton Economic Growth Strategy and associated action plan was approved at Cabinet on 20th May 2020. The Northampton Economic Growth Strategy is a key document for the Council that will shape the future of Northampton's economy, enable the safeguarding and creation of local jobs and stimulate wealth creation for residents. It will help the Council to improve conditions that will assist local business to thrive such as enabling job creation and the growth of the town as well as to unlock potential opportunities on offer from Central Government, linked to wider growth opportunities across the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford Arc.

##### Future High Street Fund

The Northampton Forward Board has continued to meet on Zoom throughout lockdown. Outline design proposals, budget cost plans and development appraisals for the proposed schemes for inclusion in the FHSF business are complete. The deadline for submission of the final FHSF business case is the 5th June. Final details are being worked up for submission on the 2nd June. The decision on the final allocation of funding will be made by the MHCLG in the summer.

##### Upton Country Park

The phase two works to are now complete with the site handed back to the Council from the contractor. The phase two of the Country Park gives enhanced accessibility to the natural environment of more than 127 hectares of open space, stretching from Upton Mill Farm through to the village of Kislingbury. The project included the construction of 2.4km of new paths and cycle ways, with new woodland and wetland, served by a viewing platform.

##### Towns Fund

Northampton is one of the 101 towns and cities invited to develop proposals for a Town Deal, as part of the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund. As part of this, Northampton will have to develop a Town Investment Plan which should focus on driving economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, economic assets including cultural assets, skills and enterprise infrastructure. The Town Investment Plan for Northampton will be developed in the summer ready for submission later in the year.

Weston Favell Health and Wellbeing Hub We have secured funding through One Public Estate (OPE) to support the development of the Weston Favell Health and Wellbeing Hub. This project will bring forward 3.8 hectares of under-utilised public sector buildings and land at Weston Favell District Shopping Centre through the delivery of a new Health and Wellbeing Hub. The services at the hub would replace the current tired facilities in the local area, giving customers modern and user centred services while also allowing for more cost-efficient delivery. A consultant team (Continuum Sport and Leisure in partnership with Hawkins Brown Architects) have been appointed to develop a feasibility study and business plan for the project.

### COVID-19

In response to the C-19 pandemic, the Government made several funding streams available to support the business community. Initially, NBC received £37m to issue to local businesses as part of the Small Business Grant and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Fund. These grants were to support businesses in the sectors that were struggling the most and experiencing significant hardship. The EG&R worked closely with Finance to ensure the timely and safe delivery of these funds. Up to the End of May over £31m of grants have been issued to local businesses. In May, the Government announced a top-up to the existing grant scheme – the Local Authority Discretionary Fund. This fund was for LA's to issue to small businesses who didn't qualify for the original schemes, primarily and predominantly focusing on those businesses with high fixed-property costs. NBC has £1.7m as part of this fund. Payments as part of the Discretionary Fund will start to be made in early June.

### Vulcan Works Cultural Hub

Work is still progressing well on site however at a reduced capacity due to issues around COVID-19. Developments continue seeing masonry works continuing on Guildhall Road and underpinning progressing. Roof replacements completed with the exception of the last bay on which the works have now commenced in Fetter Street. Final fix electrical is underway and partitioning in progress to upper floors in Angel Street. These have yet to be determined. Tender documents for an operator of the centre are being developed which will be issued in the coming weeks.

### Marefair Heritage Gateway

Design work on a proposed new development has been completed and development appraisals are underway. If viable the scheme will be presented to members/partners/stakeholders and a cabinet report prepared determining the way forward.

24 Guildhall Rd (Guildhall Rd Block) A feasibility study to assess the options on the future uses of the upper floors has begun. As part of this work consultation will take place with key stakeholders including but not limited to NN Contemporary, Royal and Derrigate and University of Northampton

## **Corporate Assets**

In line with review of asset holdings, Rectory Farmhouse was approved for sale in February. The sale is by way of auction, the assets team continue to progress this but due to COVID19 progress has slowed as a result of restrictions on viewings and the

impact on the commercial sales market generally. The sale will progress as soon as things improve and become more certain.

In March, Cabinet approved the sale of fifteen community shops, initially being offered to the tenants of those shops but with restrictions on use to safeguard these community facilities. These sales will support the realignment and reduction of the portfolio thus ensuring the Council only retains assets that contribute to our Corporate Plan and our commitment to energy reduction. The capital receipts will be used to fund capital projects and reduce the reliance on borrowing.

In May, Cabinet approved the transfer of a number of community assets to Billing, Duston, East Hunsbury, Upton and Wootton Parish Councils. The conveyance will ensure there are adequate restrictions placed on the land to remain for community use, but the Parishes will be best placed to manage the facilities for the community. We are in discussions with the Parish Councils over these and working collaboratively to progress this through to completion.

As reported by finance in the late May Cabinet, COVID 19 will impact the Council's commercial property income, the estates team are working with tenants to mitigate the loss of income but also to try to ensure a recovery model can be agreed by both parties wherever possible. Tenants are being signposted to the information on funding and encouraged to obtain all the support they can. It is too early to know the full effect of the lockdown but further updates will be provided to Council as this becomes clearer.

## **Property Maintenance**

Works on the Street light replacement scheme has commenced on the 24th February, with work now approximately 50% complete. In spite of challenges faced by Covid 19 this project remains on course to complete in the summer.

The extension of Rectory Farm Community Centre is still progressing. Due to Covid 19 there has been a delay and this work is now intended to be completed in June.

Watercourse surveys carried out – (first time since 2014 as not in Veolia/Enterprise contracts) prices will be obtained and essential works carried out on a phased approach)

Structural surveys of all of the monuments across the Borough have now been carried out

Finally I would like to congratulate all the staff who have managed to keep all of this work on track in unprecedented circumstances, and at the same time shoulder additional duties related to the Covid emergency. I am very proud to work with you.

**Cllr Tim Hadland**  
**Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise**