

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

1. The report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to my portfolio.

Runwood Care Homes Visit

2. As promised at the September meeting of Nottinghamshire County Council, Members had the opportunity on 27th October to visit two residential care homes run by Runwood Homes, the private care provider who will be taking over the running of six care homes currently operated by Nottinghamshire County Council. These are: Bramwell in Bramcote; Braywood Gardens in Carlton; Maun View in Mansfield; Jubilee Court in Hucknall; Leawood Manor in West Bridgford and Westwood in Worksop.
3. The first stop for the cross party group of councillors (including myself) was Greenbanks, a former Hertfordshire County Council-run residential care home and day centre. Ownership of the home and day centre was transferred to Runwood Homes in 1998. It caters for 66 residents, approximately half of whom have been formally diagnosed with dementia. Since transferring to Runwood, the home has benefited from ongoing investment, including redecoration and refurnishing. It was last rated as a 2 star (good) home under the former Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating system.
4. The councillors also visited Lancaster Court, a Runwood Homes residential care home purpose built two years ago. It provides care for 65 people, including frail older people, people with physical disabilities and people suffering from dementia. The home has provision for those requiring nursing care and employs qualified nursing staff. It was also last rated as a 2 star (good) home under the former CQC rating system.
5. The council delegation included Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Councillor Kevin Rostance, Labour Group Leader Councillor Alan Rhodes, Independent Group Leader Councillor June Stendall, Deputy Liberal Democrat Group Leader Councillor Ken Rigby, Councillor Chris Winterton, Councillor Keith Longdon and Councillor Les Ward. Councillor Rostance and Councillor Stuart Wallace, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health, had already visited other Runwood Homes prior to the transfer being agreed.
6. I was impressed by the high standards at the two Runwood residential care homes we visited. It was very evident that the interior of the homes, the gardens and most importantly the residents and their family members were extremely well looked after. The staff were very positive and it was particularly interesting to meet a former Hertfordshire

County Council employee who left that Council 9 years ago as a part-time worker and is now one of the full-time management team at Greenbanks.

9Cs Leaders and Chief Executives Meeting

7. On 31st October I attended the 9Cs Leaders and Chief Executives meeting at Nottingham City Council's Loxley House offices. Items under discussion included the implications of the health reforms for local authorities, the campaign for the dualling of the A453, the campaign for funding to enhance the Midland Main Line and an assessment of the impact of academies.

2011 Summer Reading Challenge Celebration

8. On 1st November I attended the Summer Reading Challenge Celebration event in the Assembly Hall at County Hall.
9. The 2011 'Circus Stars' Summer Reading Challenge opened on 16th July at libraries across Nottinghamshire, challenging 4-12 year-olds to read six or more books over the summer period. Incentives included special rewards to collect, online games and quizzes, scratch n' sniff stickers and, for those who completed the challenge, a certificate and a gold medal. Special events at the libraries included storytellers, stilt walkers and clowns, in keeping with the circus theme.
10. It was evident at the celebration event that this local initiative by Nottinghamshire County Council had been a great success. It formed part of the national Summer Reading Challenge co-ordinated by the Reading Agency. Preparations are already being made for another Summer Reading Challenge in 2012.

Nottinghamshire Local Government Leaders' Group

11. On 4th November I attended a meeting of the Nottinghamshire Local Government Leaders' Group at the offices of Mansfield District Council.
12. I was able to advise group members that Nottinghamshire County Council was in the final stages of preparing its Local Broadband Plan, which would secure significant Government funding for upgraded broadband infrastructure across the County. I stressed that whilst the County Council would be making a significant financial contribution itself, it could not deliver the required match funding on its own and therefore, letters had been issued to borough and district Council partners requesting contributions.
13. Group Members also discussed the draft agenda for the next D2N2 Local Enterprise Board meeting, scheduled for 15th November at Markham Vale Environment Centre.

School Attendance Awards

14. On 7th November I was present for the Schools 100% Attendance and Exceptional Attendance Awards in the Rufford Suite at County Hall.
15. The event was being hosted by the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People's Services, Councillor Philip Owen, but as Leader of the Council I was keen to add my congratulations to young people from across Nottinghamshire who have achieved 100% school attendance.
16. Of course, every pupil should aim for perfect attendance, but that does not mean we should take the achievement for granted. Our target is to continue the improvement in performance in schools across Nottinghamshire and by celebrating full attendance, we can send out a positive message to children and their parents.
17. The 'Exceptional Attendance' award recognises those students who have overcome difficult personal circumstances such as serious illness and still managed to maintain an exceptionally high level of attendance. It is so important that we acknowledge and reward these examples of incredible courage and commitment.
18. More details on the event can be found in the report of the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People's Services.

Nottinghamshire Outward Bound Association Presentation

19. On 9th November I joined the Council Chairman in attending the Nottinghamshire Outward Bound Association Annual Presentation, held at County Hall.
20. Outward Bound was founded in 1941 to encourage young people to develop their own individual skills in difficult and testing conditions. The scheme was a huge success and the Nottinghamshire Outward Bound Association was formed in 1954 to continue that work locally. It is now one of 22 local associations, run by a committee of volunteers.
21. With four Outward Bound Centres situated across the country, the scheme provides access to challenging, adventurous experiences that enable 11-24 year olds to boost their self confidence, realise their true potential and gain essential life skills for the future. Last year, approximately 600 courses were completed by young people from all walks of life.
22. Nottinghamshire County Council is proud to host the presentation event and it was my pleasure to present sponsors certificates to the people and organisations that support Outward Bound with finance, time and physical resources. In addition to the County Council's own significant contribution over many years, Outward Bound has received backing from The Rotary Club of Mapperley; The Rotary Club of Carlton; Samworth Church Academy; Nottingham Academy; Djanogly City Academy; Hillside Primary School; Chilwell School; Heddon Park High School; The Dukeries School; The Carlton Academy and Webs Furniture Training.

Two Minute Silence

23. On 11th November I joined colleagues for the two minute silence in front of the Memorial Plaque outside County Hall to mark Armistice Day.
24. The Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council laid a wreath on behalf of all councillors and employees to recognise and remember the sacrifice made by our service personnel in conflicts over the years. A wreath was also laid by the County Chairman of The Royal British Legion, Mr John Jackson. The Royal British Legion is the chosen charity of the Council Chairman in what is the 90th anniversary year of the Poppy Appeal.
25. During the last year, Nottinghamshire County Council has helped dozens of community organisations and groups across the county to pay their own Armistice Day tribute. Funding has come from two sources – the Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) and the Councillors' Divisional Fund (CDF). The LIS in particular has supported the restoration and repair of 18 war memorials across the county.

Official Opening of Newark Bus Station

26. Later on 11th November it gave me great pleasure to attend the official opening by the Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council of the new Newark Bus Station, which began operating on Saturday 12th November.
27. Part of the £50m Asda supermarket development on the town's Potterdyke car park, the station is a fully enclosed building offering protection from the weather. It boasts comfortable seating and CCTV, providing a more relaxed and safer waiting environment. It has departure bays and, for customer safety and comfort, boarding is controlled by automatic doors that only open when there is a bus at the bay.
29. The bus station building is open from 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, and an out of hours bay (Bay A) is provided for night time and Sunday services. It has been estimated that there will be around 2,000 bus arrivals and departures a week – with around 25,000 passenger arrivals and departures over the same period.
30. Working with Asda and Newark & Sherwood District Council, Nottinghamshire County Council contributed £275,000 towards the new building and will take responsibility for maintaining and managing the bus station.

D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board

31. As mentioned above, I attended the latest meeting of the D2N2 LEP Board at the Markham Vale Environment Centre in Chesterfield, Derbyshire on 15th November.

Meeting with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport

32. On 16th November I attended Trent Bridge cricket ground with stakeholders from the tourism sector for a meeting with Jeremy Hunt MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport. Also present was Mr Hunt's colleague, the Minister for Tourism, John Penrose MP.
33. The meeting was arranged to discuss various aspects of business and tourism preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games and the route through Nottinghamshire for the Olympic Torch.

Visit to The Crossing in Worksop

34. On 17th November, I was pleased to honour an invitation to visit The Crossing Church & Centre in Worksop. I was joined for a tour of the facility by the Deputy Leader, Councillor Martin Suthers and the county councillor for Misterton, Councillor Liz Yates.
35. In its own words, The Crossing Church & Centre "exists to show God's love by serving Christ in our community". The Church Family strives to be a place of worship, prayer and friendship and the centre, church and café seek to provide a base for partners to further their own community projects and opportunities.
36. We were given a guided tour by Anne Taylor, the Social Enterprise Development Manager and we were also introduced to Paula Howard, the Partnership Administrator. The Crossing Church Minister, the Rev Mark Pengelly, was unable to attend on the day but it was interesting and informative to meet staff and volunteers who do such a good job running the facility and serving local people.
37. The Crossing SEC is one of many outside bodies to which Nottinghamshire County Council appoints representatives, our current nominated representative being Councillor Mike Quigley.

Meetings with borough/district councils

38. As part of my ongoing dialogue with our borough and district council partners, I was pleased to hold a meeting on 18th November with the Leader and Chief Executive of Rushcliffe Borough Council.
39. Items under discussion included the latest developments on the A453, West Bridgford Library and the D2N2 LEP.

Visits to Children's Centres in Broxtowe and Rushcliffe

40. During the last month I have taken the opportunity to visit Children's Centres in Broxtowe (23rd November) and Rushcliffe (29th November) as I continue my commitment to meet service users and employees at these facilities in all areas of Nottinghamshire.

41. My tour of centres in Rushcliffe was somewhat truncated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer's welcome announcement in his Autumn Statement that the dualling of the A453 would be fast-tracked. This major breaking news story created immediate media demands, but I fully intend to re-schedule and complete my tour of children's centres in Rushcliffe in the near future.
42. Following on from previous tours of children's centres in Ashfield, Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood, my visits to facilities in Broxtowe and Rushcliffe confirmed my view that they are an immensely valuable resource to the people they serve and should be foremost on the list of critical provision we need to protect. I am happy to restate my commitment to centre users and employees that this council administration will ensure the continuation of these services.

1936 (Newton) Squadron Air Training Corps (ATC) Recruit Graduation Parade

43. On 28th November, wearing my Council Leader and local councillor hats, I was pleased to visit the Unit Headquarters of the 1936 (Newton) Squadron Air Training Corps for their Recruit Graduation Parade.
44. The invitation from Commanding Officer, Flt Lt Jodi Hudson RAF VR (T) stated that "as Reviewing Officer" I would be invited to inspect the Cadets of the 1936 Squadron, as well as present certificates and awards to those recruits being welcomed into the Air Cadet organisation.
45. The event provided a fantastic opportunity to see the ATC facility at Newton and meet the cadets, staff and Civilian Committee. I had earlier written to the 1936 (Newton) Squadron praising their role in the Remembrance Day commemorations in Radcliffe-on-Trent on 13th November.

Visit to Synseal Extrusions Ltd, Huthwaite

46. I joined Cabinet colleagues on 1st December for a tour of Synseal Extrusions Ltd in Huthwaite. This was the latest in a series of visits to leading local companies who have established national/international reputations and brought benefit to the local economy.
47. Synseal Extrusions were the winners of this year's Nottinghamshire Company of the Year Award, sponsored by Nottinghamshire County Council and KPMG, at the Nottingham Post Business Awards on 7th July.
48. Established in Nottinghamshire more than 30 years ago, Synseal manufactures PVC-u profile conservatory roofs, portal frames and vertical sliding windows. Their operation is based at a single 35-acre site in Huthwaite and they have more than 700 trade customers who collectively buy over 25,000 miles of PVC-u extruded profile and 50,000 conservatory roofs each year. The business has an annual turnover in excess of £75 million and employs more than 500 people.
49. Synseal invests in its workforce through management development programmes and skills training. In the last two years the business has helped 100 employees achieve a

vocational qualification. It also runs a profit-related bonus scheme so all employees can share in the company's success.

50. In February 2010, the company received the 'East Midlands Deal of the Year Award' for successfully completing a management buyout which allowed an exit for the business founder, Gary Dutton MBE, and an opportunity for new Chief Executive, David Leng to lead Synseal into a new era. It was David who greeted the County Council delegation and led the factory tour.
51. The company has grown despite being in an industry sector which could be classified as 'mature and declining'. It has been the most successful business in this sector in terms of profitability and growth in the last decade.
52. Synseal also has good 'green credentials'. It recycles 1,500 tonnes of PVC-u waste per annum, incorporates re-cycled plastics into its products, achieves significant production energy savings and is reducing waste disposal to landfill.
53. Members and officers thoroughly enjoyed what was a very informative and interesting visit. It is encouraging to see proof that businesses can thrive in Nottinghamshire even in the current tough trading environment. I would like to place on record my thanks to David Leng and our officers for arranging the visit and I wish Synseal continued success in the future.

**COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**