

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Since our last meeting and AGM I have worked 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 more detail in Cabinet colleagues' reports.

### **Council & Cabinet Meetings**

This Full Council meeting is open to attendance by the public, and is also being streamed, and that will continue to be the case with all Full Council and Cabinet meetings in the future. The continued relaxation of distancing guidelines and therefore the reduction in space required between members at those meetings should make them better in the future for public and members to engage in. Thank you for bearing with us at this meeting, at which we have ensured full compliance to current guidelines.

### **Cabinet**

The Council's Cabinet is in place, and I'm grateful to them for the energy with which they have quickly got to grips with their areas of portfolio responsibility and established effective working relationships with their corresponding officers.

The first West Northants Council Corporate plan was published on 1<sup>st</sup> June, just seventeen working days after the election, and approved by Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> June. It sets out our strategy, our priorities and our values, as we embark on the task of serving the residents, communities and business of West Northants to the best of our abilities. I am grateful to the Chief Executive and Senior Officer team for the work that they put in to finalise this document so quickly, demonstrating the ambition and urgency with which we are approaching this task.

To assist, we have put in place a weekly Executive programme Board meeting which all Directors and Cabinet members attend, to ensure that priorities are driven forward. This Board will also contribute significantly to good governance, ensuring that Cabinet members are fully aware of emerging initiatives and fully briefed on all formal decisions that they will be asked to take in due course.

### **Training**

As I know all other members have, I have attended as much of the member training as possible, and I know that also like me, members have found it to be tremendously helpful. The Member's Welcome event on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June was particularly helpful in allowing us all to hear an overview of the council's directorates, and a snapshot of current issues. My thanks to all those who were involved in creating and delivering the member training programme and events. A reminder to members that you can view videos of the training and other support material in the 'WNC – Member Development' Teams folder.

## **Civic & Events**

Preserving the Civic traditions across West Northants is tremendously important, and so to support this, and to plan how our new council will deliver Civic events, we have formed a Civic Group, comprising the Chairman of the Council, along with members from each legacy council area with local civic knowledge, having been a previous council Chair or Mayor. This group also includes those Officers who support Civic and Lieutenancy activities.

I was pleased to recently attend the Armed Forces Day flag raising, marking an important date in the civic calendar, and also to attend the Oak Apple Day service, which is the traditional, annual ceremony that remembers the generosity of King Charles II, who donated over 1,000 tons of timber to reconstruct All Saints' Church and halved the town's taxes for seven years following the Great Fire of Northampton in 1675.

I was also, delighted that we marked Windrush day, honouring the British Caribbean community, and the half a million people who travelled to the UK after the Second World War.

It was a pleasure to join with members of the Bangladeshi community, representing a community of around 10,000 people in West Northants, for a 'Freedom 50' event, which marked fifty years since the independence of Bangladesh.

## **Other Activity**

Amongst many meetings, I have met with the Local Government Association, and the County Councils Network, and Leaders from across the Arc. I have also ensured that WNC continues to play a full and active role in SEMLEP.

I have joined with the Chief Executive to have discussions with the Leader and Chief Executive of North Northants Council, mostly regarding those service areas that are run on a shared basis.

I have met and had discussions with the Independent Chair of the VCSE Assembly regarding food poverty and our plans to work with all sectors to produce an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as well as meetings with the Director and Portfolio Holder to shape our approach to this work. Cllr. Golby makes further reference to our work on this important initiative in his report.

On 18th June it was a real pleasure to be asked to help mark Men's Health and healthy Eating week, by attending and asking some of the questions in the WNC & NNC 'Virtual Pub Quiz'.

On 24th June I participated in the Health & Wellbeing Board, and I have recently had meetings with the Northampton Town Centre Business Improvement District.

I have met recently with two of our MPs, and on 28th June I chaired a meeting of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone Board, where significant progress is being made in moving some of the remaining, undeveloped sites towards a position of being more market-ready, and able to contribute to our local economy.

Following the long journey to refurbish and extend the Northampton Museum & Art Gallery, includes long delays due to covid, it is of delight to me that the doors are now being opened to the public from 10<sup>th</sup> July, creating a wonderful visitor, educational and cultural attraction.

Finally, I was very glad to be involved in the WNC & NNC covid thank you video, in which we thanked so many for their efforts during the pandemic, and was particularly pleased to be able

to thank the 14,000 volunteers that came forwards across our county. This has been the most difficult time, but one during which so many across West Northants, and our county as a whole, have responded extraordinarily and selflessly.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn  
**Leader of the Council**