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 STANTON CROSS CPO
Work looks likely to begin this year on the £500 million Stanton Cross development, after the Government confirmed a compulsory purchase order to secure a crucial piece of land. The order was made in April and two objections were received. These were withdrawn after successful negotiations between the council, developer Bovis Homes and the objectors, which avoided the need for a public inquiry. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government then confirmed the order on 30 November.

Stanton Cross, on land to the east of Wellingborough’s train station, will be the largest growth the town has seen since the 1960s. It will include more than 3,000 homes, as well as shops, schools, office space, a town park, community centre and doctor’s surgery. Major improvements to roads and public transport will also take place.

The whole development is expected to take 10-15 years to complete and will create around 100 jobs a year over the construction period, as well as more than 2,000 additional permanent jobs once the project is completed.

2.2 CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS
Wellingborough was transformed into a winter wonderland on Saturday 24 November as the town enjoyed a spectacular event to mark the switching on of the Christmas lights.

Despite the rain and cold, hundreds of people turned out to enjoy a packed afternoon of entertainment, including performances from local school children. Santa mingled with the crowds, chatting to the children about his plans for Christmas Eve and introducing people to a couple of his reindeer. Snow cannons brought winter magic to Market Street and a firework display lit up the skies as the town centre lights were switched on by the Mayor of Wellingborough and competition winner Emily Sivers aged 4.

The Mayor also joined councillors, officers and day centre visitors at the Glamis Hall Christmas party on 13 December, and a community carol service was held at All Hallows church on 20 December.

2.3 HORSES ON COUNCIL LAND
Wellingborough Council took away 12 horses in December after owners ignored notices telling them to remove the animals from council land. The official notices were served at the end of November after the council became concerned about the welfare of the horses and the safety of residents. As the
deadline for owners to remove the horses passed, 13 tethered horses had
been removed but 12 remained grazing loose in council-owned fields off Niort
Way. After being checked over by vets, the horses were stabled and as no
one has come forward to claim the horses, they will remain at the stables until
options for rehoming or selling them have been explored.

2.4 FLOODING
The council worked closely with the Environment Agency and the police
throughout December as several flood warnings were issued for the borough.
At one time, around 170 properties were considered to be at risk from the
flooded rivers Nene and Ise.

The council’s environment protection officers drove round the worst affected
areas to assess the situation and, where possible, to check on isolated
properties.

2.5 FOOD SHOP CLOSURE
A Wellingborough food shop was closed for a week after the council’s
environmental health team discovered conditions so unhygienic they believed
there would be a risk to the health of any customers that bought food there.

Smakus, which is on Cambridge Street, was closed on 1 November following
a visit from the council. Health protection officers found poor conditions
including inadequate hot water for staff to wash their hands and extremely
dirty food equipment. In addition, around 40 food products were seized from
the premises because they were found to be either significantly past their use-
by date or unfit due to mould growth.

The company directors of Smakus Ltd appeared at Wellingborough
Magistrates Court on 8 November, and the court confirmed that there had
been an imminent risk to public health and ordered the disposal of all food
seized. The company was also ordered to pay the council’s costs, of over
£1,000.

2.6 UNLICENSED TAXI PROSECUTION
A taxi driver without a private hire operator’s licence was prosecuted by
Wellingborough Council after accepting a booking to take a couple to Norfolk.

Robert Charles agreed to take the couple to and from the seaside resort of
Caister for their holiday. During their journey the couple had reason to
complain about the service they received and got in touch with the licensing
team at the council.

During the routine investigation, officers discovered that although Mr Charles
does hold a private hire driver’s licence – and has done so since April 2011–
he doesn’t hold a private hire operator’s licence. This means that he is not
legally allowed to accept bookings directly from members of the public and
must only work for a licensed company.

Mr Charles appeared at Wellingborough Magistrates Court on Thursday 8
November. He pleaded guilty to accepting a booking without holding a private
hire operator’s licence and was given a conditional discharge. This means that
if he goes before court for any offence in the next 12 months, this conviction
will be taken into account. Mr Charles was also ordered to pay £500 towards
the council’s costs.
2.7  FRAUD PROSECUTION
A Wellingborough woman has been ordered to wear an electronic tag and obey a curfew for six months after fraudulently claiming nearly £15,000 in benefits.

Charlotte Rawle, 28, of Ashfield Road, was claiming income support, housing benefit and council tax benefit when her partner moved into her house. She didn’t declare the move and Wellingborough Council launched a joint investigation with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) after information was received that her partner, who had a full-time job, was living with her.

Miss Rawle pleaded guilty and was sentenced to observe a six month curfew between 8pm and 7am which would be electronically monitored. She was also ordered to pay £200 costs.

2.8  BUDGET CONSULTATION
Public consultation on the 2013-14 budget is underway, as an online survey went live on the council’s website at the end of December. The consultation asks for people’s opinions about freezing the borough council share of council tax, as well as areas that could be looked at to make further savings in the council’s budget over the next few years.

2.9  MARTIN CAHILL MBE
Former councillor Martin Cahill has been awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours list, in recognition of more than 50 years service to the community. Mr Cahill represented the Earls Barton ward on the council from 1995-2003 and has also been a member of Earls Barton Parish Council since 1991. He has been a regular volunteer at Earls Barton Baptist Youth Club and is now chairman of the management committee, and he has strong links to the village’s cricket club. In 1996 Mr Cahill, a former firefighter, offered his services to a partnership between the British Red Cross and Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, and now travels around the county to give advice and offer help to people who have suffered serious fires in their homes.

2.10  HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY
This year’s Holocaust Memorial Day will be marked with a series of events in Wellingborough, including a survivor’s account of being separated from her parents as a baby.

Elke Hannah, who was sent from Prague to England in 1939 aged just 14 months, will be at Wellingborough Museum at 10.30am on Saturday 26 January to tell her story. Between 1938 and 1939 around 10,000 children were sent to England without their parents, like Elke and her brother. At the end of the war, the majority of these children learned that the people they had left behind – parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins – had been killed.

Her visit has been organised by the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) to mark Holocaust Memorial Day, a national occasion that sees hundreds of events being held across the country to commemorate the anniversary of the liberation of Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau.
Following Elke’s talk at the museum, The Castle Youth Theatre will take to the stage at 1.30pm to perform War Child, a play inspired by poetry and drawings showing the courage of Jewish children during the Holocaust at the Terezin concentration camp in Prague.

On Sunday 27 January, Mayor of Wellingborough, Cllr Ken Harrington, will attend a remembrance event organised by the council. It will take place at 2pm by the Anne Frank tree in Swanspool Gardens and will be followed by prayers in the council chamber.

3. **Proposed action:**
   Council is invited to RESOLVE to note the report.

4. **Author and contact officer**
   Paula Whitworth, Democratic Services Officer (Communications)

5. **Consultees**
   The Mayor, Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, Heads of Service