

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 15 April 2010

agenda item number **7a i.**

## REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL – APRIL 2010

### County Council Budget

As expected, much of my time during January and February was occupied by meetings and communications relating to the first budget proposals of the new administration. I should like to echo the comments of the Cabinet Member for Finance & Property in thanking our officer team for all of their work and effort on the budget process.

I should also like to thank Members for their contribution, not least during the budget debate on 25<sup>th</sup> February. It was one of the longest and most intense Council meetings to have taken place in this Chamber for many years and I believe it does great credit to Members on all sides of the Chamber, and to this authority as a whole, that the council's future strategy was subject to such thorough examination.

### Nottinghamshire Police

During the early part of the year I have held a number of meetings with the Chief Constable, fellow councillors and representatives of Nottinghamshire Police Authority to determine how this County Council can work effectively with Nottinghamshire Police to help them meet the well-publicised challenges they currently face.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March I joined Nottingham City Council Leader, Councillor Jon Collins at a press conference to respond to the findings of the Capability Review of Nottinghamshire Police Authority and Nottinghamshire Police. We accept the findings of the review panel and we are firm in our commitment to work together to help the force speed up performance improvement.

### Nottinghamshire Sports Review of the Year

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 2010 I attended the Nottinghamshire Sports Review of the Year hosted by Nottinghamshire County Council at the East Midlands Conference Centre, University of Nottingham. BBC East Midlands Today presenter Colin Hazelden hosted the evening with colleague Natalie Jackson, joined by guests from professional sport including Nottinghamshire County

Cricket Club's Mick Newell and Chris Read, players from the Nottingham Panthers, Nottingham Rugby Club and some of Nottinghamshire's Olympians and Paralympians including gold medallist swimmer, Rebecca Adlington.

Following another highly successful year for sport in Nottinghamshire, panels of sports experts across the county whittled down over 200 nominations to a shortlist of 5 in each category. WBC super middleweight boxing champion Carl Froch was named Sportsperson of the Year in recognition of two successful title defences. A full list of nominees and winners is published on the County website.

### **Creative Writing Presentation**

On 17<sup>th</sup> February I attended a Creative Writing Presentation Ceremony held in the Rufford Suite at County Hall. The finalists in the New Writers UK Creative Writing Competition had their works published in a book called 'Nottinghamshire Children Tell Tales (Volume One)', copies of which were presented to them by Cllr David Taylor, Chairman of the County Council.

I am keen to encourage and engage with competitions such as this, given this Council's commitment to improving educational attainment and creativity.

### **County Youth Arts Showcase**

Also on 17<sup>th</sup> February I attended the County Youth Arts 'Showcase' at the Palace Theatre in Mansfield. County Youth Arts is part of Nottinghamshire County Council's Youth Service. 'Showcase' is a year long activity involving a whole series of events around the county and the performances themselves are the culmination of a huge effort from both staff and young people over many months.

Each year, County Youth Arts brings together a spectacular collection of dance, music, drama and film performed by young people from across Nottinghamshire. The brochure I received at the event promised 'everything from hip-hop to rock music, break, street and contemporary dance'. I have to say that my own musical preferences lean more towards jazz, but it was a pleasure to see young people with various levels of ability and experience having the opportunity to show off their talents.

### **True Grit: a response to the extreme weather experience**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March I joined Councillor Richard Jackson, Cabinet Member for Transport & Highways in attending the 'True Grit' conference hosted by Northamptonshire County Council at Silverstone.

This was a key meeting of experts, government bodies, business leaders, media and public representatives to examine the lessons learned from the extreme weather which hit the country between December 2009 and January-February 2010. The final recommendations of this summit meeting will feed into national and local government policy actions coming forward later in the year.

### **Meetings with other local authority Leaders**

On 4<sup>th</sup> March I joined fellow council leaders at the East-West Shire Leaders' Meeting hosted by Leicestershire County Council at County Hall in Glenfield. Discussion focused on the challenges faced by all shire authorities with regard to budget savings and the potential for a change of direction in national Government policy, depending on the outcome of the General Election.

On 5<sup>th</sup> March I visited Kelham Hall, Newark for a meeting of the Nottinghamshire Local Government Leaders' Group. Topics of discussion included Joint Economic Development Working, the Joint Local Economic Assessment for Nottingham & Nottinghamshire and transportation issues.

I visited Leicestershire County Council's offices again on 12<sup>th</sup> March for an East Midlands Leaders' Board meeting. As explained in a previous report to Council by the Deputy Leader, the East Midlands Leaders' Board forms part of a new regional structure created pursuant to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act. The Board is intended to consider relevant items in relation to the development and delivery of the Regional Strategy, though its precise role and longevity could depend on the outcome of the forthcoming General Election.

### **Presentations of the Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll**

On 10<sup>th</sup> March I attended a ceremony in the Rufford Suite at County Hall to see The Elizabeth Cross and Memorial Scroll presented to the next of kin of six UK Armed Forces personnel who died on operations or as a result of terrorism. It is not a posthumous medal for the fallen but an emblem for Service families, demonstrating tangible national recognition of their loss.

The Nottinghamshire Citations at this ceremony were: -

- Corporal Leon Anthony Bush, who was killed in September 1982 by a booby trap bomb attached to security gates dividing Catholic and Protestant areas of West Belfast, Northern Ireland;
- Rifleman James Meredith, who was shot by a terrorist sniper during service in Londonderry, Northern Ireland in June 1972;
- Steward Mark Royston Stephens, who died in May 1982 when his ship HMS ANTELOPE was hit by bombs dropped by Argentinean aircraft during the Falklands conflict. Steward Stephens was part of the Ship's First Aid Party;
- Flight Lieutenant Arthur Paul John Dodson, who was part of the flight crew of a Bristol Belvedere heavy lift helicopter which suffered catastrophic mechanical failure and crashed during service in Borneo in May 1963;

- Lance Corporal Trevor Jeremy Holmes, who was shot and killed by an unknown Arab terrorist during a rest period in Bingisar whilst on deployment to Aden in August 1967; and
- Sergeant Craig Brelsford MC, who was killed by enemy fire whilst trying to rescue another fatally injured soldier during his second tour of Afghanistan in September 2007. For his bravery he was awarded a Posthumous Military Cross.

Individual presentations of The Elizabeth Cross were performed by the Lord-Lieutenant, Sir Andrew Buchanan Bt. followed by individual presentations of the Memorial Scroll by Brigadier Andrew Williams, commander of 49 East Brigade.

### **New office for the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce**

On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> March I was delighted to attend the Official Opening of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce's new Nottingham office on the ng2 Business Park. Guest of Honour, The Right Honourable Kenneth Clarke QC MP performed the cutting of the ribbon, launching a day of celebration for the Chamber.

The move to ng2 forms part of the Chamber's planned expansion in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire which will provide many new facilities including improved conference space and video conferencing services.

### **Robin Hood – The Movie Exhibition**

On 22<sup>nd</sup> March I joined the Cabinet Member for Culture & Community and other Members at Nottingham Castle for a special preview of Robin Hood – The Movie Exhibition, which was opened to the public by the Chairman of the County Council at Sherwood Forest Visitors' Centre the following day.

The official Movie Exhibition was designed by Universal Pictures with costumes, props and behind the scenes materials displayed at both locations. The exhibition at Sherwood appears like a medieval encampment in the ancient forest whilst inside, three large screens tell the story of how the movie was made with exclusive behind the scenes shots.

To complement the new movie exhibition, the existing visitor centre at Sherwood has undergone a major refurbishment creating an atmospheric 3D look with woodland sets, figures and buildings which, combined with displays, retell the stories of Robin's life and his forest home at Sherwood.

I would like to congratulate our own Nottinghamshire County Council officers, Nottingham City Council, Experience Nottinghamshire, the East Midlands Development Agency and Visit Britain on their efforts in bringing about this superb spectacle. I am confident that our efforts to promote the Robin Hood legend will bring regeneration and tourism benefits to the County.

**Civic Reception**

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010 I was proud to attend a Civic Reception held in the Assembly Hall at County Hall to thank front-line personnel for their exceptional dedication in maintaining Nottinghamshire County Council's vital services during the harshest winter for nearly 30 years.

We know the difficulties and dangers faced by those who drive gritting lorries through the most appalling conditions to make our local highways safe for others. We also value the dedication of those who successfully deliver services such as meals on wheels to older residents who most need our help at these difficult times.

Staff across the Council went above and beyond the call of duty to serve the public and I was delighted to join the Chairman in placing on record the gratitude of Members of this Council.

**COUNCILLOR KAY CUTTS**  
**Leader of the County Council**