



**Northamptonshire  
County Council**



**Councillor Robin Brown  
Division: Braunston**

## **Annual Report for 2010/11**

**Prepared by Northamptonshire County Council  
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**2002-2003**  
*Improving Urban Green Spaces*

## NCC – 2010/11

- “It is clear that the new Government are quickly laying out a challenging agenda of change, an agenda that will impact on Northamptonshire. However we are confident, however, that within this new agenda, many opportunities will exist to help us maintain and develop local services as well as attract valuable inward investment and jobs. For example, councils will be freed from the bureaucratic and costly CAA regime which will be replaced by self assessment and by publishing performance data so that local people can form a judgement on how we are performing.”
- “The Government has been very upfront about the challenges they face, and they could learn a lot from our successful ‘You Choose’ campaign which was featured on the BBC’s flagship Panorama programme. A BBC research team and Panorama presenter, Shelley Jofre, visited two of the ‘You Choose’ road shows that took place in Northampton and Kettering to find out more and speak to county residents about the campaign. We were pleased that we were able to take part in the Panorama programme, as it was an opportunity to demonstrate the work we are doing to tackle the unprecedented financial challenges Northamptonshire is currently facing and how we are discussing these with local residents.”
- “It is clear that people across the County value and respect the services we deliver, and it is always an honour when the hard work of our staff is recognised. The team behind a project set up by Northamptonshire County Council and NHS Northamptonshire which saw nearly 100 adults with learning disabilities, take more control of their lives has won an East Midlands Delivering Chances Award. The team has been recognised for its work to improve the quality of life for 87 people with severe learning disabilities and complex needs in Northamptonshire. By using individual budgets to help them

have more choice and control about how they live their lives, the project will see all 87 people progress from being NHS patients to becoming citizens within their local communities. This award highlights the great improvements we have made in improving and modernising our care services, and highlights the hard work and commitment of our staff, which we can all be proud of.”

- “We can also be proud of the fact that the Department of Education has recognised that we have made significant progress in improving education provision in Northamptonshire and that we have the strategic drive, commitment and momentum to continue this work. The progress we have made has meant the Government has announced that it thinks that intervention by the Education Department is no longer necessary. This is great news and a tribute to all the hard work by our officers and schools.”
- “Raising attainment across the board remains a key priority because we want to deliver the best possible education for our children and help them to reach their potential. For the first time, Northamptonshire has recorded more than half of the county’s students achieving the standard of 5 or more GCSE grades A\*–C including English and Maths which is a two per cent increase on last year’s performance. This improvement in performance will make a real difference to the life chances of young people in the county and work is underway to analyse this year’s results to see where there have been achievements as well as identifying areas where more work is needed.”
- “It is important that all children across our County are given the opportunity to succeed academically, and are well equipped with the necessary life skills to compete in an ever competitive world. As corporate parents, we have a responsibility to all those children in our care, and their welfare and education remains a key priority. As we want to ensure that all children in our care are given the chance to achieve and succeed.”

- “As well as ensuring our children and young people are able to achieve academically, it is also vital that they are able to take part in and access youth activities; training and support. Youth Services in the County have been transformed and our new innovative ways of working will see the provision of services delivered area by area, which will ensure the needs of young people are met at a local level. As the County Council commissions youth services rather than directly provides them, the work has been awarded to two organisations, Youth Works and Service Six, through a full procurement process. The youth services will be delivered through four areas; Northampton, Daventry and South Northamptonshire, Kettering and Corby and East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough.”
- “As part of the contracts, Service Six and Youth Works have a target for the number of young people that need to be engaged in positive activities and to ensure the needs of vulnerable young people are met. Northamptonshire now has an enviable approach to interacting with children and young people and ensuring that their ideas and suggestions are listened to and that we deliver the activities and support they want.”
- “Northamptonshire County Council’s libraries have become the first library service in the East Midlands to achieve the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard. The Council’s library and archive services have together been awarded the CSE, which is a government accreditation that requires organisations to prove a deep understanding of their customers’ needs and to demonstrate how they are building their services around these needs. It is a highly-demanding assessment which replaces the Charter Mark process. The County Council had to meet 57 challenging criteria and a number of areas were highlighted for praise. The service was also commended for the introduction of self – service machines and the way staff worked closely with customers to ensure this was successful which has resulted in 92% of customers choosing to help themselves.”

- “The County Council is now a leading authority on becoming an open and transparent organisation, with the ongoing programme to publish directorate spending over £500, as well information on salaries and contracts. Officials from the Cabinet Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government have visited the Council to discuss and learn from our experiences with regard to our work on transparency. It is a source of pride that we have been able to lead from the front and set a high standard before Councils are required to do this by law, and this high standard continues to evolve as the Council is now publishing financial information in open format.”
- “In addition to our work on transparency, the County Council has also launched a page on its website offering residents the opportunity to create and submit petitions online. This will enable them to create their own petitions about any subject and sign others, which can then be submitted directly to the County Council online. The launch comes ahead of the government deadline, of December 2010, for councils to implement this service. Although residents can still take up traditional paper petitions, this new system allows petitions to be visible to a much wider audience and to ensure that every petition will get a response from the relevant County Council department. They are also copied in to a relevant cabinet member and divisional councillor.”
- “The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for example delivered one of the toughest outlooks for the public sector for a generation, and there is no doubt that the cuts announced by George Osborne will have a significant impact on public services in Northamptonshire. Since the announcement, the Cabinet have worked closely with the Chief Executive and his management team to examine the detail in these announcements to fully understand the extent of their impact as we await the local government settlement which will be announced in December.”

- “It is important that Northamptonshire receives a fair deal from the Government, and following the meeting Cabinet Members had with the County’s MPs, we submitted a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer setting out why our County has been insufficiently funded due to the inherent weaknesses in the funding formula used by the previous Labour government. We are continuing to lobby the government to recognise these flaws as the pressure on our budgets continues to increase. With this in mind, the Cabinet are due to meet the MPs again and it is my hope that together, we can make some much needed progress on this important issue.”
- “Although the Government have placed the deficit reduction programme at the heart of their agenda, it is reassuring that they are pushing ahead with their promised shift of power from Westminster to people and to promote decentralisation and democratic engagement. By ending the era of top-down government and giving new powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals, councils such as ours will now have the opportunity to respond to local needs and concerns without the needless and costly bureaucracy that stifled innovation and modernisation.”
- “We can be proud of the fact that the County Council won five awards in the Great East Midlands Care Awards 2010. The awards celebrate excellence in the social care sector and are open to all private, voluntary and statutory organisations. The awards aim to promote best practice within both home care and care homes sectors, and pay tribute to those individuals who have demonstrated outstanding excellence within their field of work.”
- “In addition to this, The County Council also scooped three awards at the Chartered Institute of Public Relations local public services excellence in communications awards in Brighton last

month. Not only did we win the communications team of the year award, we also won awards for internal communications and digital excellence. These awards highlight the ongoing progress and improvements we are making, and we can all be very proud of the excellent work our staff deliver each and every day.”

- “Last December saw the publication of the Localism Bill. This new bill offers an exciting new future for us as it promises that councils will be freed from central government control and diktat. There are clearly a great deal of opportunities for innovative councils such as ours to take advantage of as power is devolved down and we are given a new general power of competence.”
- “The localism agenda will undoubtedly bring new challenges and opportunities, but it also promises to radically alter the way democracy and service provision is delivered across Northamptonshire. Although the bill is still progressing through Parliament, it is clear that a flexible and forward thinking council such as ours will benefit a great deal as we will be better able to respond to local needs and pressures, and implement policies that best suit our communities.”
- “Another key tenet of the Government’s new agenda for local government has been making councils more transparent about how they spend taxpayers’ money. The Council’s own transparency drive has been well documented and we were able to meet the DCLG’s requirement to publish information long before the date that was set by the Secretary of State.”
- “We continue to foster a culture and mindset that spreads the principles of transparency and accountability beyond what we publish on our website and the innovative and pioneering changes to the way our Council is managed will help to ensure the County Council remains at the forefront of openness and transparency in local government.”

- “It was clear that setting this year’s budget was both difficult and complex, as we meet the challenges being posed through Government cuts in public spending. It is more important than ever that the Government recognises the pressures that the growth of Northamptonshire places on our limited resources. We have continued to lobby central government about the need for them to recognise the growth of our County when funding is allocated. This month, along with the County’s MPs, we secured a meeting with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, which I hope will mean this historic issue will at last be properly addressed by the Government.”
- “As a growing County, it is also important that the Government supports investment into our transport infrastructure. Earlier this year, Northamptonshire County Council submitted Expressions of Interest to the Department of Transport for both the A43 Corby Link Road and the A509 Isham Bypass. The announcement by Transport Secretary, Philip Hammond, that the Corby Link Road has been carried forward to the next stage, which will see the Government work closely with the County Council over the next few months with a view to achieving a full approval announcement for the scheme towards the end of 2011. We were very pleased that this project has been given the green light to go forward to the next stage. It will be pivotal to the economic development in the north of the County, as it will ensure that the growth that is planned and already taking place in Corby and Kettering is supported through excellent transport corridors that link through to the national networks. The scheme will allow for traffic to be taken away from villages along the A43 and also traffic that would otherwise have gone through Corby. However the Government’s announcement also means that the Isham Bypass project will now not yet proceed. We will continue to work with the Borough Council of Wellingborough, Kettering Borough Council and with local residents, to look for alternative funding opportunities in the intervening time and do

everything we can to bring this by-pass into fruition as soon as possible.”

- “The work and investment we continue to put into our highways will bring long term benefits to the County. This was reflected in our response to the winter conditions experienced in December, which was the coldest recorded since Met Office records began. Having learnt many valuable lessons from previous winters, the County Council was well prepared to meet some of the most challenging weather conditions the County has ever seen. Not only did we increase our ‘resilience’ levels of salt storage, by increasing both the maximum level held in stock and the minimum level prior to re-order, we also used a new type of sugar-coated salt which can be used more sparingly and reduces corrosion to vehicles. Not only is this new mixture less visible on the highway than more ‘traditional’ salt, it also gives us 40% more resilience, meaning that is as effective as last year’s resource and more importantly it goes a lot further.”
- “In addition to this, we were able to clear footpaths more effectively through new machinery and provide 150 additional salt bins which brought the total to 1780 across the County. We can be proud of our response to the difficulties winter conditions can bring. Not only are we ensuring our main roads are safe and our pavements clear, we are also helping to keep Northamptonshire open for business which will also help to minimise the economic impact felt by local companies.”
- “Our work to grow the ‘Big Society’ in Northamptonshire also continues as we build upon the excellent summit that was held last year. As part of this work we felt it was important that we look at how the private sector and public bodies could work together to improve lives for people across Northamptonshire. We have met with Business leaders in the county and with The University of Northampton to see how they could play a role in shaping the Big Society. We need business and industry to engage in our work on building the Big Society and we need to

understand how businesses see their role in this. This meeting was an exciting opportunity for public bodies and businesses to work together to improve outcomes for the people of the County and to explore how much interest there is in business developing social enterprises.”

- “It is also important that communities are able to come together and celebrate. Royal Weddings have historically brought the nation together as we join together to commemorate these special days. As Royal Wedding fever continues to build, the Council has launched a special pack to help neighbourhoods, villages and communities kick off their planning for a Royal Wedding street party or fete this year. The information, which can be found at on our website includes details of how people can set up celebration events to mark the wedding of Prince William and Miss Catherine Middleton in April, and gives advice on who to speak to and what licences, permissions and insurances are needed to hold such an event. Additional information will be added to the website over the coming weeks and months and it will also be used for people to publish the pictures of their street parties.”

## **Budget 2011/12 Key Points**

- Today’s budget will see almost £27m of investments to meet the demographic changes that continue to put immense pressure on both Children Services and Adult Social Care.
- We propose a 0% increase in Council Tax for 2011/12. Instead we will take advantage of the Coalition Government’s offer of the equivalent funding of 2½% which will give the Council just over £6m revenue income. This will ensure that the level of Council Tax remains the lowest of any county in the Country.

- We will to invest £2 million of the £6m into job and wealth creation in Northamptonshire which will not only target inward investment in key sectors of our economy such as high performance engineering, logistics, tourism and agriculture, but will develop and train the entrepreneurs of the future. This investment will help to secure jobs, attract new businesses and equip Northamptonshire with the skills and capabilities to compete on the world stage. It is therefore a key foundation on which the future of our County will be built.
- As a consequence of this we introduced a new strategy for road maintenance and we are proposing to spend a further £30m over the next three years bringing our roads up to an acceptable standard.
- This budget will set a new course for this council. Under the Target Operating Model (TOM for short) there will be a full review of the management structure which should save the Council in the region of £3m.
- No libraries will close as a result of this budget. Instead we will we carry out a wider ranging review of all 36 libraries to consider new models for delivery in partnership with local communities.
- Following feedback received during the consultation the proposed £150,000 saving for Advice and Information Services has been removed and an extra £100,000 will be invested instead. We recognise that this is a difficult time for many people in the county and investing a quarter of a million pounds in the voluntary sector will help ensure that advice and information services will be available for those who need them.

- following the public consultation regarding the decision to withdraw the £3.1million bus subsidy we will be investing a further £300,000 in to exploring new approaches to public transport, this is in addition to the £700,000 already earmarked. The £1million of investment will provide more tailored public transport for communities.