Leader's Update

Cllr Jason Smithson
Leader of the Council

7 March 2022

Introduction and Welcome!

This last week has been shocking and very emotional for us all. The premeditated and unprovoked attack by Putin's forces on Ukraine is a stark contrast to the freedoms we enjoy and take for granted here in our country. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine who are fighting for their democratic freedoms, something that we have taken for granted for so long but now has become very precious to us all.

We must also condemn the actions of the Russian government and of Putin himself. Condemning the unprovoked aggression of the Russian government who have invaded Ukraine. The Council will do what we can to support our Ukrainian residents and our Ukrainian friends. We will do the politics in show their contempt for the brave men, women and children of Ukraine.

Condemnation of the Russian invasion of Ukraine

Motion proposed by Cllr Jason Smithson and seconded by Cllr Rebecca Bennett-Knight at Full Council on Wednesday 23rd February 2022. The Council clearly expected that it stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Text of the motion: Council notes the unprovoked and premeditated attack on the sovereign state of the Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

The motion was seconded by the Labour Group and supported by the Green Alliance, giving it cross-party support.

Council condemns the Russian Government and President Putin for their unprovoked aggression in invading the Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and supports the British Government in its sanctions against Russian individuals and companies.

Vigil held in solidarity of Ukraine

On the evening of Thursday 3 March, North Northamptonshire joined with the Vigil for Civilians in Ukraine, which was organised by Kettering Council.

The Council acknowledged the support of Kettering Council in organising the vigil, which was held in Queen's Park. The Council also thanked the Ukrainian community for their contribution to the vigil, which was very moving and emotional and provided a very powerful and poignant opportunity to show our support for the people of Ukraine.

Council officers and elected members were not particularly entitled to receive these nationally recognised vigils, but we felt it was important to show our support for our Ukrainian friends, who are suffering so much at the hands of the Russian Government. We also felt it was important to try to address some of the extremely difficult pay challenges that a refugee from Ukraine would face.

We have contacted our Ukrainian friends and people from our Ukrainian community and have recommended to the employment committee that the NJC Green Book pay award should also be applied to our Ukrainian friends who are refugees.

We believe that the right thing to do is to make our Ukrainian friends who are currently in our country feel welcome and to provide them with a pay award that is equitable to the pay awards we are considering through our People Strategy to reward and recognise colleagues going forward.

Pay award update

I was pleased to see that a number of national pay awards (National Joint Council (NJC) - Green Book and Chief Officers) have been agreed recently. This is very important because it means that our Ministers have now implemented and paid in employees' pockets the nationally agreed pay awards.

This means that our dedicated staff who are not compulsorily entitled to receive these nationally recognised pay awards have also received a pay award which could pay dividends in terms of our ability to attract and retain talented staff. This is very important because we need to be able to address some of the extremely difficult pay challenges that a refugee from Ukraine would face.

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We believe that the right thing to do is to make our Ukrainian friends who are currently in our country feel welcome and to provide them with a pay award that is equitable to the pay awards we are considering through our People Strategy to reward and recognise colleagues going forward.

Full Council Meeting – 24 February

The Council has formally recognised the Ukrainian people and the Ukrainian people in the media and I have been keen to highlight the key events on this subject.

The Council has formally passed a motion at Full Council on Thursday 24th February in a resolution, which was proposed by Cllr Jason Smithson and seconded by Cllr Rebecca Bennett-Knight.

Full Council Meeting - YouTube

The approved resolution stated that the Council:

- Condemns the unprovoked and premeditated attack on the sovereign state of the Ukraine by the Russian Federation.
- Stands in solidarity with the people of Ukraine.
- Continue to invest in local services, town centres and environment.
- Continue to support our local economy.
- Support education and skills development.
- Support our vulnerable residents.

The Budget also continues to make a significant investment in projects across the area. Through the Council's approach to Green Growth we continue to work to attract and create jobs and to ensure that our residents have the skills they need to take up the opportunities that are being created in our area.

I am also very proud of the group of what we have achieved over the last year.

We have made a lot of progress and we have achieved a lot over the last year.

We have made important steps that need to be Full Council on 24th February online here: **budget reports**

Your Council, Your Services

As soon as the budget was passed a draft report on information which was finalised in February. This has been sent to Parish Councils. This report will be sent to Council Members, Council Officers and Council Partners.

We will continue to monitor traffic/off-peak information about where the Council get its information from. This will include a regular monthly/quarterly report to organisations that can provide financial and other information. This will ensure that further information can be hosted.

Bullseye! Another signpost.

Next Full Council Meeting

The next **Full Council meeting** will take place on Thursday 31 March at 2pm in the Council Chamber at Corby Cube. The agenda and reports will be available the week before.

Live streaming of meetings

Thank you to those of you who watched the Council meeting online live on Wednesday 23 February. We had over 1,000 people watching the meetings that will be held at Corby's Cube. This will be kept informed and up to date.

Watch the meeting on play back on **YouTube channel**.

Corby redevelopment projects showcased to Government

North Northamptonshire Council projects that are spearheading further redevelopment in Corby town centre were showcased during a visit to the town by Government Minister for Levelling Up, Neil O'Brien, who was keen to see at first-hand the work being undertaken to transform the town centre.

Minister visited Corbyn Hussain's restaurant in Corby, which will be supported by a £500,000 grant via a north Corby pilot before launching Corby train station, which is part of a scheme to bring a new station back into use, with a £2.5 million Government grant.

The Minister for Levelling Up Neil O'Brien said:

"I am truly excited by the regeneration of Christchurch House into a modern, new, carbon neutral office building for North Northamptonshire Council. This will be a hub for Corby, where local people access information the opportunity to attend their local Council meetings.

"It was also fantastic to see Corby station and discuss government funded plans to improve the station and surrounding area. I know that the Council is also working with Network Rail and other partners to bring regeneration and jobs back to the town and I am very pleased that Corbyn Hussain's restaurant is now thriving and flourishing, with a bright future ahead for the business and for the town."

Corbyn Hussain said:

"It was an honour to have Corby station and discuss government funded plans to improve the station and surrounding area. I know that the Council is also working with Network Rail and other partners to bring regeneration and jobs back to the town and I am very pleased that Corbyn Hussain's restaurant is now thriving and flourishing, with a bright future ahead for the business and for the town."

Corbyn Hussain said:

**"I am very proud to be a Corbyn citizen