

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

Purpose of the Report

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

Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire

2. On 21st March 2012 I paid a visit to the offices of Rural Community action Nottinghamshire (RCAN) in Newstead Village to meet the RCAN Chief Executive Robert Crowder, Head of Project Development Penny Halewood and Head of Resources Linda Fitzgerald.
3. I was joined at the meeting by our Chief Executive, Mick Burrows and the county councillor for Newstead, Councillor Chris Barnfather. Also present were Councillor John Clarke and John Robinson representing Gedling Borough Council and Councillor Rachel Madden representing Ashfield District Council.

Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner

4. On 22nd March I attended the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce (DNCC) Annual Dinner at the East Midlands Conference Centre on the University Park Campus in Nottingham.
5. The event included a 'Business Runway': a concourse of exhibition stands on route to the main dining room allowing companies to raise their profile, network and generate new business.
6. The guest speaker was Kate Adie OBE, who became a household name as the BBC's Chief News Reporter and now presents 'From Our Own Correspondent' on Radio 4.

East Midlands Councils Executive Board

7. On 23rd March I attended a meeting of the East Midlands Councils (EMC) Executive Board at Nottingham City Council's Loxley House offices. Items under discussion included the EMC priorities, business plan and budget for 2012/13 and a review of achievements over the past year.

8. As a consultative forum for local government in the East Midlands, EMC has worked on a range of policy issues including economic growth, local government pay and recent changes that affect health and housing. Alongside this, EMC has lobbied for key infrastructure development including the upgrade and electrification of the Midland Mainline.
9. Looking forward, it was agreed that the 2012/13 business plan priorities should be a continued commitment to supporting economic growth and a focus on transformation and sector-led improvement, including the development of a Performance Management Benchmarking network.

Residential care homes handover event

10. On 26th March I travelled the short distance to Leawood Manor Residential Care Home in West Bridgford for an event marking the official handover of six Nottinghamshire County Council care homes to private operator Runwood Homes. I was joined by the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Councillor Kevin Rostance and senior managers from Runwood.
11. The move will trigger a £9.4 million investment in care for older people in the county over the next five years. It also ensures that care residents continue to pay the same price to be cared for by the same staff in the same homes.
12. The six homes transferred are: Bramwell Care Home, Bramcote; Braywood Gardens, Carlton; Jubilee Court, Hucknall; Leawood Manor, West Bridgford; Maun View, Mansfield and Westwood in Worksop.
13. Runwood Homes have already signalled their long term commitment to the homes by pledging to spend £3 million to upgrade and expand them over the next five years. In total, there is current capacity in the homes for around 330 residents. Planning applications have been submitted to increase the number of bedrooms at all six homes, providing an additional 20 to 32 extra beds per property.
14. Nottinghamshire County Council will receive a £2.5 million capital receipt from Runwood Homes, which will be put towards the costs of new investments in Extra Care and day services. The switch will also save the County Council £900,000 per year in running costs, which will be used to fund new care services to help older people stay in their own homes for longer.
15. The care homes will join approximately 160 others already run by independent sector providers in Nottinghamshire. The six homes will be subject to exactly the same inspection regime as they are at present, by both the Care Quality Commission and the County Council.
16. With an ageing population, all authorities providing care for older people are under increasing pressure. By engaging high quality private sector providers in residential care alongside new County Council services to support older people in their own homes for longer, we are taking the action needed to meet the long term demands facing social care. I am satisfied that the transfer to Runwood Homes is the best possible outcome for the future care of older people in Nottinghamshire.

South Nottinghamshire Academy Performance Showcase

17. On 27th March I attended a Performance Showcase event at South Nottinghamshire Academy in Radcliffe-on-Trent, featuring a variety of music, drama and performing arts students.
18. Members may recall from an earlier report that I attended the official launch of the South Nottinghamshire Academy last October. I welcomed the opportunity provided by the Academy's Performance Showcase Week to demonstrate my continuing support for students and staff.

Meetings with borough/district councils

19. As part of my ongoing dialogue with our borough and district council partners I held meetings during April with the respective Leaders and Chief Executives of Bassetlaw District Council and Gedling Borough Council. I also travelled to Mansfield to meet with the Mayor of Mansfield, Tony Egginton.

Official Opening of the new Bilsthorpe Highways Depot

20. On 11th April I was delighted to attend the formal opening of Nottinghamshire County Council's new Bilsthorpe Highways Depot, marked by the unveiling of a plaque by the Chairman of Nottinghamshire County Council, Councillor Keith Walker.
21. Construction of the depot by the County Council's partners Interserve and internal contractors Highway Operations started on the site of the former Bilsthorpe Colliery in January 2011. Work was completed on schedule at the end of the year and the depot is now fully operational. The final £8.6 million cost of the project represented a considerable saving on the original projected cost of £11 million under the previous administration.
22. The new Bilsthorpe base boasts offices, vehicle workshops, training facilities, storage for vehicles and materials and vehicle fuelling and cleaning areas. It is also home to the County Council's third salt barn, allowing an extra 5,000 tonnes of road salt to be stockpiled under cover and boosting Nottinghamshire's reserves to combat severe winter weather. Overall, we are now able to store 16,000 tonnes of salt under cover in Nottinghamshire.
23. The new depot replaces old and out-dated buildings in Newark, Cuckney, Mansfield and Arnold and brings highways employees at those sites together on one site, thereby saving on maintenance, lighting, heating and travel costs.
24. The new depot will also be more energy-efficient and cheaper to run. Some 266 photovoltaic panels covering 340 square metres of the roof will generate more than 42,000 kilowatt hours of electricity during an average year, saving the Council more than £3,000 per year in electricity costs. In addition, through the Government's Feed in Tariff (FIT) scheme, the Council can expect to receive in excess of £14,000 in FIT payments from the renewable electricity that the array will generate.

25. The three occupied buildings on the site are all heated by a biomass heating system. This means that all of the energy used to heat the site is from a renewable and carbon neutral source.

Refurbished Data Centre

26. Continuing the theme of internal modernisation and improved efficiency, on 17th April I was given a tour of Nottinghamshire County Council's refurbished Data Centre on the County Hall site. Over the last 18 months a £1.8 million refurbishment programme has delivered a modernised and fit for purpose ICT facility. Officers provided a short presentation on what had been achieved, before demonstrating the new facilities in action.
27. The County Hall Data Centre is the Information & Communications Technology (ICT) engine room where all of our data, systems and much of our equipment is held. Thousands of transactions flow through this facility every day and some 130,000 users from 600 buildings rely on it functioning effectively so that systems are available throughout the business day.

Leaving event for the Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club

28. On 19th April I attended an informal event at Trent Bridge cricket ground to mark the departure of the Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club, Derek Brewer. It is a testament to his performance at Nottinghamshire that Derek is leaving to take up a new post at Lord's as Chief Executive and Secretary of the Middlesex Cricket Club (MCC), the world's most famous cricket club.
29. Since he joined Nottinghamshire in 2005 he has overseen a period of great success and development, winning the County Championship twice (2005 and 2010), coordinating the £8.2 million redevelopment of the New Stand at Trent Bridge and securing Ashes Test Matches in 2013 and 2015.
30. It is fair to say that Nottinghamshire County Council has enjoyed a very constructive relationship with Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club during Derek's tenure and we wish him continued success in his new role.
31. Lisa Pursehouse has been appointed to replace Derek. Lisa joined Yorkshire County Cricket Club in 1995 before moving to Trent Bridge in 2000 with a brief to develop the commercial activity of the club. Her promotion to Deputy Chief Executive in 2005 saw her take responsibility for the commercial and operational aspects of the business.
32. Derek Brewer recently said: "Lisa was my greatest ally during my tenure and I am delighted that the Committee has seen fit to install her as my successor. Her knowledge base is an incredible asset to the Club and I wish her every success."
33. I am sure as a Council we all echo those good wishes.

Cotgrave Candleby Lane School Recording Studios

34. On 25th April I was pleased to fulfil an invitation from Cotgrave Candleby Lane School to visit and celebrate the launch of their new recording studio – “High Flying Studios”.
35. The philosophy behind the new facility is to celebrate talent across the local community. In keeping with this, the launch event consisted of performances from local young people who provided a fantastic evening of entertainment. I wish the new studios every success.

University of Nottingham carbon neutral laboratory

36. On 26th April I attended a luncheon event at the University of Nottingham to mark the official announcement of a project to establish a carbon neutral laboratory on the University Campus.
37. GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and the University have formalised a collaboration to build the laboratory, which will accommodate a Centre of Excellence for sustainable chemistry. The agreement represents progress on GSK’s ‘green chemistry’ commitment first announced in 2010.
38. The GlaxoSmithKline Carbon Neutral Laboratory for Sustainable Chemistry will be based on the Jubilee Campus and its construction is being supported by a £12 million grant from GSK. It will focus on research that is of particular relevance to the pharmaceutical industry and will deliver advanced undergraduate teaching and outreach to the wider scientific community, to embed sustainable chemistry principles in the next generation of scientists.
39. The focus on sustainability will be reflected in the building itself, which will incorporate the latest technologies to allow it to be carbon neutral over its lifetime. It will be built from natural materials and the energy required to run it will be from renewable sources such as solar power and sustainable biofuel.
40. The formal project announcement was made by Sir Andrew Witty, the Chief Executive of GSK, who also carried out the official opening of the new Engineering and Science Learning Centre on campus later that day.

Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce (DNCC) President’s Breakfast

41. On 4th May I attended with our Chief Executive, Mick Burrows and Business Engagement Champion, Councillor Keith Girling as Nottinghamshire County Council hosted a DNCC President’s Breakfast meeting in the Rufford Suite.
42. The main subject of discussion at the meeting was the Local Broadband Plan, with officers from Nottinghamshire County Council making a presentation to the guests. The Government has confirmed that they will be allocating £4.25 million towards the council’s £17 million plan to ensure residents and businesses have access to a superfast broadband service.

43. I am delighted the Government has approved our broadband plan which paves the way for securing a telecommunications supplier to help make the necessary improvements. Internet access is especially important for jobs, education and business, particularly where transport is not always good. Getting Nottinghamshire connected to superfast broadband access will attract new businesses and support existing enterprises.

Councillor Kay Cutts
Council Leader