

Leaders Report for Council 18th March 2019

New Car and Coach Park

I am pleased to confirm the acquisition of land in Market Harborough Town Centre for a new car and coach park has now been completed. Development of this site will begin shortly and the acquisition of land to allow coaches to park close to the town centre will be good news for our retailers and visitors alike. Coach operators have been in touch with our Economic Development Team and I am pleased that progress is being made to ensure the Coach park will allow for visitors to enjoy all areas of our District in addition to the Market Harborough experience.

Comedy Festival

The 'Market Harborough BIG Weekend', organised by Harborough District Council with the Leicester Comedy Festival, was a resounding success with events happening at venues all over the town. The two Market Hall events were sold out with 371 people attending each night on Sat 23 February and Sun 24 February. Expressions of interest are now being invited from venues throughout the District for the 2020 BIG Weekend. The aim was to showcase what a great place this District is and to increase tourism and provide opportunities for residents to enjoy top quality comedy on their doorstep.

Invest in Harborough

The Council launched its new Invest in Harborough website and video on 1 March 2019 at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground. The event included a preview of the website, an investment video, along with guest speaker, Mark Oakley the Director of Inward Investment and Place Marketing at Leicester City Council. The aim of the event was to showcase and help raise the profile of the District so that businesses looking to re-locate consider Harborough as an option and to connect investors and commercial agents together with the aim of showcasing what the district has to offer. This is also a key part of the Council's Economic Development Strategy, adopted in February 2018.

View the new website and a promotional VIDEO about the district at www.investinharborough.com

HIC Event

I am delighted to report on the success of the HIC following the publication of the Impact Report which shows in the 7 years since its opening 796 jobs have been created across 122 companies. The Impact Report indicates some £19.3 million has been created by these companies for the local economy. The Harborough Innovation Centre was developed by the Council in a far sighted move to bring together innovation and enterprise across the District. The Impact Report makes for good reading and it was only right to celebrate this success by a networking event on the 8 March 2019 to launch the Impact Report and hear from businesses based at the Innovation Centre.

Future of High Streets Fund – Expression of Interest

Harborough District Council has begun the process of making a bid from the Future of High Streets Fund focussing on Lutterworth. The Bid is made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. I am pleased the bid is focussing on Lutterworth as this is an area that has huge potential to be enhanced and renewed with appropriate investment. The Bid dovetails nicely with the launch of the Masterplan process for Lutterworth as we begin the process to secure Lutterworth as a vibrant place where a rich mix of businesses can flourish and where residents can be proud to live and visitors will want to return to.

Lidl

Members will be aware that Lidl made an announcement this week that they intend to move out of their Distribution Centre at Magna Park in July 2020. There is a potential loss of 350 jobs and we note with concern the anxieties that these job losses will have on the work force. I understand the reason for Lidl moving is that they wish to expand and they will be going to a larger distribution warehouse in Peterborough. Their current work force will be offered employment at the Peterborough site but of course that won't suit a number of employees. Talks have taken place between Gazeley (the owners of the Lidl warehouse at Magna Park) and the Council and Gazeley are optimistic about finding a new tenant in the timescales involved to minimise the disruption.

Welland Park Academy – Climate Change Demonstration

On Friday afternoon, 15 March 2019, I will be meeting students and staff from Welland Academy who want to publicise the corrosive effects of Climate Change on our Planet. I welcome their interest in this vital issue and look forward to hearing

about the students and staff campaign and having the opportunity to explain the Council's own Green Agenda and the many things we have in place and are putting in place to protect our environment including the support we are giving to the Harborough Eco Church's Plastic Pledge.

Kibworth Air Monitoring Station

In my last Leader's Report I highlighted the Air Monitoring Station being installed in the Kibworths. I understand that the Station went live as from the 14 March 2019 and has begun to collate the necessary data to allow the Council to monitor the air quality in the small area of the A6 in the Kibworths that is affected by poor air quality. This is a part of the Council's commitment to improve standards under our Air Quality Management Action Plan.

Brexit

On 8 March 2019 all members were sent a briefing note on HDC's preparedness for EU Exit. This note covered information on delivery and continuity of statutory services, the potential impact on regulatory services, assessment of supply chains, data handling, local partnership working, community safety, communications and a proposed 'March to Leave' event.

Since the briefing note officers have continued to be involved in the multi-agency planning for a "No Deal" Brexit and continue to respond and plan in the light of emerging issues.

Retiring Members

Finally I recognise this is our last Full Council Meeting before the District Council elections on 2 May. We may well have an Extraordinary Council Meeting at the end of April to consider adopting the Council's Local Plan. If we have such a meeting it will in all probability just be a single item Agenda meeting. Accordingly, let me use this opportunity to thank all Members who are retiring from the Council at the Election of the new Council in May. Thank you all for your public service, the contributions made to this Council through the work of its committees and in Full Council. You have all served the residents not just of your own ward with distinction but of the whole District.

Cllr Neil Bannister

15th March 2019