

“Our town centre needs a big hug” – businesses and residents have their say on the future of Northampton town centre

19th September 2018: More than 150 people gathered in Northampton this week – determined to have their say and help shape the future of the town centre.

The ‘Northampton town centre – Our Next Steps’ event, hosted by Northampton town centre Business Improvement District (BID), brought a panel of business, education and council leaders together, with Northampton residents and businesses asking challenging questions and sharing their aspirations.

Rob Purdie, Executive Director of Northampton town centre Business Improvement District (BID), summarised: “It is time to act, to focus on our town centre, to be positive and to move forwards. Northampton town centre needs a big hug and the passion and commitment from our speakers, panellists and all our guests proves this is what we all want.”

Here are a few highlights from the event:

The University of Northampton urged businesses and residents to warmly welcome students and staff to the town centre. Deborah Mattock, Director of Human Resources, Marketing and International Relations, said: “We have 12,000 young people and 2,000 staff coming into Northampton town centre this month as our new Waterside campus opens. So, my question is ‘Northampton – are you ready?’ Our students have money to spend and skills to offer.”

Market Square – this was announced as a priority for the BID and also the council. George Candler, Chief Executive of Northampton Borough Council, said: “We need to create areas for people to congregate and there is an opportunity to do something with the market square, and we need to be bold and imaginative. This is a priority.”

The University of Northampton also announced it will, for the first time, be holding its Freshers Fair on the Market Square – so get ready to meet over 3,000 students this coming week.

Christmas lights will return this year, announced the council, despite rumours to the otherwise.

The Drapery: George Candler, Chief Executive of Northampton Borough Council, said the borough council has pledged to pick up the £55,000 bill for improvements to The Drapery - to tackle traffic flow and reduce the air pollution. Work will start soon.

New museum: Contractors are now on site, with the £7million refit now underway that will double the size of the museum and also be home to a Centre of Excellence.

Vulcan Works, next to the museum, will be home to a small business hub. This project has been awarded £3million of European money.

The old Greyfriars bus station: Jonathan Nunn, Leader of Northampton Borough Council, said: “We want something iconic, bold, something better than the plan previously put forward. This is a priority and we are getting professional advice.”

New town centre homes: The borough council announced it is committed to getting people back into and living in the town centre. There is set to be 200 apartments for key workers and ‘grand plans’ for private and social housing in and around the town centre.

Blooming and beautiful: It was announced that the East Midlands in Bloom judges had visited Northampton and awarded it ‘gold’ status, so Northampton is now through to Britain in Bloom.