

Council meeting

25 FEBRUARY 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 WELLINGBOROUGH'S GOT TALENT**

Fourteen-year-old singer Lauren Alexandra Jones won the first ever Wellingborough's Got Talent with a performance of Les Miserables classic 'I Dreamed a Dream' that wowed the packed auditorium and expert judges.

Her version of the song won her the top prize of a day recording at Beck Studios. Second place went to eighteen-year-old Samantha O'Neil, and third place was taken by fifteen-year-old Amy Addison. Thirteen youngsters took to The Castle stage on Thursday 23 January in the competition that celebrated talented youngsters from all over the borough.

The acts were judged by Dave Smith, owner of Beck Studios, as well as musician John Bowman and acclaimed singer/songwriter Martyna Wren, before audience votes decided the winner.

**2.2 GREAT DODDINGTON AFFORDABLE HOMES**

The council is now offering people on the housing register the chance to bid for new affordable homes in Great Doddington. The properties will be prioritised for applicants with a connection to the village.

Work began on the development, on land off Earls Barton Road, last summer. It's due to be completed in March and will consist of eight 2-bedroom houses, one 3-bedroom house, and one 2-bedroom bungalow.

The development is being built on what is known as a rural exception site, which means it's on land that wouldn't usually secure planning permission for housing. Planning laws allow affordable homes to be built on the site in order to address local housing needs. This is why, in order to be eligible for one of the homes, applicants should be able to show they either currently live in the village, have family there, or work there. Applicants with a connection to the wider parish council area – which includes Wilby, Earls Barton, Grendon, Wollaston, Little Irchester and Irchester – may also be considered for the homes.

In addition to the Great Doddington homes, the following affordable housing schemes have started or been completed in the borough:

- commencement of 48 dwellings at 200 Doddington Road, Wellingborough;
- completion and occupation of 27 units at Corrie Close, Wellingborough;
- commencement of 23 units at Sunlight Factory, Buckwell End;
- completion of extensions to sheltered accommodation at Palmer Court;

- completion of Da Vinci, 42 Croyland Road, Wellingborough (former Prince of Wales);
- commencement of development at former Dun Cow site, Wellingborough.

### 2.3 LEA WAY CPO

The council has taken possession of the derelict shops at 66-74 Lea Way, after using compulsory purchase powers to buy them in a bid to end the antisocial behaviour on the site. Since taking possession, the council has been working on securing the site by putting up fencing, taking away rubbish, and clearing out the buildings. The next step will be to market it, probably for residential use.

The Lea Way site used to house a mini supermarket and several other smaller shops, but has stood empty for more than seven years. It quickly became an eyesore and a hotspot for antisocial behaviour, causing misery to nearby residents. The council received numerous complaints about the site and, after several attempts to negotiate with the owner failed, agreed to use compulsory purchase powers to buy it so improvements could be made.

The landowner objected to the compulsory purchase order, which meant a public inquiry was held in October last year. The council's property team continued to negotiate with the owner and on the second day of the inquiry an agreement was reached. The inquiry was closed and the purchase went ahead.

### 2.4 INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY

The Mayor joined more than 600 people at the Wellingborough District Hindu Association's celebration of Indian Republic Day on 26 January. The celebration has been an annual event in the borough's diary for many years.

### 2.5 OLDER PERSONS' FORUM

The Wellingborough Older Persons' Forum, a free meeting that brings together older people from the area so that they can share information and ideas about issues affecting them, was held on Thursday 30 January at Knights Court. The meeting was a great success, with over 40 people attending. The event focused on providing information about keeping fit and well, and living independently.

### 2.6 CIVIC BALL

This year's Valentine's Civic Ball, hosted by the Mayor and Mayoress, is due to take place on Saturday 15 February at Wicksteed Park Pavilion. The event includes a two-course meal and live music and dancing, plus a cabaret from Wellingborough's Got Talent winner Lauren Jones. All proceeds from the event will be donated to the Mayor's Charity Fund, including Help for Heroes and the Northamptonshire Air Ambulance Service.

### 2.7 TWINNING

A delegation from Wittlich, one of our twin towns, is due to visit Wellingborough from Friday 14 to Sunday 16 February. The delegation, which includes Wittlich Mayor Joachim Rodenkirch and Deputy Mayor Jorg Hosp, will enjoy a busy weekend in the borough, including attending the Civic Ball on the Saturday evening.

## 2.8 COMMONWEALTH DAY

The council will be taking part in the 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth' ceremony on 10 March. The Mayor will read out the Commonwealth Affirmation before the council joins local authorities around the country by raising the flag at 10am to mark Commonwealth Day.

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

