

Northampton

TOWN CENTRE BID

For the businesses by the businesses

The 'Northampton town centre – Our Next Steps' event – hosted by the BID in September 2018 - brought a panel of business, education and council leaders together, with Northampton residents and businesses asking challenging questions and sharing their aspirations.

Here is a taste of what our speakers said ...

Chronicle & Echo editor David Summers: “We can't have more delays and more inaction. We can't be sitting here in five years discussing the same problems. Our cultural quarter is positive and the opening of the new Waterside Campus is a massive opportunity. People care passionately about the town centre, we all want it to be successful. This is the time to bring about change.”

John Griff, compere of the event: “We are here to talk about the future. Nobody can deny that Northampton has seen its fair share of challenges but there is also plenty to be positive about. We are interested in moving forward. Northampton has taken a battering, but we are where we are and the emphasis of this evening's event is to look forwards, not back. It's collaboration that we are really keen to foster this evening.”

Michael Weedon, a retail expert and Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) Retail & High Street Policy Unit, summarised national trends: “Overall we are doing less shopping. Last year just over 50,000 shops closed, that is one in 10, while 45,000 opened up. That is the effect you see in town centres. This year the UK is gaining barbers, beauty salons, vaping shops, cafes and nail salons – these are things you can't do online - but we are losing pubs, banks travel agents, post offices and newsagents. In Northampton we have Primark, which won't sell you anything online. They have 6.1million Instagram followers and are engaging with people. This is what we need to be doing.”

George Candler joined Northampton Borough Council as Chief Executive at the end of April 2018: “It's important we have vision, ambition, that we are bold and have strength of conviction. To attract developers in we need to be clear and the start of that is the development of a town centre strategy, in partnership and collectively.”

Rob Purdie, Executive Director of Northampton town centre Business Improvement District, said: “There is a deep passion and care for the town, but the key thing is that no one organisation is big enough to affect all of this change – we need to work together. This conference is just the starting point to bring all the right people together. The level of interest has been phenomenal and highlights the passion for our town centre. There is lots going on in the background by various partners but we need to show we are working together and actually deliver what we’ve all been talking about. I believe this is an opportune time for change. Please join with us in helping us build a new Northampton – that is what we need, deserve.”

Mick Stamper, Chief Superintendent at Northamptonshire Police, was asked about safety on Bridge Street: “We police Bridge Street every Friday and Saturday night and are keenly aware that young women can be at risk so we put a lot of effort in to protect people. With the influx of students we are working closely with the university to ensure we have additional resources available at night.”

Andrew Lewer, MP, answered a question about business rates. He was asked “Will our MP give us a commitment that he will go back to Government and sort out business taxes?” He replied: “The Chancellor has flagged up business rates. He recognises that business rates are not good for business. They need to be tackled, particularly for small business. The Government needs to be open to the idea of moving away from static business rates for small business and consider a sales turnover tax instead.”

Summarising the event, Rob Purdie said: “We pledge to focus on vacant town centre units and how we can best fill them, the Market Square and how we promote Northampton as a ‘Shoe Town’.