

Leaders report for Council 24th June 2019

As this is the first Council meeting since Annual Council, I'd like to welcome all members, both returners and those who were elected for the first time on 2nd May to this their first full Council meeting of the new cycle. I look forward to the contributions that you will all make over the next four years in helping shape the district in which we live, work and enjoy our leisure time.

Celebrating Planning Success

Earlier this month the Neighbourhood Plan for Saddington was shortlisted as a finalist in the National Planning Awards. Sadly we were pipped at the post, but all credit is due to the volunteers in Saddington, their consultant and to HDC in-house team.

Neighbourhood Planning is a truly fantastic success story across the Harborough District; later this week on Thursday 27th June, the Tur Langton Neighbourhood Plan will be voted on in a referendum. If they say yes, then this will become the 21st 'made' plan in the district. There are many more in the pipeline.

I have tasked officers to look at how we can move forward with the stalled Lutterworth Neighbourhood Plan and investigate how we can get one set up for Market Harborough.

Finally, it was truly fantastic to attend the Neighbourhood Planning Conference held at the Three Swans on 6th June. Matt Bills deserves a lot of credit for securing the top speakers in the field to attend as well as 75 delegates from near and far. Our success and events like this places Harborough District Council as the lead authority in the County, as well as one of the top areas in the Country for Neighbourhood Planning.

However none of this would have been possible without the unstinting contributions made by the many hundreds of volunteers that have taken part in neighbourhood plan making since 2012.

A huge vote of thanks is due to them all.

Lotto 1st Anniversary success

Talking about volunteers, on 12th June this chamber was filled with volunteers from 40 organisations drawn from across the district. In its first year they have managed to raise approx. £35,000 towards their own funds using the Harborough Lotto, making it one of the most successful Council-run lotteries to date. They have also bumped up the amount that the District Council can dish out to other groups via its District wide grants. A true win-win situation for all.

Visit Harborough District launched

Tourism brings in over £125m to the local economy and supports over 1,700 full-time jobs each year. Our Economic Development Strategy seeks to improve this, thus on 14th June, I presented at the launch event of the 'Visit Harborough' tourism guide and website, which was kindly hosted at Nevill Holt Opera by Mr David Ross. Over 50 business representatives attended from across the district and afterwards were treated to a personally guided tour of the magnificent gardens and the award-winning Opera House. A truly great venue in the heart of the Harborough district which has a global reach. The website is now live www.visitharborough.com and booklets are being distributed far and wide to encourage visitors to our area.

Car parks investment

At the last Cabinet meeting expenditure of over £250,000 was approved to be spent over the next 3 years in car parks in Market Harborough town centre, Little Bowden and in Lutterworth. The works include resurfacing, as well as more 'Pop and shop' 30 min free bays in Lutterworth. These enhancements along with the soon-to-be-live 'pay-by phone' ticket app, will help to keep the Harborough district an attractive place for visitors, shoppers and businesses. Improvements have already been completed in a number of car-parks along with the installation of some Electric Charging points, most recently at School Road in Kibworth Beauchamp. Day visitors will also be further encouraged with the addition of new coach-parking facilities in Market Harborough, to add to those already in operation in Lutterworth.

Community cohesion

Over the past few weeks and over the coming months there will be numerous community events being held, all of which depend on the support and generosity of hundreds of volunteers, those un-sung heroes who year after year ensure that each event will take place, come rain, wind or shine (or latterly all 3!).

Such events with their teams of volunteers and supporters are critical to providing not just vital funds, but also for the opportunities they afford for communities to work together, to help build bridges between the old and young; the haves and have-nots; the established and our newest residents.

I'm sure that we can all agree that this social fabric is a vitally important aspect of what makes the Harborough District such a great place to live, work and enjoy. It helps provide residents with a true sense of belonging. Over the coming months the District Council will be looking at what more it can do to help develop its offer to support this important work within our communities.

Cllr Phil King

Leader

24th June 2019