

**AGENDA ITEM 9**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S VIEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES**

Madame Mayor, Fellow Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This is an additional council meeting to make changes which are necessary to the Council's constitution to deliver on our manifesto commitment of introducing a committee system and to deal with financial and legal issues which will allow us to deliver the ambitious and exciting development we want to see in Beeston Town Centre.

Since we last met and debated the future of Beeston's Crown Post Office plans have been formally announced to move the Post Office in to W. H. Smiths. The mood of the council at last month's meeting was clear and I remain of the opinion that making changes based on trading figures over the period of chaos in Beeston due to the tram works is flawed. Last Saturday I joined Cllr Janet Patrick and Anna Soubry MP and met with Richard Hall, Post Office's regional manager who listened to our concerns. We have been assured that no final decision has yet been made and that a public meeting will be arranged next month for local people to have their say – the Chief Executive's report of the debate at last month's council meeting will form the basis of this Council's response to the consultation.

On a sad note the Ministry of Defence has announced that Chetwynd Barracks is to close by 2020 bringing to an end over 100 years of a military presence on the site. I have asked for a meeting with M.O.D. Ministers to discuss the impact of the closure and the opportunities for planned development on the site – I am particularly keen for this council to be involved at an early stage in the M.O.D.'s plans for land releases to ensure that we can achieve a high quality planned development on the site with appropriate infrastructure improvement in Toton and Chilwell. This is a golden opportunity to redevelop a Brown Field site and, with work, will allow us to safeguard more of the Borough's Green Belt.

We should also recognise that with the closure around 1,200 jobs will be lost to the Borough and clearly we need to plan to ensure that land is available for businesses to replace them.

I am also keen to ensure the future of the memorials within the Barracks site and to ensure that their ownership and maintenance are considered as part of the sale. Members may recall that I have previously discussed the upcoming centenary of the 1918 munitions explosion when 134 people were killed and a further 250 were injured. From what we currently know about the M.O.D's plans the Barracks will still be operational in 2018 and I will be discussing how we can mark the centenary when I next meet the commanding officer.

Members will know that following a unanimous vote of Council late last year the first family rehoused under the Governments Syrian Refugee Programme are now well settled in Beeston. The public have been very generous with donations and offers of

help and – I would like to particularly mention Councillors Jan Goad and Janet Patrick who have given up their time to prepare a house in Beeston for a second family who we are expecting in the next few weeks.

There has been no real progress on devolution since we last met and I am convinced that we now need a “Plan B”. Other areas have had their devolution plans approved and there is a danger that we, in the East Midlands, could be disadvantaged and national investment goes into devolved areas.

Along with The Mayor and Deputy Mayor I had the great pleasure of helping judge the Nottingham Post’s “Best of Broxtowe” awards. The sheer number of nominations we received for local people, by local people is a credit to all that they do to support the local community.

There are people from all walks nominated from sports people and young people, to local businesses and community champions – all unsung heroes of our Borough. Cabinet recently approved our participation in the “Warm Homes on Prescription” project which will see over £28,000 invested in Eastwood South aimed at tackling fuel poverty by improving energy efficiency in up to 30 homes per year.

I would also like to inform colleagues that Councillor Mel Crow has been elected by the Conservative Group as Deputy Leader and this position will be formalised at the Annual Council Meeting two weeks tonight – in welcoming Mel to her new role I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Jill Owen for her work as Deputy Leader and on a personal level for the help and support that she has given me over the past nine years.

Finally Madame Mayor can I congratulate you and the Civic Team on an excellent Civic Ball last Saturday at the Nottingham Belfry. The event was, as ever, impeccably organised and all who attended had a thoroughly enjoyable evening.