

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 22nd September 2011

agenda item number **7a i.**

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Southwell Library Poetry Festival

1. On 3rd July 2011 I enjoyed attending the official opening of the annual Southwell Library Poetry Festival. The festival is going from strength to strength, showcasing a mix of established and emerging poets as well as talks, workshops and a chance for people to read and listen to their favourite poems.
2. The festival ran from 3rd – 9th July and opened with readings by award-winning poets Pauline Prior-Pitt and Simon Armitage CBE. The week continued with performances combining poetry with jazz, a ‘Southwell Poetry Pub Crawl’ and, for children in particular, a contribution from acclaimed performance poet Brian Moses.
3. In addition to the programmed events, the festival included work with community groups and visits to residential homes. Southwell Minster, local shops and individuals all helped to ensure the festival was varied and interesting by hosting events and providing ideas. We should record our grateful thanks to festival supporters.

Nottingham Post Business Awards 2011

4. On 7th July I was proud to attend and support the Nottingham Post Business Awards at the Council House in Nottingham. I was joined at the event by senior officers and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Martin Suthers, the Cabinet Member for Culture & Community, Councillor John Cottee and, of course, our Business Champion and Deputy Cabinet Member for Culture & Community, Councillor Keith Girling.
5. It was my pleasure to present the prestigious Nottinghamshire Company of the Year Award, sponsored by Nottinghamshire County Council and KPMG, to the Huthwaite-based PVCu window and conservatory production company, Synseal Extrusions. More details

about the winners in the various Business Awards categories can be found later in this Council book in the report of the Cabinet Member for Culture & Community.

County Garden Party

6. On 9th July I was pleased to attend the annual Nottinghamshire County Council Garden Party at County Hall. As always, councillors invited guests who have made an outstanding contribution to their local communities. It is a chance to say thank you to volunteers and community leaders for all of the work they do to make Nottinghamshire a better place. Feedback from the event has been very positive and I know that guests really enjoyed the opportunity to take a guided tour of County Hall.

Official Opening of Two New Framework Centres

7. On 12th July it was a pleasure to attend the official opening by HRH The Duke of Gloucester of two new Framework centres. I am delighted that Nottinghamshire County Council was able to help see the Outram Street and Sherwood Street projects through to completion despite budgetary pressures. In addition, the Council is providing nearly half a million pounds to help run both centres throughout this year.
8. The 17-unit Outram Street Centre in Sutton-in-Ashfield provides somewhere safe to go for vulnerable young people at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system, helping them to look for education and work opportunities from a stable base and giving them the chance to learn how to live independently.
9. The Sherwood Street Centre in Mansfield provides refuge and respite for vulnerable and homeless adults, with 15 accommodation units available for rough sleepers and others in emergency housing need.
10. Both Framework and Nottinghamshire County Council have recognised and responded to budgetary constraints by looking at how we can provide services in the most efficient way. These projects show what can be achieved and I would like to wish Framework a happy 10th anniversary and applaud the support that they continue to give to so many.

Visit to Abacus Lighting

11. I joined Cabinet and other colleagues on 14th July for a tour of Abacus Lighting in Sutton-in-Ashfield. This was the latest in a series of visits to leading local companies who have established national and international reputations and brought benefit to the local economy.

Cabinet Members were made to feel extremely welcome throughout the tour of the Abacus premises and it was easy to see why this business has established such an enviable reputation.

12. Abacus won the International Trade Award at this year's Nottingham Post Business Awards and is recognised as a leader in the exterior lighting market. Based in north Nottinghamshire for more than 50 years and currently employing 200 people locally, Abacus established a presence in China 18 years ago. It has a purpose-built sales and manufacturing facility in Shanghai, a new business in Russia and a global network of representatives. Recent high-profile projects include the Faldo golf course in Dubai, airport lighting at Xian in China and for the Winter Olympics in Russia.
13. The company's lighting is used everywhere from streets and industrial estates to sports grounds and docks, utilising the very latest LED technology. An excellent example of their work can be seen close to County Hall in the form of the six 40 metre high floodlights overlooking Trent Bridge cricket ground.

AVIC Nottingham University Innovation Centre in Aero Engines

14. On 15th July I attended the official launch of the AVIC Nottingham University Innovation Centre. This is a major research and development facility set up at the University of Nottingham in partnership with the Commercial Aircraft Engine Company, a subsidiary of the Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC). It will accommodate work with the Chinese on improving the fuel efficiency and environmental performance of aircraft. AVIC is one of China's leading aerospace companies and this is their first centre built overseas, demonstrating the growing importance and global nature of the aerospace industry and the key role the UK plays in this sector.
15. The Innovation Centre strengthens the global programme of the University's Institute for Aerospace Technology, a major centre for aerospace research which includes a number of internationally renowned research groups. AVIC will work with the University to reduce carbon emissions and ensure the sustainable mobility of people in the growing Asia Pacific markets for air travel.
16. A delegation including Mr Zhang Xinguo, Senior Vice President of AVIC was present to sign the collaboration agreement. It complements an existing training and educational agreement which will see 20 AVIC employees arrive in Nottingham this autumn to pursue postgraduate studies at masters and doctoral level.
17. The launch event included addresses by Mr Zhang; Professor Chris Rudd, the Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Nottingham and Mr Andrew Levi, Managing Director of UK Trade & Investment (UKTI).

This was followed by the signing of an official Memorandum of Understanding and the unveiling of a plaque to mark the launch by Mr Zhang and Professor Yang Fujia, Chancellor of the University of Nottingham.

Visit to Harworth & Bircotes

18. On 18th July I was delighted to meet an invitation from Harworth & Bircotes Town Council to visit the newly refurbished and extended Harworth & Bircotes Town Hall. Changes include the name itself, from 'Parish' to 'Town' to reflect its new status.
19. The £800,000 building is home to a Sure Start children's crèche, a Mencap coffee shop and three meeting rooms available for booking, all of which should ensure that this impressive facility will be a focal point for the local community for many years to come.
20. Representatives from Nottinghamshire County Council and Bassetlaw District Council visit the hall on certain days of the week to talk to people about any issues they wish to raise. There are also visits from the local police officer and various community organisations.

Queen's Birthday Honours Lunch

21. On 21st July I attended a Civic Lunch hosted by the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Keith Walker to honour recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours.
22. Eleven Nottinghamshire residents were honoured, eight of whom were able attend. They included MBE's, OBE's and even two Sirs. The awards had been given for a range of reasons, but suffice to say all involved outstanding service to the community.
23. I had the opportunity to thank our visitors for their superb efforts and wished them a memorable day for when they travelled to Buckingham Palace to collect their awards.

Pageant at the Palace

24. On 24th July I attended the 'Pageant at the Palace' British Festival of Archaeology event at King John's Palace in King's Clipstone, organised by the Friends of King's Clipstone and supported by The Sherwood Forest Trust.
25. This year's theme was Edward I, the Parliament of 1290 held at the Palace and the death of Edward's beloved consort, Eleanor of Castille.

Official opening of Worksop Library

26. On 25th July I had the great pleasure of attending the official opening by the Chairman, Councillor Keith Walker, of Nottinghamshire County Council's new £8 million purpose-built, state-of-the-art library in Worksop.
27. At a time when libraries across the country are being forced to close their doors, this local authority is bucking the trend by keeping every one of its libraries running and opening fantastic new facilities.
28. The new Worksop Library isn't just a place to borrow books. It features a young people's centre, day services for adults with mental health issues and with learning disabilities, a facility to register births, deaths and marriages and two ceremony rooms for weddings. There is also an art gallery, a local studies centre and a café.
29. The library opened to the public in September 2010. Since then, there have been more than 200,000 visits. More than 5,000 people have taken part in cultural and learning activities at the library and 230 young people regularly take part in fun, positive activities at the young people's centre.
30. There is a long history of innovative library services in Worksop, at times leading the development of public libraries across the country. In that proud tradition we are still developing our library services in ways that other councils will want to emulate.

Official Opening of the Queen's Royal Lancers and Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Museum

31. On 26th July I was delighted to attend the official opening of the Queen's Royal Lancers and Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Museum at The Courtyard in Thoresby Park. This was performed by HRH Princess Alexandra, the Hon Lady Ogilvy KG GCVO.
32. The UK's newest museum displays the historic collections of The Queen's Royal Lancers, the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry and the South Nottinghamshire Hussars. These fascinating collections are displayed together for the first time in the newly renovated wing of Thoresby Courtyard.
33. Visitors can see the thrilling history of the British cavalry from the days of the horseback charge, through the great tank battles of the Second World War, to present-day operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Entry to the museum is free.

A453 Meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport

34. On 27th July I was part of a high level delegation led by The Rt. Hon Kenneth Clarke QC, MP for Rushcliffe, which met with the Secretary of State for Transport, Philip Hammond MP at the Department for Transport Headquarters, Minster House in London. The delegation included our Chief Executive, Mick Burrows, Brian Conway, Head of Government and Industrial Affairs at East Midlands Airport and Patrick Dunne, Alliance Boots' Group Procurement and Property Director.
35. The purpose of our visit was of course to promote the importance of expediting the long overdue scheme to dual the A453, which has already been subject to a public inquiry and is one of only a few nationally which would effectively be "ready to go" if given the go-ahead.
36. The dualling of the A453 is one of a number of schemes currently planned for construction after 2015, but the Government is expected to announce later this year some schemes which could be accelerated to start construction before 2015 if circumstances allow.
37. This is one of the most congested roads in the country and costs larger businesses as much as £100,000 a year because of increased fuel usage, difficulty reaching customers, abandoned journeys and accident costs. To the region as a whole, it has been estimated that an improved A453 would bring a boost to the economy of £540m.
38. The County Council wrote to Mr Hammond in May pledging £20m towards the cost of widening the route and used the meeting to set out the details of their offer to Government.
39. I am grateful to the Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe for organising our latest opportunity to lobby for this vital road improvement. It is fair to say that the feedback received since the meeting has given cause for optimism, but we must wait and see what emerges. Members who have been involved with the A453 issue for many years will fully understand my caution!

9Cs Leaders' & Chief Executives' Meeting

40. Upon my return from London on 27th July, I attended the 9Cs Leaders' and Chief Executives' meeting at the offices of Leicestershire County Council. Topics under discussion included economic development, strategic transportation issues, Police & Crime Commissioners and local progress on the NHS changes.
41. Leaders shared experiences of the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and bids that had been made for Enterprise Zones. We also discussed our experiences so far regarding the

establishment and progress of Health & Wellbeing Boards. There was a discussion on the relationship between these Boards and the National Commissioning Board, and on the need to use the changes to promote more joint commissioning.

42. Nottinghamshire County Council was given the opportunity to update colleagues on our earlier A453 meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport. Leaders re-iterated their support for this road improvement project, which has also been backed by East Midlands Councils.

Visit by Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce

43. In the Civic Suite on 28th July, Cabinet Members hosted a visit by members of the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce Members Council. Much had happened in the 18 months since the new Cabinet previously met with the Members Council, so this was an opportunity to review progress, discuss the implications and opportunities arising from developments in the public sector, re-iterate support for economic development and discuss transport infrastructure improvements.

Bridgfest 2011

44. The 'Bridgfest' youth festival in West Bridgford on 14th August clocked up its biggest attendance since this became a regular annual event on the summer calendar.
45. Out of the 1,200-plus young people who came along to the day of free music, sport and fun organised by Nottinghamshire County Council, 700 signed up to a charter of non-violence condemning the recent spate of anti-social behaviour demonstrated by a small number of people in some of Britain's cities. Those adding their names to the charter also called for the media to increase their coverage of the positive behaviour and activities that most young people are involved with on a regular basis.
46. I was happy to spend the Sunday afternoon joining in activities and chatting to youngsters. I believe young people often get a raw deal in the press and with some of the 'older' generation who perceive them to be troublemakers and up to no good, but the reality is that this is only a very small minority.
47. Bridgfest is a great example of youngsters enjoying a fun afternoon of outdoor music and positive activities peacefully. Their behaviour was outstanding and real credit. I think everyone there would agree that the atmosphere was fantastic and high levels of respect were evident between those at the event.

48. Since the first Bridgfest in 2009, when less than 500 teenagers attended the event, the festival's popularity has kept on growing. Along with the 1,200 eight to twenty-five-year-olds it attracted this year, a further 2,500 adults and younger children also attended.
49. Twelve rock and pop youth bands from the Rushcliffe area performed on the main stage and the urban marquee hosted MC-ing, DJ-ing, street dance and poetry. The fun activities on offer, including body zorbs, sumo wrestling with inflatable suits, graffiti art and circus skills, were mainly aimed at young people between 10 and 19, but children from five were also catered for. In the science gazebo there was a chance to experiment with chemical balloons, hoop planes, make an iodine clock or test your visual powers with optical illusions. Youngsters could also scale the climbing wall, check out the bungee run or join in football activities.
50. I wish to take this opportunity to record a big thank you to all our partners and providers who helped make Bridgfest such a success.

D2N2 Meeting with the Minister for Decentralisation & Cities

51. On 30th August I joined other Board Members of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) at Nottingham City Council's Loxley House offices for a meeting with The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister for Cities & Decentralisation. Mr Clark was visiting Nottingham as part of his schedule of visits to the eight Core Cities, the others being: Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Sheffield, Newcastle, Leeds and Bristol.
52. The meeting provided an opportunity to promote the LEP and raise issues with the Minister, including what we were asking and expecting from Government. We found Mr Clark to be enthusiastic and keen to listen.

Welcome Service at West Bridgford Methodist Church

53. On 3rd September I attended West Bridgford Methodist Church to take part in the Welcome Service for the Reverend Dr Paul Hill, the new Superintendent Methodist Minister for the Nottingham South Methodist Circuit. The Circuit covers a large area of Rushcliffe including my own division of Radcliffe-on-Trent.
54. Until 1st September, Paul had been the Superintendent Methodist Minister at Mansfield Methodist Church. We met previously at the opening of the two new Framework centres in Mansfield and Sutton-in-Ashfield to which I referred earlier in this report.

55. The Mayor of Rushcliffe was also present at the Welcome Service. Paul has indicated his desire to work closely with all local civic leaders in his new appointment, as he did in Mansfield and Ashfield. I would like to take this opportunity welcome and wish him well in his new role.

Cotgrave Candleby Lane Teaching Schools Celebration

56. In November 2010, the Schools White Paper, The Importance of Teaching, proposed a new national network of teaching schools modelled on teaching hospitals. This new designation gives outstanding schools a leading role in the training and professional development of teachers, support staff and headteachers, as well as contributing to the raising of standards through school-to-school support.
57. Cotgrave Candleby Lane School is one of only 100 schools in England to be granted teaching school status so far. Understandably, the school is very proud of being the first primary school in Nottinghamshire to gain this recognition. On 6th September, I fulfilled an invitation from the Head, Chris Wheatley, to attend a special event to celebrate this achievement.
58. Schools work together within a teaching school alliance – a group of schools and other partners supported by the leadership of a teaching school. I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with this teaching school alliance and witnessed a short presentation on the vision behind the teaching school.

Nottingham Playhouse Civic Night – “The Ashes”

59. On 7th September I attended the Nottingham Playhouse Civic Night, which featured a performance of “The Ashes” by Michael Pinchbeck, directed by Giles Croft.

COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS
Leader of the Council