

report

meeting

COUNTY COUNCIL

date

24 September 2009

agenda item number

Report of the Leader of the County Council

Purpose of the Report

This is my first report to Council since the election of the new administration in June. I will use this and future reports to cover some of the activities and other events I have undertaken as Leader of the Council.

Communicating the new message

As expected, a lot of my time during June, July and August has been spent meeting representatives from partner organisations across the County, Members of Parliament, representatives from other local authorities, business leaders, community interest groups and various journalists from the radio and television news media.

In particular I had constructive meetings with the Member of Parliament for Broxtowe, Nick Palmer and the Executive Mayor of Mansfield, Tony Egginton.

The change of political control after 28 years has created great interest in the new direction of the Council. One of my key priorities is to establish a strong working relationship with the borough and district councils within Nottinghamshire as our primary partners. I have already held a series of meetings with senior representatives from these authorities to further this aim.

I have also made it clear that this Council will be proactive in listening to and working with large and small business and supporting local enterprise in general. The response to this message has been very encouraging.

Cabinet/Budget Meetings

Since the election the Cabinet have met collectively with the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) on several occasions to discuss the policy direction of the new administration and to prepare for the 2010/11 budget. These meetings will continue in the coming weeks as the budget consultation process makes progress.

Nottinghamshire Partnership Forum

I attended the Nottinghamshire Partnership Forum on Friday 26th June at Nottingham Racecourse. The event was chaired by Tom Fremantle, Chair of NHS Nottinghamshire County and the main item on the agenda was a presentation by Ben Page of Ipsos MORI entitled 'Life in Nottinghamshire in

2009 - what needs to change?', which was based on the Nottinghamshire Place Survey 2008/9.

Armed Forces Day

I was delighted to attend two special events in the build up to the first UK Armed Forces Day on 27th June.

Fly the Flag Ceremony

On 22nd June a ceremony was held to 'Fly a Flag for our Armed Forces'. Presided over by Master of Ceremonies Mr Colin Slater MBE, the event commenced with a March Past followed by the raising of the Union flag by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, Sir Andrew Buchanan, Bt. A prayer for peace and protection was then led by The Venerable Air Vice Marshal Robin Turner CB DL RAF (Ret'd). A pledge signing ceremony took place whereby the County Council added its support to the reservists who are employed by the Authority.

Beat Retreat

On a sunny evening on 23rd June I joined other Members, officers and many onlookers in witnessing a spectacular display by the Nottinghamshire Band of the Royal Engineers at a Beat Retreat Ceremony on the riverbank outside County Hall.

This was preceded by a reception and speeches by the Chairman of the County Council, the Commanding Officer of the 73 Engineer Regiment (Volunteers), Lieutenant Colonel Alex Hilton and a presentation by Warrant Officer Class 2 Andy Dove who had only recently returned from Afghanistan.

Flags at County Hall

I am pleased to report that the flag of St George and the Union flag are now flying permanently alongside the Nottinghamshire County Council flag outside County Hall as a lasting symbol of pride in our heritage and armed forces.

This authority has a number of former and current military personnel within its ranks, and we are all conscious that this a difficult time for our armed forces and their families. We fly the flags to show our respect for fallen and injured servicemen to whom we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude for the dangerous but necessary tasks they undertake on our behalf.

Local Government Association Conference, Harrogate International Centre 30th June - 2nd July

The Local Government Association annual conference and exhibition brings together 2,000 of the leading players in councils, central government, partners and business. The LGA is a cross party organisation which represents councils in England and Wales, who together employ 1.6 million people, spend £85 billion and have more than 20,000 elected members.

This year's event carried the main theme 'Big Issues, Local Solutions' and included workshop sessions on the future of adult social care and support,

helping children out of poverty in a time of recession and local partners against crime. There were also some interesting fringe meetings focusing on how councils can obtain the best value for money, and an analysis of the current balance of power between central and local government.

I attended the event along with Labour Group Leader Cllr Alan Rhodes and others. It was an excellent opportunity as the new Council Leader to meet people in similar positions from across the country. Naturally, I took particular interest in a keynote speech by the Rt. Hon David Cameron MP, Leader of the Conservative Party.

County Garden Party

On Saturday 18th July I thoroughly enjoyed attending the Nottinghamshire County Garden Party at Rufford Country Park.

This annual event hosted by the Chairman of the County Council is an opportunity for all of us to thank people from across Nottinghamshire who contribute so much of their time and effort to making their towns and villages a better place to live.

On arrival we were greeted in the Courtyard with a performance by the Southwell 11th Session Steel Pan Band, and as the evening progressed we enjoyed a series of short programmes in The Marquee by the County Concert Band. Guests were also able to enjoy a mix of light string orchestra classics by the County Choir and String Ensemble.

The evening was also attended by some members of the 73 Engineer Regiment (Volunteers).

County Council Civic Service

On Sunday 12th July I attended the County Council Civic Service at Southwell Minster - presided over for the final time by The Rt Rev George Cassidy who was preparing to retire after 10 years as the Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham.

This was followed by afternoon tea in The Minster School, which provided the opportunity to meet representatives from Parish and Town Councils, Magistrates and civic heads from surrounding counties.

Robin Hood Festival

On 3rd August I attended the opening ceremony of the Robin Hood Festival at Edwinstowe, a colourful celebration of the life and times of the world's most famous outlaw - Robin Hood, organised by staff of the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre.

Judging by the number of young families present, the festival was very well received and we must now look to the future and ensure we create a visitor centre worthy of Sherwood Forest and its legend.

Meeting with the Chief Constable

I was grateful for the opportunity on 4th August to join civic leaders from Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire on a tour of the Nottinghamshire Police Headquarters at Sherwood Lodge, Arnold.

We were treated to a display of dog handling and a demonstration of the Taser gun (not on me I hasten to add). I also took the opportunity to meet with the Chief Constable, Julia Hodson and share thoughts about the future of policing and community safety issues in Nottinghamshire.

'Meet the media'

In addition to the specific meetings with press and television representatives mentioned above, I also joined my Cabinet colleagues and officers in attending a special 'Meet the Media' event at County Hall on 10th September.

This provided an opportunity for an informal gathering of various local media representatives with whom the new Cabinet will have an ongoing dialogue during the term of this administration.

Continuing the sentiment of my predecessor as Council Leader, David Kirkham, my door is always open. Please feel free to contact me with ideas, proposals or issues at any time.

COUNCILLOR KAY CUTTS
Leader of the County Council