

Leaders Report for Council 28th January 2019

Grow on Space

Construction is progressing well and is on target for completion by early October 2019. The steel frame and all pre-cast concrete floors to the upper floors have been installed. Work is progressing on the ground floor slab and fire protection to the external steel frame.

I was delighted to attend the Topping Out Ceremony on 10 January 2019. This was a key milestone in the project with the steel frame now completed. Also, in attendance were representatives of MHCLG & LLEP, our key funding partners, Cllr Hallam and Cllr Knowles and representatives of Willmott Dixon, including the Construction Manager who is a district resident were all present supporting the Ceremony, demonstrating support to the local economy.

We will be able to announce some important aspects of Social Value being delivered through the construction project over the coming months including local spend to support local businesses, support for apprenticeships, work experience and helping long term unemployed residents back in to work.

Mark Perris will arrange some dates for visits over the next few weeks to enable Councillors to view progress. If Members are interested in getting a close view of the project then please email Mark Perris. Also please feel free to suggest names for the new building to Mark Perris who will pass on to the Executive to consider.

Christmas Parking

The free Christmas parking campaign in 2018 ran for each Saturday throughout December.

Whilst there is a cost to the Council over 20,000 transactions were recorded for the free Saturdays across the district so hopefully this will have helped our local retailers during these challenging times, as well as our residents.

Electric charging points

Our first electric car charging pods were installed 30 November in the Commons car park. The two pods are now available for use and will enable four vehicles to be charged at any one time. An additional machine will be installed in the disabled bay on 6 February 2019. The future sites will be Station Road Lutterworth, Orchard Road Broughton Astley and Kibworth.

Pay by Phone

We want to introduce a scheme to assist both shoppers and retailers to allow car park users to pay for their car park fee by phone - and to top up the fee while out shopping. We have commissioned a tender process which is now underway so we can see if we can introduce this scheme over the next few months.

Local Plan

The Proposed Modifications have now been published (16th Jan) for a 6 week consultation period. Thereafter the Inspector will consider responses as part of finalising his examination report. The Inspector will then send his draft report to officers for factual checking prior to him sending through his final report.

We are hoping the Final Report will be submitted to the Council before Easter and then it will be considered by the HDC Executive and Full Council as part of Plan adoption process. We don't know when these meetings will take place but members need to be aware they may take place during the last week in April when a lot of us will be busy in the District Council elections. However, the Local Plan is such an important document to this Council that adoption before the 2nd May is highly desirable and all members whether seeking re-election or not really should attend the Council when the Plan comes up for adoption.

Brexit

The Government has been encouraging all Councils to plan for a no deal Brexit so we are currently carrying out some internal planning exercises and taking part in planning exercises with "Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland Prepared" our Local Resilience Partnership to highlight scenarios, analyse risk and discuss mitigation. Members will be updated as work progresses on this area.

Plastics pledge

The Eco Church of Harborough organised a Plastics Pledge encouraging residents to make small changes in how they use and can reduce reliance on single use plastics. If enough people make these changes it can make a real difference. This administration is happy to lend support to this initiative as part of our important Green Agenda.

HDC Officers and Cllrs, LCC (Environmental Campaigns), FCC, a school party along with The Eco Church attended the launch of the Plastics Pledge at an event on the 25th January. FCC, our Environmental Services contractor, donated £500 towards the event and it was clearly a successful launch.

Neighbourhood Plan number 20^t to referendum

Our neighbourhood plan programme continues to help Parishes produce robust plans and four Neighbourhood Plans for Saddington, Shearsby, South Kilworth and Burton Overy have successfully passed their referenda on 10th January. These will now be moving through the remaining processes to 'make' these neighbourhood plans. A further neighbourhood plan (the 20th Plan) for Arnesby Parish was approved by HDC Executive at their meeting on 14th January to progress to referendum. It is anticipated that this referendum so take place at the end of February. If it passes the referendum stage it will be the 20th Plan to be produced in the District which is a fantastic achievement .

Business Rates Pilot

I was happy to hear that the Business Rate Pilot bid to Government in the summer was successful – only one of 15 approved nationally. The pilot bid includes all Leicestershire Councils and concentrates on two key areas; promoting housing and economic growth through infrastructure investment and support for Councils in financial sustainability through

supporting demand pressures (for example, homelessness and social care). The additional benefit to Leicestershire from being a pilot authority is anticipated to be in the region of £14 million with part of this coming direct to Harborough District to determine their own priorities.

Harborough District has since 2013 been an economic success story with over £5 million of retained business rate growth retained within the District supporting Council services and an additional £4 million contributed to the Business Rate Pool within Leicestershire, retaining monies locally that would have gone direct to Central Government. This success in being awarded pilot status builds on this success

Comedy Festival

As part of the Leicester Comedy Festival, Harborough District Council is bringing some top comedy acts to the district with venues such as Harborough Market, The Angel Hotel, Beerhouse and Duncan Murray Wines in Market Harborough hosting comedy events as part of the 'BIG Weekend' of comedy from **21 February to 24 February 2019**.

Acts include in the BIG Weekend include BBC Radio 4 regular & comedy legend Arthur Smith at The Angel Hotel, award winning comedian Tez Ilyas at Harborough Theatre, an open mic night at Beerhouse and Silly Wriggly Readers at Harborough Library and Museum.

On Saturday 23 February 2019 at 8pm Harborough Market welcomes the Edinburgh Fringe hit show '**Dad's Army Radio Show**'.

I urge residents to take up the opportunity to support these shows. You will have a great night out!

Market Harborough Post Office

I am concerned at the reports that the main Post Office in Market Harborough may close. We have been in touch with Neil O'Brien MP to clarify what the Post Office is doing to ensure the town does not lose its main post office. The Council is also speaking with retailers who might be interested in hosting the Post Office in their shops. I wish to assure Members – particularly the Town Members that this is a matter that we are closely monitoring.

Flooding incident

I am pleased that the Council's efforts in minimising flooding at an incident in Market Harborough last Thursday were publicly well received. Whilst the County Council were contacted they were unable to respond adequately and this highlights the benefits of having local services at a time when centralising service is being discussed within some organisations.

Cllr Neil Bannister
Leader
24th January 2019