

Council meeting

14 JANUARY 2014

Report of the Chief Executive**NOTABLE ACTIVITIES****1 Purpose of report**

This report is presented as a monthly update on notable activities that have taken place or are planned and relate to the council's PRIDE objectives.

2 Items of note**2.1 WHICH SIDE OF THE FENCE?**

One half of Church Street in the town centre remained totally uncleaned over a weekend in November, as part of an experiment to highlight how much litter is dropped every day and the cost to the council of picking it up. The council teamed up with environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy for the experiment, to show people what happens when we stop cleaning up after them. More than £100,000 a year is spent in the borough just on picking up rubbish from the ground.

As the weekend progressed, the uncleaned side of the street – the side with Tresham and the bus stops on – became increasingly littered, with bus tickets, fast food wrappers, drinks cans and cigarette ends on the floor. Significant publicity in local media and posters along the street helped raise awareness of what we were trying to achieve. Wellingborough was also chosen by Keep Britain Tidy to help with their research and monitoring, which will go on to inform their reports and papers in the future.

2.2 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON

Hundreds of people enjoyed a festive spectacular as the town was transformed into a winter wonderland for the switching on of the Christmas lights. Tributes to Kylie Minogue, Michael Bubl  and Olly Murs entertained the crowds with a string of chart-topping hits throughout the afternoon, before 'snow' fell on Market Street and Santa arrived with his reindeer. A firework display lit up the sky as Santa was joined on stage by the Mayor and Mayoress of Wellingborough and the cast of The Castle's show '101 Dalmatians' to switch on the Christmas lights.

The festive celebration was organised by the Wellingborough Business Improvement District (BID) and supported by the council.

2.3 GLAMIS HALL CHRISTMAS LUNCH

The Mayor and Mayoress were joined by councillors and around 140 day centre customers at the Glamis Hall Christmas party on 12 December, where those attending enjoyed a Christmas lunch and live music.

2.4 CAROLS IN CASTLE FIELDS

Castle Fields park enjoyed a double celebration on Saturday 7 December, as it hosted an open-air carol concert, during which the recently restored bandstand was honoured with the 2013 Wellingborough Civic Society award.

Around 60 people joined in with traditional carols and gospel songs, accompanied by the Salvation Army Band and the Mill Road Baptist Church choir, before the Mayor of Wellingborough, Cllr Graham Lawman, accepted an award from the Wellingborough Civic Society. The award is given out every year to schemes and projects that best meet the society's aims of preserving, developing or improving the historical interest of the area. The bandstand was chosen following an extensive renovation project that restored the concrete structure to its former glory.

2.5 MARKET CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Activities took place to promote Wellingborough Market during the two Saturdays before Christmas. Eagle-eyed shoppers could help Santa find his nine reindeer, which were hidden among the stalls, on 14 December, and the following Saturday market traders put up their decorations to compete in a 'best dressed stall' competition to win a £100 rent voucher. There was also a special post box set up for children to send their last minute letters and lists to Santa.

2.6 SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

The council gave new businesses a chance to set up shop in the town centre on Saturday 7 December. A shop on Market Street was turned over to a number of small businesses and local craftspeople as part of the national Small Business Saturday campaign, which encourages people to buy local. The council opened up 17 Market Street in order to showcase local entrepreneurs and business owners. The young enterprise team from Sir Christopher Hatton Academy, who are taking part in a programme to set up and run a business for a year, were also there to demonstrate their ideas and products, and anyone interested in starting a business could pop in to get advice and support from the Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership.

Some of the traders who took part were so pleased with the opportunity that they are now looking into setting up a co-operative to take on a retail unit.

2.7 WRAPPED UP

The Wrapped Up campaign is running again this year to help keep the county's most vulnerable people warm and well during the winter months. As the weather gets colder, councils and charities are joining forces to protect people most at risk.

A hotline is now available to respond to calls for help. Health professionals and volunteers will speak to callers and check in on older or unwell people. If you are concerned about friends, neighbours or relatives, call 0845 677 2220.

2.8 OLD GRAMMARIANS FOOTBALL FOUNDATION GRANT

Wellingborough Old Grammarians have been awarded a £74,997 grant from the Football Foundation, the country's largest sports charity, which will help enhance their provision of youth football. Work has now commenced on the project and the funding will allow the flourishing sports and social club to make grass pitch improvements to two acres of land at its Sywell Road Memorial Sports Field site that will be dedicated to youth football.

It is hoped the project will address the shortage of small sided, 9x9 facilities in the area. This format of the game applies to children aged from Under-11s to Under-13s – this is a vital step in the development of players' skills, and a

pivotal stage for inspiring and maintaining the interest of individuals in physical activity.

The club received considerable help from the council's sports development officer and the Northamptonshire FA to secure the grant from the Football Foundation.

2.9 SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTIONS

The council has recently had a number of successful prosecutions. Joanne Grebska, 36, of Gannet Lane, was prosecuted after fraudulently claiming more than £7,000 of housing benefit and council tax benefit. She appeared in court in November, where she was sentenced to a 12 month community order to undertake 40 hours of unpaid work, and ordered to pay £50 costs and a £60 victim surcharge.

Also in November, Cassie Coles, 29, of Nightingale Lane, was sentenced to three months in prison, suspended for a year, and ordered to pay £100 costs, following a prosecution by the council and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). She fraudulently claimed more than £20,000 of income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit when her fully-employed partner moved into the family home.

Wellingborough pastor Easton Russell, 52, of Roberts Street, was prosecuted by the council and the DWP for fraudulently claiming nearly £18,000 in benefits when both he and his wife were working. He appeared in court in December and was sentenced to a total of 26 weeks custody, suspended for two years, and given a two year supervision order with a requirement to complete 240 hours of unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £300 costs to the council and a victim surcharge of £80, by 6 January 2014.

In the same week, a Wellingborough woman was sentenced at Northampton Magistrates Court for wrongly claiming over £6,000 in benefits. Kim Frederick-Higham, 35, of Mannock Road, claimed income support and council tax benefit as a single parent, despite the fact her fully-employed partner had moved back into the family home. She was prosecuted by the council and the DWP and given an 18 month conditional discharge and ordered to pay £100 costs with a £15 victim surcharge.

The council has also prosecuted a persistent fly-tipper. James O'Hagan, of Shelley Road, was seen last October driving a small tipper truck loaded with garden waste and asbestos roofing sheets. He was spotted by wardens working for Wellingborough Norse, who recognised him due to a previous fly-tipping offence back in 2011. On this occasion, O'Hagan was seen loading the rubbish from properties in Northampton Road and Milton Avenue before leaving the town, He was later seen driving away from Lower Ecton Lane near Ecton with an empty vehicle, and the waste that had been on the truck was found dumped along a track nearby. He appeared in court in November and received a community penalty order of 150 hours of unpaid work. He was also ordered to pay £250 costs and a £60 victim surcharge.

Finally, Tracey Plummer, of Shakespeare Road, was fined and had her speakers taken away after playing loud music, at all hours of the day and night, for nearly a year. The council's environmental protection officers investigated complaints from neighbours before serving a noise abatement notice, prohibiting the playing of amplified music, in July this year. After the

notice was served, officers witnessed four more incidents, including music being played late at night and on one occasion music on a Saturday that had continued from the previous evening. As the abatement notice was not being complied with, noise making equipment – including a television, games console and speakers – was seized from Plummer and she was charged by the council with four offences of causing a noise nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. She appeared in court in November and was fined £350, as well as £100 costs and a £35 victim surcharge. The court also ordered that the seized speakers be forfeited.

2.10 WELLINGBOROUGH'S GOT TALENT

A special event in aid of the Mayor's Charity Fund is being held at The Castle on 23 January. Wellingborough's Got Talent will showcase the very best local young singers, bands and musicians.

2.11 HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

The 2014 Holocaust Memorial Day will be marked with an event at Wellingborough Museum on Saturday 26 January, followed by a service at the Anne Frank tree in Swanspool Gardens on Sunday 27 January.

<p>3. Proposed action: Council is invited to RESOLVE to note the report.</p>

4. Author and contact officer

Paula Whitworth, Corporate Communications Officer.

5. Consultees

The Mayor, Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Chief Executive, Heads of Service.