

MONTHLY NEWS REPORT MAY 2022



E-Newsletter Issue 5/2022
Knife Angel
(The National Monument against Violence and Aggression)
All Saints Church, Northampton
Saturday 30 April 2022

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NEWS REPORT MAY 2022

Monthly Highlights

In response to the many questions about WNC support and help for Ukrainian Refugees, I have provided information, which was issued by Cabinet on 12 April 2022. It sets out the role of WNC and that of Community and voluntary organisations as well as Town and Parish Councils. I have also provided details on how to apply for school places.

I have gone back to Highways to ask them to let me know when they are going to do the check on the A428, when the results are going to be available and when the review meeting will take place. In the meantime, I sent them a copy of a recent police incident number 22000196816 where a 63-year-old driver died in a fatal accident on the A428 just outside Yardley Hastings. I have asked them to bring this to the attention of the Committee. It is becoming clear that Highways must look carefully at the safety of the A428 from Little Houghton through to Yardley Hastings and I would like them to ensure that this is carried out.

Find out more about the service I attended to welcome the Knife Angel (The National Monument against Violence and Aggression) at All Saints Church, Northampton on Saturday 30 April 2022 at 7.30pm.

The contemporary sculpture, which is formed from 100,000 knives, was created by artist Alfie Bradley and the British Ironworks Centre in Oswestry, England. It was completed in 2018 and is 27ft tall. The iron works produced 200 knife banks and amnesties were held for individuals to anonymously donate their knives.

The Community Safety Team at West Northants Council will be running a series of safety sessions for parents and guardians to help them recognise any signs of concern with their children. The sessions are part of a series of events taking place to mark a two-week visit from the iconic Knife Angel to Northampton in May. They will look at how and why children get involved in gangs and carrying weapons and how to recognise if your child might be the victim of grooming.

West Northamptonshire Council's Cabinet adopted an Anti-Poverty Strategy at its meeting on Tuesday (12 April), which was designed to tackle poverty and deprivation and is particularly important in the context of current financial pressures facing households. It also forms part of the council's bold new approach to improve social, environmental and economic sustainability, which will help protect communities for future generations.

Eligible households in West Northamptonshire are due to receive the Government's £150 Council Tax energy rebate in the coming weeks. The rebate applies to households in Council Tax Bands A to D, of which there are about 147,000 in West Northants. Processing the rebate has required a major undertaking by Revenues and Benefits, who have had to work with software suppliers and establish new processes in order to make the payments as quickly as possible. While the process has taken longer than originally anticipated, it is hoped that the first payments will be made to residents by mid-May.

Free, independent, confidential and specialist legal advice is being offered to Northamptonshire's residents, by Community Law Service (Northampton and County). If you would like to access information in the One Stop Shop, Community Law Service offers help with housing repossession and eviction, welfare benefits, debt, immigration, energy efficiency advice and fuel poverty. Community Law Service (Northampton and County) is a registered charity and an independent specialist social welfare advice provider and holds the Law Society's LEXCEL quality mark demonstrating excellence in client care.

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has issued consumer guidance that, due to conflict in Ukraine affecting sunflower oil supplies, some food products labelled as containing sunflower oil may instead contain other oils.

West Northamptonshire Council is developing a new housing strategy, which will be a high-level document that will explain our vision, plans and priorities for the next two years. We want to make sure that the new housing strategy covers the housing issues important to our residents and stakeholders and this can be achieved by asking you to help us shape it and we welcome your views and comments. This questionnaire closes at midnight on Tuesday 24 May 2022.

New communal garden spaces have been created in Northampton neighbourhood where residents can grow food and spend time outside. Housing provider, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH), created the spaces in St James for residents of Abbey, Melbourne and Devonshire House. The installation of the raised planter beds was made possible through funding from PCSO Andrew Emberton from Northamptonshire Police and the Office of the Fire, Police and Crime Commissioner (OFPCC). Tenants were invited to an event where they could claim their free plot in their communal gardens and have already planted flowers, herbs such as basil and chives, and vegetables such as spinach, onions and lettuce leaves which will bloom in the coming weeks and months. The funding for this project came from the OFPCC grants fund.

Farmers with diesel and oil storage tanks are being warned to check their security amidst increased fears that thieves could target them. Farmers are a particular target, as, due to the nature of their business, they require greater amounts of red and white diesel, and oil. Financially, it benefits them to buy in bulk as prices are usually reduced.

A West Northants business on the cutting edge of materials technology and a second providing parents with eco-friendly options have both received a 2022 Queens Awards for Enterprise. Diamond Hard Surfaces at Caswell Park just outside Towcester produces high performance, high endurance diamond-based engineering materials and coatings for the aerospace and electronics sector. They have received an award in the International Trade category. An award in the Sustainable Development category was won by Bambino Mio in Brixworth, which is reducing single-use plastic waste through making reusable nappies the first choice for parents, through accessibility and education.

After the 24-hour bus lane camera in Weedon Road, St James was switched off in December 2021; a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has now been passed changing its operational hours to the morning rush hour. Motorists can now be fined if they use the bus lane between the hours of 7:30am and 9:30am, Monday to Saturday. The new TRO follows a public consultation on the scheme this autumn, which received a total of 2,752 responses from residents, businesses, and local organisations. The feedback received showed that half of all respondents were in favour of the Weedon Road/St James' Road bus lane continuing to be enforced

I visited Chester House Estate with a number of other West Northamptonshire Councillors on 29th April 2022. Jack Pishorn, Business Development Manager gave us a great presentation and we had a tour afterwards. The Chester House Estate is designed to offer something for everyone, whether it's participating in one of the education programmes, discovering archaeological materials within the Archaeological Resources Centre (ARC) or simply a family day out. We saw a complete vessel, which is an unusual find as the artefacts are normally fragments of a past life. Seeing some of Brafield's archaeological past caught my attention. Having family members with an interest in archaeology, I intend to visit Chester House Estate again for a closer look at our heritage.

If you intend to have a beacon event then you should register it by the 31st May 2022. The Beacons in the Commonwealth Countries & United Kingdom Overseas Territories will be lit at 9.15pm local time, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Anchor Chain will be lit at 9.30pm and the Beacons along Hadrian's Wall will be lit at 10pm. All other Beacons throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man will be lit at 9.45pm. Communities with pre-existing beacons are encouraged to light these on the night of the Platinum Jubilee, June 2nd 2022.)

The organic display of community spirit, which emerged during the Covid-lockdown and became known as the Towcester Rock Snake, has been given a new home. Before lockdown 'Love Rocks' was a common pastime throughout the country, which saw children decorate stones, sometimes with greetings, which they would then hide for someone else to find, photograph, share on Facebook and then re-hide.

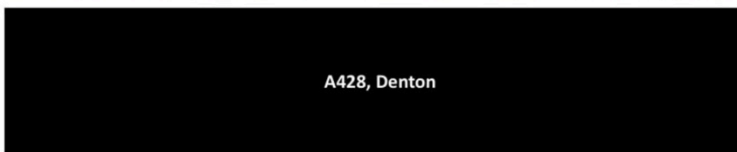
Do you have links with local schools that might want to enter our Jubilee-themed art challenge? The 'Queen of Arts' activity is encouraging young people to decorate everyday household items in honour of Her Majesty – from mugs to T-shirts, tea towels to photo frames...the possibilities are endless. Children could also create a picture, portrait or poem about the Queen, with the best creations set to be showcased in libraries across Northamptonshire. Entries must be sent to queensjubilee@westnorthants.gov.uk by Friday, 13 May and include the entrant's name and age as well as a couple of lines stating what the Queen means to them.

All the Best, Steve

PARISH MEETINGS, VISITS AND CASEWORK

Request for A428 Speed Restriction, Denton

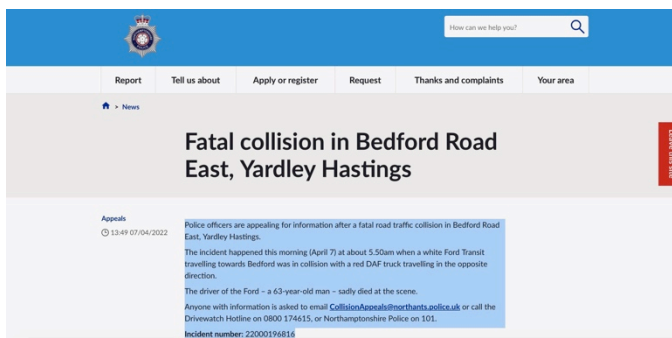
On 4 April, I gave you an update regarding the recent speed limit review panel meeting. They considered Denton Parish Council's request for a 40mph limit between to the two access points into the village on the



A428. There was a lot of discussion surrounding the request and it was decided that it would be useful for Police colleagues to gather some up to date speed data on the sections of road in question. This will enable the panel to make a more informed decision. The request will be considered further at the next meeting when the speed data will be available. I have gone back to Highways to ask them to let me know when they are going to do the check and when the results are going to be available and when the review meeting will take place. In the meantime, I sent them a copy of a recent police incident number 22000196816 where a 63-year-old driver died in a fatal accident on the A428 just outside Yardley

Hastings. I have asked them to bring this to the attention of the Committee. It is becoming clear that Highways must look carefully at the safety of the A428 from Little Houghton through to Yardley Hastings and I would like them to ensure that this is carried out.

I observed where the accident occurred on the day of the recent road closure and spoke to Police Officer on the scene.



If any other residents want to send information for the Panel in support of the Denton proposal or any related A428 matter then you can send this to me directly: stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

I will keep you informed.

In addition, I can advise that as part of the Red Route' process some route hygiene works have been identified along the A428 between Great Houghton and Yardley Hastings. This includes undertaking works to clean/repair/upgrade/replace existing signage to improve conspicuity of hazards, including junctions, village entrances and lay-bys, to ensure a consistent approach to hazard signing between the two villages. Consideration was also given to improving the signage at the lay-bys and changing the alignment of the western lay-by to prevent right turns and provide an acceleration lane. This work was all approved and will

go into the programme subject to prioritisation. If any other residents want to send information for the Panel in support of the proposal or any related matter then you can send this to me directly: stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

I will keep you informed.

Cogenhoe Farmers Market

I'm looking forward to the Mud Kitchen Café's monthly farmers' market and craft fair at Cogenhoe and Whiston Village Hall on Sunday 8th May 2022 from 10am to 3pm.

They have organised a really good range of stalls including, among others, Food for Thought, Brockleby's Pies, Love Edie Sweets, Michelle's Fancy Felts, Thermomix, Goodtoffee, Neals Yard, Cherry Blossom Candles, The House of Iniquity, Mini Map Makers, Pretty Home Decor plus a good range of fresh vegetables too.



Little Houghton White Cherry Tree

On 9 April, the Tree Warden for Little Houghton Parish Council, alerted me to a problem with a white cherry tree planted in Lodge Close, Little Houghton. The tree was planted by the Guides for the Queen's Coronation 1953 and is considered important to both the Guides and the village, as the white blossom looks spectacular against a blue sky. Ralph has requested that WNC inspect the tree to determine its condition for the following reasons:

1. The damage, which has occurred to the lower branch of the tree, which is brushed regularly by WNC bin lorries.
2. The hollowness of one particular branch of the tree.

I have asked WNC to arrange a site visit in order to determine the condition of the tree. I will keep you all updated.



Fundraising for the Brafield on the Green Jubilee Celebrations



10

TODAY AT 10:30

Fundraising Coffee Morning (& cake)

Brafield Club

I enjoyed meeting Michelle, Faith and others on Sunday 10 April at the 'Fundraising for the Brafield Jubilee Celebrations' in June. I had a warm welcome and I definitely enjoyed the coffee and cake. I am looking forward to seeing you all at the Coronation Tea Party on Thursday 2 June.

Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Hackleton and Grange Park
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk



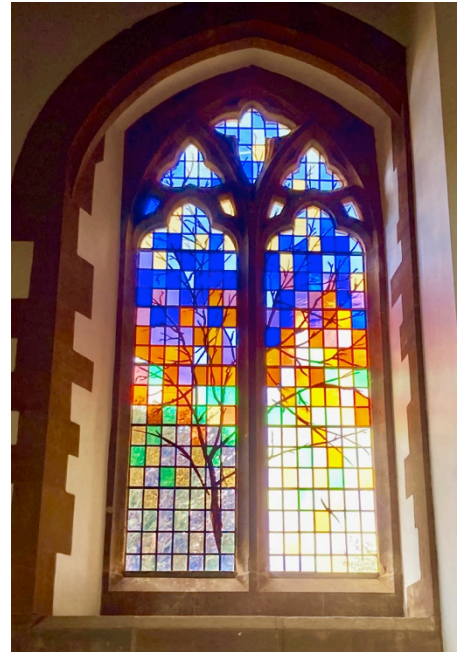
The BRAFIELD ON THE GREEN JUBILEE FUND, which was set up by a group of villagers to raise Funds for and organise events for the village for the Diamond Jubilee 10 years ago, is still active for the Platinum Jubilee. They are raising funds for the various Jubilee events. I have been happy to use some of my Councillor Covid Support Fund to help organise the Coronation Tea Party, which is to be held at the Working Men's Club (WMC) Brafield on the afternoon of Thursday 2nd June.

Little Houghton Parish Coffee Meeting

I was pleased to meet with residents from Little Houghton for their Parish Coffee Morning on Saturday 9 April 2022. It was an opportunity to catch up with John, Jenny, Gill, Ralph and others.

I was able to capture a photograph of the new west window for the south aisle of Little Houghton Church, which was installed in June 2021 and is to be dedicated in June this year.

A simple tree spreading its branches across the two light windows and upward into the tracery forms the background design. The theme, using different shades of coloured glass, reflects the several stages of life. Rachael Aldridge of Walgrave, Northamptonshire, created the window and the glass is from an old-established German maker of Glashuette Lamberts of Waldeassen in Bavaria.



Fly Tipping Hackleton

I have escalated the enclosed requesting that we check whether the originator of this material is identified in enclosed paperwork. This fly tipping in open countryside needs tackled and the offenders prosecuted.

Grange Park Parish Council and SEGRO S106 Funding

Applications for funding are made using a proforma, which is reviewed by the WNC S106 team to confirm it is in accordance with the terms of the agreement and it is then circulated to the Community Liaison Group for comments. The proforma and comments will then be forwarded with a recommendation for consideration by WNC. If authorised, the funds are then paid out. The applicant and the Community Liaison Group will be

advised of the outcome of the application for funding. All that remains is for Grange Park Parish Council to apply for the funds for an eligible project.

Mud Kitchen Café Reading Corner

On Friday 8 April 2022, I made a quick visit to the Mud Kitchen Cafe at the Cogenhoe and Whiston Village Hall to see the new Reading corner. I have been happy to use some of my Councillor Covid Support Fund to help with this initiative. The Mud Kitchen Cafe provides an engaging and friendly atmosphere for all members of the Cogenhoe community. It is a real community hub.



They wanted to improve what they were able to offer and provide a comfortable reading chair with coffee table and reading material.

Community hubs have an important role to play in supporting local communities. Developing a sustainable business model means that they are more likely to survive and thrive for generations of local people. Well done to Paula and Sean and all who support this hub for everything they do.

Fundraising Event, St Peter's Church, Cogenhoe



What a lovely afternoon at the Fundraising Event at St Peter's Church, Cogenhoe on 16 April, for Operation Smile UK and the village church. With an Easter Egg Hunt, tombolas, raffle, homemade cakes, and other stallholders as well as great refreshments and beautiful sunshine. It was good to meet up with so many of you again. Well done to all who were involved.

It was good to meet up with so many of you again. Well done to all who were involved.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme



This allows people in the UK to offer a home to people fleeing the war. Once



refugees have been matched with host families, they can begin the visa application process. The Government is carrying out the visa checks and once these are cleared, applicants will be given leave to travel to the UK.

Are you looking for ways to help the people of Ukraine arriving in West Northamptonshire? Individuals, charities, community groups and businesses can record their interest in supporting Ukrainians fleeing the war by completing our online form at <http://ow.ly/2OvK50ICY40>

Are you thinking of becoming a sponsor for the Homes for Ukraine scheme? Have you already signed up as a sponsor? We've put together a range of guidance and advice on our website at <http://westnorthants.gov.uk/homes-ukraine>

The Government's Ukraine Family Scheme

A family visa scheme, administered by the Government, is also in place. This allows people who were living in Ukraine on or before 1 January this year to apply to join UK-based family members. More information can be found on the Government website.

Our Council's role in the local response:

I have been asked about support and help for Ukrainian Refugees. WNC Cabinet released the following information on 12 April 2022.

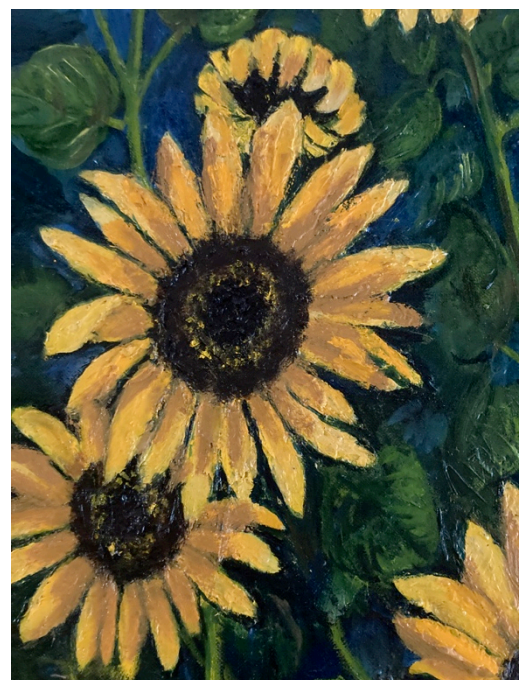
Anticipated arrivals across West Northamptonshire – 08/04/22

- Total number of sponsor households – 155
- Total number of Ukrainian guests – 303

The visits to sponsor/host households commenced w/c 04/04/22 for accommodation and safeguarding checks and the process to pay cash payments to guests are in place.

To answer your queries:

Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme Phase 1, Guests will be able to access Benefits, Health Care, Employment and other support.



Sponsors are required to:

Support & help guests to: adapt to life in UK; have access to food and essential supplies; have access to mobile phone and/or internet to stay in touch with family members; and help direct guests to public services e.g. GP and dentist. There is no requirement to cover food & living expenses – although they can choose to offer this.

The Role of WNC

When a visa application is received, WNC will be notified of the sponsor household and guest household, including the address.

Accommodation checks

- At least one in-person visit & check of accommodation prior to arrival of guests wherever possible.

Safeguarding checks

- Complete DBS checks of all adults in the sponsor household and enhanced DBS if any guest is under 18 or a vulnerable adult
- Following guest(s) arrival councils should confirm ASAP that: the guest is well; there are no serious safeguarding/welfare concerns; or needs for care & support.
- If concerns emerge to be dealt with under usual safeguarding practices and procedures.

Other Support

- To administer an interim £200 cash payment per guest on arrival for subsistence costs.
- Provide school places for school age children.
- Where necessary, provide advice and referrals to specialist public and health services as appropriate e.g., mental health services, adult social care, and children's services.
- Support guests to access local Jobcentre Plus appointments for benefit assessments and job seeking.
- The Council's statutory homelessness duties will apply where sponsor/guest relationships breakdown.
- Supporting integration into local communities, including access to translation services and working with faith groups & local voluntary sector organisations to help signpost guests to advice and support.
- To administer the £350 'thank you payment' to the sponsor each month.

West Northamptonshire Council is continuing to shape arrangements for providing every Ukrainian guest with a £200 payment, as recently announced by the Government.

Under the Government's Homes for Ukraine initiative, the payment will be given to each guest to cover the cost of immediate essentials, such as food, clothing and toiletries, before universal credit is made available.

The Council is predominantly a 'cashless organisation' – meaning it cannot generally conduct physical cash transactions in a timely or low risk way, which also helps prevent vulnerable people from being targeted or taken advantage of. It has opted to initially distribute the payments using a voucher system that has already successfully been in place for several months to help Afghan nationals resettling in West Northants. The vouchers can be redeemed either in store or online at a wide range of outlets.

Following recent feedback, the Council is also looking at other options for making payments, including the



possibility of a pre-paid card, and will update guests and host families in the coming days if this alternative can work with its existing systems.

We've recently received feedback that we need to look at alternatives, so we're looking at this and hope to have news on this in the coming days. For example we are considering a pre-paid card, which can be used like a debit card, but we have to look at what is workable in distributing the Government payments quickly and effectively.

I have been asked: "If I sponsor under the Homes for Ukraine scheme will I lose my council tax discount?"

The answer is: "sponsoring refugees through the Homes for Ukraine scheme will not impact your council tax, including single person discounts."

Role of Community Organisations, Faith Groups & Town and Parish Councils

The Initial meeting with key voluntary/community organisations and faith groups took place w/c 4th April. A Task & Finish Group is being set up where key voluntary/community organisations and faith groups can work with WNC to develop our local response.

WNC will support the development of locality groups in locations where there are clusters of sponsors.

Town & parish councils also being given the opportunity to become actively involved in developing the local response.

Other information

- Reset is working with Refugees at Home, an independent UK charity, to deliver training to the sponsors.

<https://www.refugeesathome.org/>

Councils have a critical role to play in the success of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. I am happy to help where I can.

CONSULTATIONS

The Big Conversation



The Big Conversation was open for 4 weeks until 27th March 2022. The Council analysed the residents' conversation and the Conversation with Staff ran from 4th April to 22 April 2022.

May 2022 onwards

West Northants Council will consider everything that has been contributed in the big conversations to create neighbourhood strategies, a citizen's charter between the council and local residents, and set out the council's ways of working for staff.

FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

Future Transformation Plans

Our Council is one year old this week. Since replacing the previous district, borough and county councils on 1 April last year we have



been making good progress on our fresh start to deliver better local public services across Daventry, Northampton and South Northants areas. Born from the biggest restructure of local government in Northamptonshire in over 40 years, and having guided communities through the challenges of the Covid pandemic, we now head into our second year with a balanced budget and additional investment in services ahead.

Future transformation plans are also taking shape, including:

- Progressing work to join up health and social care services and working collaboratively to help people live their best lives,
- Working on our Anti-Poverty plans and skills agenda,
- An ambitious new approach to making West Northants a more sustainable and environmentally friendly place to live and work,
- To protect and improve the local environment, economy and society for future generations

Progress over the First Year

You can read more about our first year in the Leader's Report to the Parish Councils, together with my Annual Report, but here are just some details of the progress we have made against our priorities over the past year:

Priority: Improving Life Choices

- Continuing the improvement journey in children's services as recognised by Ofsted
- Progressing plans to join up health and social care services
- Helping the most vulnerable including free school meals, funds to help households with food and energy bills, resettling Afghan families and beginning to co-ordinate the Government's Ukraine response locally
- Developing our Anti-Poverty Strategy with partner organisations and charities
- Council Tax reduction scheme and improving financial support for care leavers
- Developing the Armed Forces Covenant and establishing new armed forces hubs
- New customer experience strategy to improve how residents access our services

Priority: Green and Clean places

- Shaping our new sustainability goals - to net zero the Council's own emissions by 2030 and those of residents and businesses by 2045
- Retaining Green Flag awards for our high-quality parks
- Improving Towcester Water meadows and encouraging community tree planting
- £6.2m community flood protection scheme
- Installing new electric charge points across West Northants
- Crackdowns and prosecutions on environmental offenders, from fly-tipping and food safety to Trading Standards
- New litter charter and community litter-picking initiatives
- Grants for landowners to tackle fly tipping

Priority: Economic Development

- Submitting a bid for city status for Northampton
- Securing £37m funding for regenerating Northampton town centre and Market Square
- Delivering Daventry's new cinema complex
- Redeveloping Brackley Library and delivering our award-winning 'For the Love of Books' reading challenge to over a thousand residents
- Consulting on shaping our Strategic Plan
- Supporting businesses and start-ups with funding, advice and support

Priority: Connected Communities

- Embarking on a major roads improvement programme
- Making plans and funding bids to improve bus services
- Extending Northampton's public e-scooter scheme
- Shaping and progressing our future highways maintenance service and transport infrastructure

Priority: Thriving Villages and Towns

- Providing accommodation and support for rough sleepers
- Localising planning arrangements and simplified, more effective planning enforcement
- Investing in a host of initiatives to make communities safer
- Distributing grant funding for community and voluntary groups
- Re-opening the refurbished and extended Northampton Museum and Art Gallery
- Showcasing our heritage with open days and supporting the Go Northamptonshire destination campaign
- Redevelopment of Avenue campus into 170 new homes
- Working with parishes on Neighbourhood development plans and conservation area appraisals

Priority: Robust Resource Management

- Capping Council Tax rises at £99 per year
- On target deliver our first year on budget, and setting a balanced budget for the year ahead and making robust plans to tackle financial challenges
- Working to join up local services across the whole West Northants area, to make them better and more cost-effective

I think much has been done but there is much still to do and I hope that you continue to alert me to the problems you face and the issues that you would like me to help resolve. I want to see that the great results we had with South Northamptonshire Council are being reflected in the new Unitary Authority.

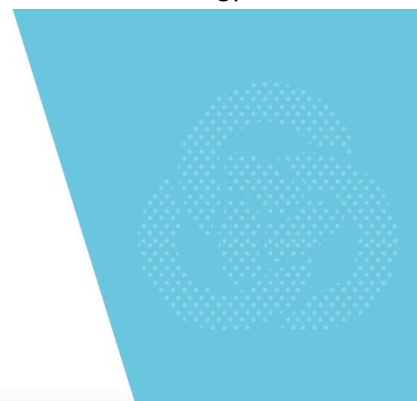
Anti-Poverty Strategy

West Northamptonshire Council's Cabinet adopted an Anti-Poverty Strategy at its meeting on Tuesday (12 April), which was designed to tackle poverty and deprivation and is particularly important in the context of current financial pressures facing households. It also forms part of the council's bold new approach to improve social, environmental and economic sustainability, which will help protect communities for future generations. The WNC approach is summed up in three overarching priorities, which are in turn built on some key principles aimed at helping people to live the best life possible. The strategy identified ten underlying principles recognising that people need:

- The best start in life
- Access to the best available education and learning
- Opportunity to be fit, well and independent
- Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty
- Housing that is affordable, safe and sustainable in places which are clean and green
- To feel safe in their homes and when out and about
- Connected to their families and friends



Anti Poverty Strategy



- The chance for a fresh start when things go wrong
- Access to health and social care when they need it
- To be accepted and valued simply for whom they are.

In order to provide these opportunities for people, it will be necessary for the council to work with a range of partners. The three governing principles behind this approach are:

- Supporting people who are struggling in poverty now
- Preventing people falling into poverty in the first place
- Influencing the Government and other national organisations to get the best deal for the people of West Northamptonshire.

The strategy has been developed with cross-party support and its aims include improving health and wellbeing, increasing average household income, reducing reliance on benefits, lowering the cost of rented and social housing, improving outcomes for young people and tackling fuel poverty.

Council Tax Energy Rebate

Eligible households in West Northamptonshire are due to receive the Government's £150 Council Tax energy rebate in the coming weeks. The rebate applies to households in Council Tax Bands A to D, of which there about 147,000 in West Northants.

Processing the rebate has required a major undertaking by Revenues and Benefits, who have had to work with software suppliers and establish new processes in order to make the payments as quickly as possible. While the process has taken longer than originally anticipated, it is hoped that the first payments will be made to residents by mid-May.



Direct Debit payers

For the 99,000 homes in Bands A to D that pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit, the council has received updates from its software suppliers and is carrying out testing before applying the update to the live systems. The data is due to be uploaded to the portal on or around 9 May, in the hope of making the first payments to residents by mid-May. If any accounts require any further information or validation this will be done as soon as possible.

Non-Direct Debit payers

For around 48,000 Council Tax payers in Bands A to D who don't pay by Direct Debit, we are identifying eligible households, and will write to them in the week beginning 16 May. The letters will invite people to make claims online using a secure pin number, however paper application forms will also be enclosed for those without Internet access. The claims received will then be validated and, as long as no issues are raised, payment will be made. Based on the volumes of claims we are expecting and depending on how quickly applications are returned, we would expect to start making payments in June. To ensure that all eligible residents receive the rebate, any residents that have not made an application by 31 July 2022 will have their Council Tax account credited with the £150 payment.

Discretionary Scheme

The Council also has a discretionary scheme to help those in Bands E-H and non-Council Taxpayers who are vulnerable. Further information about this will be published in the coming weeks.

One Stop Shop, Community Law Service

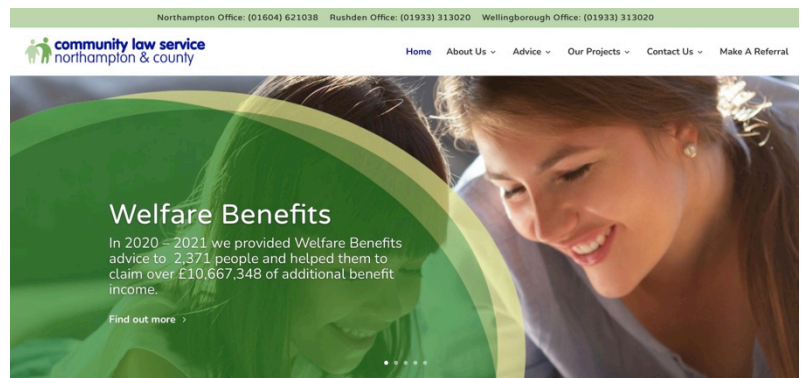
Free, independent, confidential and specialist legal advice is being offered to Northamptonshire's residents, by Community Law Service (Northampton and County). If you would like to access information in the One Stop Shop, Community Law Service offers help with housing repossession and eviction, welfare benefits, debt, immigration, energy efficiency advice and fuel poverty. Community Law Service (Northampton and County) is a registered charity and an independent specialist social welfare advice provider and holds the Law Society's LEXCEL quality mark demonstrating excellence in client care.

The free sessions started on April 4th and will run for the coming months.

The Community Law Service reception desk in the One Stop Shop is open between 9.30am - 12-30 pm Monday to Thursday. Some sessions must be pre booked in advance by calling 01604 621038 or visiting the reception at The Guildhall or Community Law Service office at 49-53 Hazelwood Road, Northampton. Residents can also receive advice by email, telephone, Zoom or a home visit. For more information visit Community Law Service or call 01604 621038.

The service is currently funded by:

- North Northamptonshire Council
- West Northamptonshire Council
- Legal Aid Agency
- Community Justice Fund
- Money and Pensions Service
- Northamptonshire Carers
- British Gas Energy Trust
- National Grid Warm Homes Fund
- Self-funded Immigration Advice Service
- The National Lottery Community Fund



REGULATORY SERVICES

Test Purchasing Targets underage sales of e-cigarettes

A shop sold an e-cigarette to a 16-year-old girl during a test purchasing operation carried out by West Northamptonshire Council's Trading Standards team. The girl, under the supervision of Trading Standards' officers, visited five shops during the exercise, attempting to buy e-cigarettes at two shops and cigarettes at the others. The legal age to buy these in the UK is 18.



Three of the shops correctly asked for her ID and refused sale when she could not produce any, while another refused sale but failed to ask for ID. However one of the shops sold the girl an e-cigarette after making no checks at all, and will now face further investigation. All of the shops chosen for the exercise were the subject of complaints over underage sales, and shopkeepers across West Northamptonshire are being reminded of the proof-of-age checks they must make before selling tobacco or e-cigarettes. Most businesses do this by

operating a Challenge 25 policy. If a customer looks under the age of 25, proof of age is required, and staff

must be trained to verify the customer's age before selling age-restricted products. The vape test purchases were part of an enforcement project supported by the Department of Health & Social Care that aims to ensure e-cigarettes or e-liquids are not sold to people under the age of 18.

It follows a previous operation in February, when two out of the five shops visited sold e-cigarettes to a 15-year-old girl. People can report underage sales to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133

Food Standards Agency-Sunflower Oil

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has issued consumer guidance that, due to conflict in Ukraine affecting



sunflower oil supplies, some food products labelled as containing sunflower oil may instead contain other oils.

The guidance recently issued on the use of refined rapeseed oil has now been extended to include fully refined palm oil, fully refined coconut oil, and fully refined soybean oil.

Stay informed here:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/.../update-fsa-provides-consumer...>

PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Appeals

Since my appointment, I have kept you informed as to the progress of the major Appeals in South Northamptonshire. The update for this month is as follows:

- Hartwell, land North of Ashton Road-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land South of Station Road-Dismissed
- Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton-Dismissed
- Greens Norton, land off Mill Lane-Withdrawn
- Milton Malsor, land East of Lower Lane-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land off Northampton Road -Dismissed.
- Yardley Gobion, land at Asana Lodge Appeal-Inquiry 8 February 2022 for 3 days-Cancelled
- Yardley Gobion, land East of Northampton Road Hearing Date Offered of 27/07/22 TBC

Land off Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton- Appeal Dismissed

The long awaited decision regarding the Blakesley Hill Appeal, Greens Norton was received yesterday, 20 April 2022. The Planning Inspector dismissed the Appeal giving the following reasons:

- By virtue of being outside the settlement confines for Greens Norton, it is contrary to JCS Policy R1 (G), and LPP2 Policies SS1 (2) and LH1 (2).
- The scale of the proposal would undermine the urban focused spatial strategy and is not, therefore, appropriate to the scale of the existing settlement contrary to JCS Policy R1 (E).
- The proposal would not comply with the spatial strategy of the plan and would not represent a plan led development. The proposal would undermine the settlement hierarchy and would provide future residents with limited accessibility to necessary day-to-day facilities by sustainable transport modes.
- The proposal would lead to a significant encroachment of the built form into the open countryside.

- It does not comply with the development plan when read as a whole.
- The adverse impacts in relation to undermining a recently adopted plan led spatial strategy, limited accessibility to services by sustainable transport modes, and harm to character and appearance are detailed above. The development would be unlikely to function well over its lifetime because of its poor connectivity. These adverse impacts are afforded significant weight given their conflict with the Framework requirements that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led, managing patterns of growth to promote sustainable transport, whilst recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The environmental dimension of sustainable development would not be achieved given the identified harms and this weighs significantly against the proposal.
- The Council's 5 Year HLS position is agreed to be between no less than 2.31 years (appellant) and no more than 3.11 years (Council) under the administrative area approach. Even if the Planning Inspector were to conclude there is a shortfall in the 5 Year HLS on the scale suggested by the appellant, the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

A great many other appeal decisions were considered in evidence and cited in support of the parties' respective cases. However, each decision turned on its own evidence, as has the Inspector's decision. Even though the proposal would deliver significant benefits, the application of the tilted balance would still not indicate permission should be granted. As such, he found material considerations did not exist to justify a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.

West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, Spatial Options Consultation

West Northamptonshire Council is preparing a new strategic plan, which will guide development for the area up to 2050. The West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan (WNSP) sets out a vision for West Northamptonshire in 2050 and the objectives to realise the ambitions for our economy, our communities and our environment. The next Planning Policy Meeting is on 24 May 2022.

HOUSING

Housing Strategy



With the population of West Northamptonshire set to grow by seven per cent by 2030, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is consulting on core themes of a new Housing Strategy. The strategy will be the first encompassing the whole of West Northamptonshire and will replace the housing strategies agreed by the former district and borough councils. Proposals for the four core themes of the strategy are: delivering homes people need and can afford,

to improve the quality of housing services, to allow residents to live safe, independent and active lives, and to support the growth of sustainable communities.

For each of the core themes residents are being asked: if they think the right draft themes have been identified, their suggested priorities, and whether the council is missing anything out. Results of the consultation will feed into the drafting of the new Housing Strategy. To take part on the consultation, visit the WNC Citizen Space.

West Northamptonshire Consultation Register: Helping us to shape our new Housing Strategy

West Northamptonshire Council is developing a new housing strategy, which will be a high-level document that will explain our vision, plans and priorities for the next two years. We want to make sure that the new

housing strategy covers the housing issues important to our residents and stakeholders and this can be achieved by asking you to help us shape it and we welcome your views and comments.

This questionnaire closes at midnight on Tuesday 24 May 2022.

Please visit the West Northamptonshire Consultation Hub for further information about the proposal and how to have your say. If you have any questions or enquiries about the consultation, please contact the Housing Strategy and Partnership Team at: ConsultationHousingStrategy@westnorthants.gov.uk

New Communal Garden Spaces



New communal garden spaces have been created in Northampton neighbourhood where residents can grow food and spend time outside. Housing provider, Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH), created the spaces in St James for residents of Abbey, Melbourne and Devonshire House. The



installation of the raised planter beds was made possible through funding from PCSO Andrew Emberton from Northamptonshire Police and the Office of the Fire, Police and Crime Commissioner (OFPCC). Tenants were invited to an event where they could claim their free plot in their communal gardens and have already planted flowers, herbs such as basil and chives, and vegetables such as spinach, onions and lettuce leaves which will bloom in the coming weeks and months. The funding for this project came from the OFPCC grants fund. Local businesses also got involved to donate soil, give discounts on hand tools and seeds to get residents set up with everything they needed to get growing. Members of the NPH estates team also volunteered their own time to build the planters and fill them with soil, ready for residents to start planting their seeds. More raised planter beds are available to residents living in Abbey, Devonshire or Melbourne House. Those who would like to sign up for their plot should speak to their housing officer or call NPH resident involvement team on 0300 330 7003.

ENVIRONMENT

Nine Sacks of Rubbish results in £1,300 fines

A woman who dumped nine sacks of rubbish and two carrier bags of used fireworks by the side of a road



has been ordered to pay more than £1,300 in fines and court costs. A Neighbourhood Warden from West Northamptonshire Council found the rubbish piled on a grass verge next to a zebra crossing in Holmecross Road in Thorplands, Northampton on 8 November last year. Following an investigation, the Warden served a fixed penalty notice of £150 on Tanya Dawes (35), of Arbour View Court, Thorplands.

However after failing to pay the penalty notice or make any contact with the Council, she was prosecuted. And at Wellingborough Magistrates Court on Tuesday 29 March, Dawes was found guilty in her absence of littering. She was fined £200 and ordered to pay prosecution costs of £1,125, plus a victim surcharge of £34. A 28-day collection order was made for the total sum of £1,359.

Sustainable West Northants



We are encouraging residents and businesses to make personal pledges on how they will do their bit to make West Northants a more sustainable place to live and work.

Last week saw the launch of Sustainable West Northants – an ambitious new approach towards protecting and improving the local environment, economy and society for future generations.

The initiative, which is being spearheaded by our Council and partners across the area, aims to ensure everyone is working towards the same objectives and targets for developing sustainability, which are being mapped against global goals

set by the United Nations. This will only succeed if everybody gets involved, so we are asking residents, businesses and other organisations across West Northants to share their own steps and ideas to help make a difference, by making a Sustainability Pledge and inspiring others. People can learn more and make sustainability pledges at sustainable.westnorthants.gov.uk - which will help the Council to measure efforts taking place across the area to protect and enhance West Northants. We have also unveiled WNC's three key Sustainability Pledges – our primary commitments alongside the beginnings of a bold new strategy for steering forward resources and actions. Significant work is now going into the actions that will deliver these pledges. WNC's pledges are to:

- Net Zero the Council's own emissions by 2030 and those of residents and businesses by 2045
- Take a community leadership role for Sustainability in West Northants
- Ensure all Council strategies and policies are aligned to and contribute to the delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Garden Waste Subscription



More than 50,000 households have signed-up to our garden waste subscription service for the forthcoming year.

We have been pleased with the response so far, but we would like to remind residents who have not yet signed-up that it is not too late to do so. The annual subscription charge for the fortnightly service to April 2023 is £42 per bin, and this can be paid via debit or credit card at:

www.westnorthants.gov.uk/gardenwaste

Those who are unable to get online can subscribe to the service by phoning the council on 0300 126 7000.

Collection crews have a record of which households have

subscribed for the service as they make their rounds, so residents will be able to put their bin out on their next collection day as soon as they have paid, without the need to wait for their sticker to arrive.

Due to the large demand, there are times when the website and phone lines can be busy, and we are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause people. However we would ask anyone who experiences difficulties paying their subscription online to please be patient and try again later. People who can't access the internet, or who don't feel confident to do so, can always phone us on our main number or pop along to our offices, where we will be happy to guide them through the process.

Residents with questions about the service may find an answer in our comprehensive list of FAQs, which can be found at www.westnorthants.gov.uk/gardenwaste

RURAL SERVICES NETWORK (RSN)

RSN events

I attended the RSN Seminar: Rural Decarbonisation on 27 April 2022.

I shall be attending the Rural Conference from 19-23 September 2022.

- Rural Transport - 10am, 19/9/2022
- Rural Regeneration - 10am, 20/9/2022
- Rural Health, Care and Wellbeing - 10am, 21/9/2022
- RSN Event - 2pm, 21/9/2022
- Rural Housing - 10am, 22/9/2022
- Rural Net Zero - 10am, 23/9/2022

Farmers at threat of fuel thefts

Farmers with diesel and oil storage tanks are being warned to check their security amidst increased fears that thieves could target them.



William Nicholl, client director at rural insurance broker Lycetts, said:

“Storage tanks contain thousands of pounds of oil and diesel, so they have an obvious appeal to thieves.

“In recent weeks there have been a number of nationwide incidents of organised gangs siphoning-off fuel.

This is no hi-tech, difficult to organise crime – a 1,000-litre tank can be drained within minutes.

“Fertiliser theft is also becoming an increasing problem, and yet another consideration that beleaguered farmers will need to take into account.”

Farmers are a particular target, as, due to the nature of their business, they require greater amounts of red and white diesel, and oil. Financially, it benefits them to buy in bulk as prices are usually reduced.

With farms often located in isolated or difficult to reach areas, farmers are further incentivised to store large amounts on-site, which again makes them vulnerable to thieves. However, there are a number of measures farmers can implement which could reduce the likelihood of them becoming victims.

“Siting tanks out of view from roads is a sensible precaution,” said Nicholl.

“However, many tanks look unattractive and for that reason owners often position them out of sight of the farmhouse. The problem with this is that they locate them in areas of the property that make it easier for thieves to act unobserved.

“Lighting and CCTV cameras can be effective security measures, but it is important to maintain them and test them regularly as they may have become inoperative.

“The actual material tanks are made of should be considered before purchase. Steel ones are much more difficult for thieves to drill through – or carry away.

“Owners could also consider installing secure cages around the tanks.

“Daily checks of oil tank gauges should be made. Technology is also available that sends text messages to multiple mobile phones if there is an unexpected drop in oil levels. Additionally, there are alarms that continually monitor levels using ultrasonics and sound-off when they suddenly drop.”

Rural areas have long suffered from underfunding by successive governments.

Rural councils will receive some 37 per cent (£105) per head less in Settlement Funding Assessment than their urban counterparts in 2022/23. As a result, council tax in rural areas has increased steadily to help balance budgets, with rural residents paying, on average, 21 per cent (£104) per head more than those in urban areas.

The ‘Levelling up the UK’ White Paper promised to ‘break the link between geography and destiny, so that no matter where you live you have access to the same opportunities. The White Paper’s Four Aims are to:

1. Boost productivity,
2. Spread opportunity,
3. Restore a sense of pride and belonging, and
4. Empower local leaders and communities.



Productivity in rural areas is 83 per cent of that for England as a whole, with predominantly rural areas accounting for 22 per cent of the population, but contributing around 15 per cent economically. The high cost of housing in rural areas, combined with lower average wages and

the significantly higher fuel-poverty gap in which many rural households find themselves, has created a perfect storm for the current cost-of-living crisis. Levelling Up Funding should assess the standards of living achievable in different locations given local labour market conditions, to distribute funding to those areas in need. The measures and metrics in the White Paper need to be available at a suitably micro level to enable the pockets of deprivation in rural areas to be acknowledged with support targeted appropriately. The Government must acknowledge the differentials within rural areas that need to be addressed.

The White Paper is light on details regarding which bodies will be charged with delivery. Local government will clearly have a key role to play, but additional funding to meet change on the scale envisaged is not set out clearly, nor is the current funding gap addressed.

Can the White Paper deliver levelling up for rural areas? It can, but it needs to measure the current status quo at the right level, and introduce targeted interventions, delivered locally, that meet rural challenges and enable our rural areas to achieve their full potential.

Unless such efforts are made, the verdict on the levelling up White Paper from the rural perspective will be 'could do better'. This would be a serious lost opportunity to transform rural services.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Removal of Testing Guidance for the majority of the Population

Lockdown regulations have been replaced by a requirement on local authorities to manage outbreaks through planning and pre-existing public health powers, as they would with other infectious / communicable diseases. As a local health team we continue to use contact tracing and provide context-specific advice where they assess this to be necessary as part of their role in managing infectious diseases particularly in care and healthcare settings. We maintain capability to enable a rapid testing response, should it be required. All contingency measures are being kept under review. With the removal of legislation the onus is to be put on personal responsibility as we learn to live with Covid 19 safely.

Free testing for most people was removed 1 April 2022 with some testing still available for select groups. This document serves to update you with what we currently know with further clarification imminent from central government.

Removal of testing – as of 00:01 Friday 1 April

The Government announced the next step in its COVID 19 strategy on March 29. Free testing for the general public ends after 31 March as part of the 'Living with Covid' plan which last month set out the Government's strategy to live with and manage the virus. People at risk of serious illness from COVID- 19, and eligible for treatments, will continue to get free tests to use if they develop symptoms, along with NHS and adult social care staff and those in other high-risk settings.

From 1 April free COVID 19 tests will continue to be available to protect people who are at higher risk of serious illness from COVID 19, and eligible for treatments, if they develop symptoms. Free tests will also continue for NHS and social care staff and those in other high-risk settings. Free testing for the general public ends after 31 March as set out in the Government's 'Living with Covid' plan.

From 1 April the following groups will be eligible for tests:

Symptomatic Testing

1. Patients in hospital, where a PCR test is required for their care and to provide access to treatments and to support ongoing clinical surveillance for new variants.
2. People who are eligible for community COVID-19 treatments because they are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19. People in this group will be contacted directly and sent lateral flow tests to keep at home for use if they have symptoms as well as being told how to reorder tests.
3. People living or working in some high-risk settings. For example, staff in adult social care services such as homecare organisations and care homes, and residents in care homes and extra care and supported living services, NHS workers and those working and living in hospices, and prisons and places of detention (including immigration removal centres), where infection needs to be identified quickly to minimise outbreaks. People will also be tested before being discharged from hospital into care homes, hospices.

Asymptomatic Testing

1. Asymptomatic lateral flow testing will continue from April in some high-risk settings where infection can spread rapidly while prevalence is high. This includes patient-facing staff in the NHS and NHS- commissioned Independent Healthcare Providers, staff in hospices and adult social care

services, such as homecare organisations and care homes, a small number of care home visitors who provide personal care, staff in some prisons and places of detention and in high risk domestic abuse refuges and homelessness settings.

1. In addition, testing will be provided for residential SEND, care home staff and residents during an outbreak and for care home residents upon admission. This also includes some staff in prisons and immigration removal centres. While the restrictions are now removed, and most testing reduced, the pandemic is not over. The public should continue to follow the updated public health guidance to protect themselves and others, particularly those who may become seriously ill if infected with COVID-19. [People with symptoms of a respiratory infection including COVID-19 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Sensible infection protection control measure

Although, these are now advisory rather than legal they will enable those in West Northamptonshire to live more safely with COVID-19, including:

1. Regularly washing or sanitising hands, especially when returning home after an outing/shopping and before eating
2. Staying at home if unwell to reduce the risk of passing COVID-19 or other illnesses onto friends, family, colleagues, and the wider community
3. Wearing of face coverings in crowded and enclosed spaces, especially where coming into contact with people they do not usually meet and when rates of transmission are high
4. COVID-19 remains a dangerous disease, particularly if you haven't been vaccinated. Getting vaccinated and having boosters when invited is important. To book an appointment, those eligible should visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccine or call 119. Alternatively, people can visit a local drop-in clinic – visit www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/covidvaccine
5. Meeting in well-ventilated areas where possible, such as outdoors or indoors with windows open

There are currently three main social media channels for promoting local public health messages, which are also supported and shared by WNC and NNC's corporate communications channels.

www.facebook.com/PublicHealthNorthants

www.twitter.com/NorthantsPH and Instagram - [@Publichealthnorthamptonshire](https://www.instagram.com/Publichealthnorthamptonshire)

Healthy Start

Fruit and vegetables are part of a healthy, balanced diet and can help your family stay healthy.

If you're pregnant, or have a child under the age of 4, you could be eligible to help towards the cost of healthy essentials.

Find out more by visiting

<https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>



40 years of public Service Jeanette Davies

A manager of young adult day services has described an exciting care career filled with opportunities as she retired after 40 years of public service. Jeanette Davies recently said a fond farewell to service users and colleagues past and present and is keen to see a new generation of care workers enjoy an equally long and rewarding career with West Northamptonshire Council. Having started her career at Cotswold House, Duston in 1981, she quickly became relief assistant deputy, before leaving to become a caseworker at Eleanor Lodge in Delapre. Jeanette said one of her proudest achievements was bidding for, and winning, catering and hospitality tenders for John Dryden House and County Hall. That gave 12 adults with learning difficulties gainful employment even before the opening for two more cafes in Northampton – The Kingsley

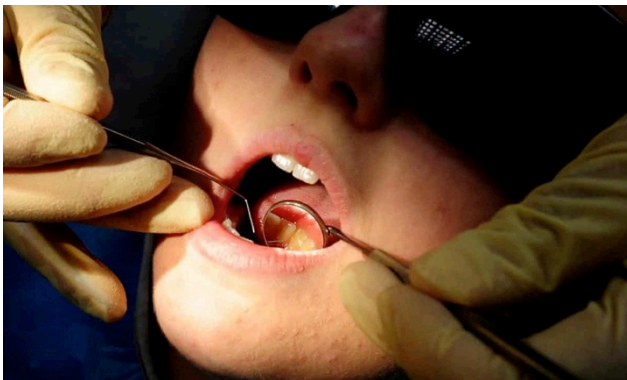


Coffee Spot and Allison Gardens. And throughout these years Jeanette completed three degrees including social working and counselling qualifications. But her career highlight was her involvement in the setting up of Olympus Care Service which led to the Olympus Chief Executive Fiona Seymour nominating and presenting Jeanette with an outstanding achievement award. Jeanette retired on Thursday, 31 March after enjoying a celebration at the Gladstone Resource Centre in Northampton, which included colleagues past, and present, family and service users. She said: "I always thought that joining the Council was

a job for life and for me it has been, with opportunities to grow and development all the way along. Jeanette said: "Care about the role you are in and your colleagues will respect you. And most of all, be reliable and join us because you genuinely want to work in an organisation that cares and supports others." For more stories about the rewarding work available within social care in West Northamptonshire and to view the latest vacancies, visit - <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers>.

NHS Dental Services in Northamptonshire

I am receiving complaints about the lack of NHS Dental Services in Northamptonshire. It is made worse by the fact that residents are unable to understand the current position, as the various search engines do not have the most up to date information about which Dentists are currently taking on NHS Patients. In fact in



a recent BBC investigation dated 7 February 2022, entitled Northamptonshire: Finding an NHS dentist 'a needle in a haystack' - BBC News they found only one dental practice in the county taking on NHS patients.

The Northamptonshire CCG NHS Dentists website suggests that there were 8 Urgent Dental Care Services in Northamptonshire, without stating their location. Indeed, when you search on 'Find a Dentist', they mostly state 'This dentist is not taking any new NHS patients at the moment' or something similar.

I am asking how the Northamptonshire CCG intends to address the provision of NHS Dental Services in Northamptonshire. I have been advised that all primary care concerns and complaints come under the remit of NHS England/Improvement and I have been referred to england.contactus@nhs.net.

I anticipate that rising energy costs will severely impact the cost of living and NHS Dental Services will be much needed this year.

Please contact me if you are experiencing problems with finding an NHS Dentist in Northamptonshire.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan Discussion Paper

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan Discussion Paper was published last week (14th April) by the Department of Health and Social Care.

<https://www.gov.uk/.../quick-read-version-of-the-mental...>

The discussion paper seeks to consult the public on a range of topics to inform the development of a new mental health and wellbeing plan. In particular, it invites the views on how to:

- improve people's mental well-being (chapter 1)
- prevent people experiencing mental ill-health (chapter 2)
- help people get support at the earliest stage (chapter 3)
- improve treatment for mental ill-health (chapter 4)
- make sure people with a mental health condition live well (chapter 5)
- best support people in mental health crisis (chapter 6)



The paper is substantial in length and covers the government's progress to date, the research and evidence behind each of the six chapters, and a section on various groups that face disparities in mental health outcomes.

You can respond to any or all discussion topics via this online survey (the deadline for responses is 11:45pm on 5 July 2022).

EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

School Admissions Arrangements

The school's admission authority determines school admission arrangements annually, even if they have not changed from the previous year. We are the admission authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools in the area. Other types of schools have their own admission authority:



- The **governing body** is the admission authority for foundation and voluntary aided schools
- The **academy trust** is the admission authority for academies, free school and UTCs

Admission authorities of schools wishing to make changes to their admission arrangements must publicly consult on the changes before determination. Further information can be found on <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/school-admissions/school-admission-arrangements>

Allocation of Secondary School Places

A total of 4,786 secondary school places have been allocated to pupils across West Northamptonshire today. This is the first year that places have been allocated specifically within West Northants, following on from local government reorganisation last year. 79.4 per cent of applicants – 3,798 children – have been allocated a place at their first preference – a slightly lower percentage than for the county as a whole last year (80.7 per cent in 2021). 95.8 per cent of applicants have been allocated one of their preferred schools – similar to the number of children getting a place at a preference school (95.7 per cent in 2021). 98.7 per cent of applications were made online (the same as in 2021).



Families who applied for their secondary school place online and within the deadline are able to check their offer on the council's website today at – www.westnorthants.gov.uk/secondary-school-offers. Any parent has the right to appeal (through the independent appeals process) against refusal of a place at any school for which they have applied. The next round of secondary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in April. Primary school allocations will be announced on April 19 2022.

They now find themselves once again in a situation when schools are reporting a lack of devices at home which, continues to form a divide in the classroom therefore the charity are applying their energy and asking local contacts to donate unwanted laptops, desktops or tablets so that they can get these to the children in greatest need and help to level up our communities where everyone can get the best education. Please donate equipment to your local TowFood or SNVB Volunteer or to Towcester Town Football Supporters Club, 19 Islington Road, Towcester NN12 6AU – Please place in shed in the car park during hours when the club is closed. Team@towfood.org.uk or 01327 636982 ; Donations to <https://local.giving.org/charity/SNVB/>

Allocation of Primary School Places

Thousands of pupils have been allocated primary school places across West Northamptonshire – for September 2022. More than 4,595 reception places at primary school places were allocated to pupils across West Northamptonshire yesterday 19 April 2022.

This year, 94.4 per cent of applicants secured a place at their first preference school, up slightly from 94.3 per cent in 2021 for the whole of Northamptonshire under Northants County Council.

While the number of families being offered a place at one of their preferred schools is 99.5 per cent, up from 98.9 per cent in 2021.



Parents/carers who applied for their primary school place online and within the deadline are able to check their school offer on the council's website today at - <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/primary-school-offers-2022>.

Additionally, the number of pupils obtaining their first preference for junior school (Year 3) places was 95.2 per cent (99.5 per cent last year).

For those who were not successful in gaining a place at their preferred school, parents have the right to appeal through the independent admission appeals process.

The next round of primary school place allocations (for late applicants) will take place in May.

Homes for Ukraine - children applying for a school place

In-year school places

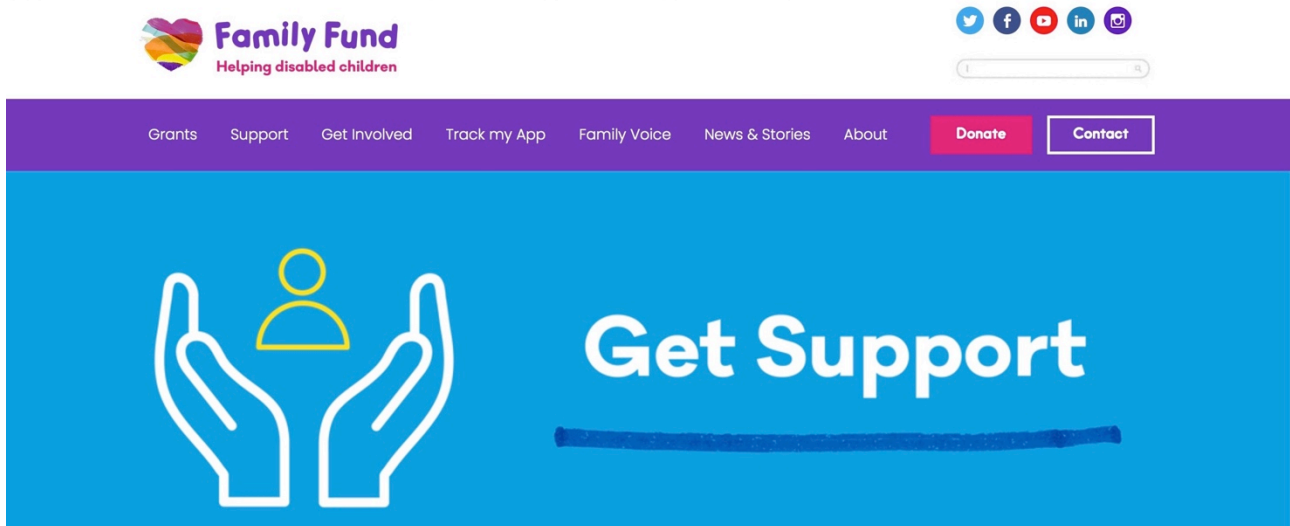
Sponsors hosting a family, which has children who need in-year school places, should advise parents to make an in-year application. If the child is in Year 6 now, an application should be made for an in-year school place in a primary school. In addition, they will need to apply for a Year 7 place at a secondary school in September 2022.

Reception places

If the child requires a place in Reception from September 2022, please apply for a primary school place. For any further information, please contact the School Admissions team.

Family Fund – The Family Fund Trust for families with severely disabled children

The Family Fund helps families across the UK who are raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young person aged 17 or under.



You can apply to Family Fund subject to a number of criteria which include that you are the parent or carer of a disabled or seriously ill child or young person aged 17 or under and that you have evidence of entitlement to one of the following: Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit and Pension Credit.

See the website for more details.

<https://www.familyfund.org.uk/>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & GRANT FUNDING

Councillor COVID Support Fund 2021-22

As you know there is a Councillor COVID Support Fund to allocate money within our wards in order to make a positive impact on the areas we represent and to empower residents to be active in their communities' recovery from the impact of COVID. I received eleven expressions of interest and seven completed applications with seven awards issued. One application didn't meet the criteria, three weren't progressed and one project was funded jointly. I have allocated my entire £2,500 available fund. Councillors Andrew Grant and Fiona Cole may still have some funding available.

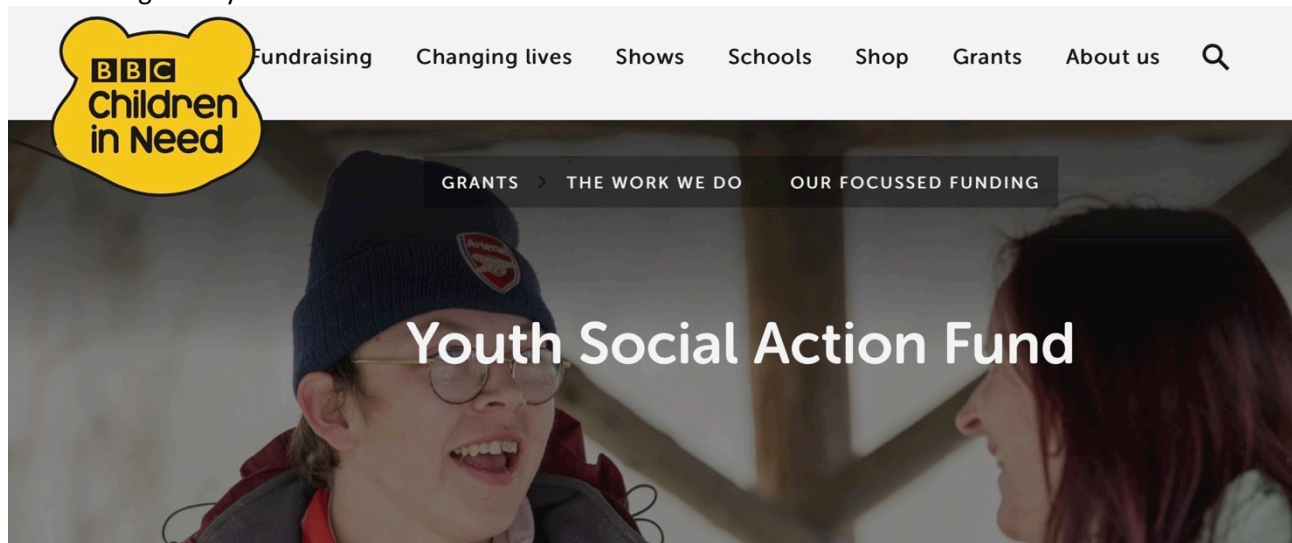
I have enclosed a list of projects, which have been supported by me.

Project	Amount
Quinton Community	£300.00 (£206.89 SC £93.11 AG)
Mud Kitchen Café Community Hub	£217.96
Children's Jubilee Celebration, Denton	£600.00

Surgery Volunteer Patient Car Scheme, Denton	£350
Pensioners Coronation Tea Party, Brafield	£310
Pre School Outdoor Play, Cogenhoe	£415.15
Wildflower Project, Denton	£400.00
Total	£2,500 + £93.11 from AG

Youth Social Action Fund – BBC Children in Need

BBC Children in Need, in partnership with the [#iwill](#) Fund and The Hunter Foundation, are delivering a £3 million fund to support organisations to embed youth social action across the UK. This fund will help to build children and young people’s confidence and skills, empowering them to take an active and leading role in developing solutions to issues which affect their lives and their communities. The [#iwill](#) Fund is a £54 million joint investment between The National Lottery Community Fund and The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This funding will support organisations to bring social action and youth empowerment opportunities to children and young people, to help prevent or overcome the effects of the disadvantages they face.



The fund especially wants to reach:

1. Organisations who focus on addressing issues of disadvantage affecting children and young people
2. Children and young people who have some experience of social action and want to develop their skills and experience to do more.
3. Children and young people who have no experience of social action work at all but want to find out what it is all about.

Up to £15k is available for unregistered organisations and up to £50k for registered bodies.

Information sessions are being held from 5 to 11 April and the deadline for applications is 23 May.

Youth Social Action Fund - BBC Children in Need.

Magic Little Grants – Localgiving

After successfully distributing 2,000 grants to Localgiving members in 2021, the 2022 programme has been



announced, supported by the People's Postcode Lottery. They will be awarding £500 grants to 2,650 charitable organisations on Localgiving. Applications for Magic Little Grants 2022 will be open from 16 March and applications should take just ten minutes to complete. <https://localgiving.org/magic-little-grants/>

Garfield Weston Foundation



The Foundation supports UK registered charities working within the UK in the areas of Welfare, Youth, Community, Arts, Faith, Environment, Education, Health and Museums & Heritage.

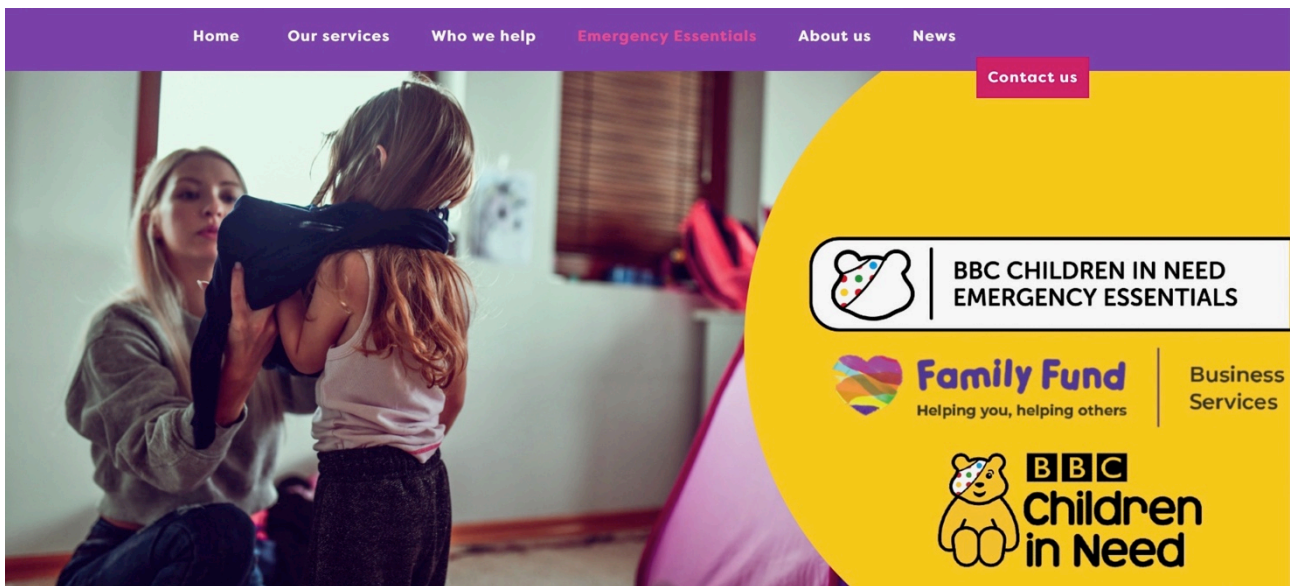
The Foundation awards grants for Capital, Project and Revenue costs. Where they already have a funding history with you, the Trustees may consider a multi-year request for up to three years, provided you can demonstrate that a longer-term commitment will add value to your organisation's objectives. There are no deadlines for applications under £100,000.

Grants above this level are reviewed at one of 8 board meetings a year.

<https://garfieldweston.org/apply-to-us/grant-guidelines/>

Emergency Essentials Programme – BBC Children in Need

Family Fund Business Services are working in collaboration with BBC Children in Need to deliver the Emergency Essentials programme supporting children and young people living with severe poverty as well as additional pressures such as domestic violence, disability or poor health in the family.



The programme can deliver or fund critical items such as:

- Gas or electric cookers
- Essential household items
- Furniture and kitchen equipment
- Children's beds and bedding
- Washing machines
- Fridges and freezers
- Baby equipment
- Clothing in exceptional or emergency situations.

Applications must be completed by a registered referrer who is part of an organisation that is supporting the family or young person and capable of assessing their needs.

Are you Struggling Financially?

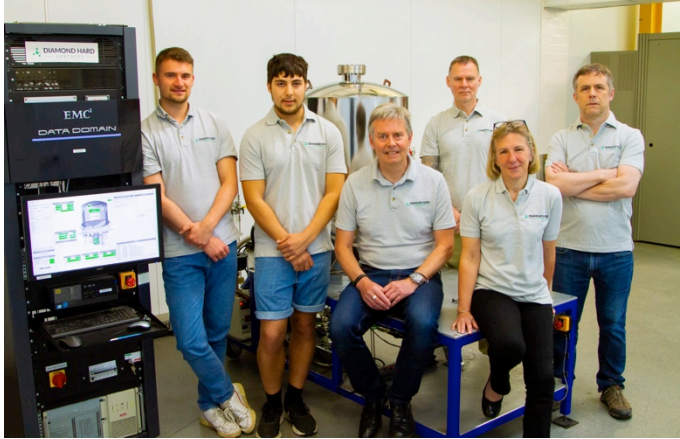
Residents struggling financially can be signposted to a range of local organisations for help, advice and support. In addition to the support our Council can provide, such as benefits, housing and discretionary schemes plus the distribution of government support funding when available, residents can also contact a range of local organisations including the following:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau can help provide advice and guidance for residents struggling with the cost of living – local contacts below:
 - CAB Northampton - 03444 889 629 / 03444 111 444
 - CAB Daventry - 01327 701646
 - CAB South Northants and North Oxon - 01327 227721
- National Debtline – Freephone 0808 808 4000 / 01327 227721
- Community Law social welfare advice provider - 01604 621038
 - Food Aid Alliance West Northants (FAAWN) – an alliance of nearly 40 food aid providers. Organisations such as foodbanks, social supermarkets, and community lunch clubs, amongst others - who have come together to collaborate in helping people in food poverty in our area.



West Northamptonshire businesses congratulated on Queen's Award for Enterprise

A West Northants business on the cutting edge of materials technology and a second providing parents with eco-friendly options, have both received a 2022 Queens Awards for Enterprise.



Diamond Hard Surfaces at Caswell Park just outside Towcester produces high performance, high endurance diamond-based engineering materials and coatings for the aerospace and electronics sector. They have received an award in the International Trade category.

Chris H Walker, CEO and Director, said: "We are delighted to have been recognised for exceptional growth over a three-year period which has been significantly challenging given the background.

"We have put international trade at the heart of our business from its inception and are proud

that our small team have built up a 'blue chip' customer base in over 20 countries."

An award in the Sustainable Development category was won by Bambino Mio in Brixworth, which is reducing single-use plastic waste through making reusable nappies the first choice for parents, through accessibility and education.

The award citation said Bambino Mio has grown from a local, family run initiative in 1997, to one that now employs 103 people, serves 50 countries and is "a truly industry-leading company."

Now in its 56th year, the Queen's Awards for Enterprise are the most prestigious business awards in the country, with winning businesses able to use the esteemed Queen's Awards Emblem for the next five years. The 2023 Awards will open for applications on 1 May 2022.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust

Find out what its like to work with us by signing up to join us at our virtual open evening on Thursday 12th May. This will be a fantastic opportunity for you to meet our Chief Executive @colinjfoster and many colleagues from the organisation. 📧

<https://bit.ly/37ACrLf>

Northamptonshire Children's Trust
Online Open Evening
Thursday 12th May 6pm-8pm
Join our online open evening to get a real feel for what it's like to work at NCT, the benefits for our workforce and to provide a chance for you to meet our Chief Executive, Colin Foster, as well as colleagues from teams across the organisation.
Register your place today!
In partnership with OPUS

TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS

Reporting Highway Problems

Report and track highway problems via Street Doctor
Before you start

Some problems cannot be reported through Street Doctor because they are the responsibility of other organisations. Please check first whether the problem you wish to report is listed below:

- Abandoned vehicles
- Flooding
- Speeding
- Trunk roads (e.g. M1, A5, A14, A43, A45)
- Street lighting
- E-Scooters

West Northamptonshire Council
Report or track a road problem online

Report or track a problem using Street Doctor

Any highway related issues or defects should be reported via Street Doctor, the Local Authorities public reporting system. By using Street Doctor, your report will be logged appropriately, go to the right team and you will, receive updates of what we are going to do and why. Issues reported will be looked at initially within 5 working days to determine what further action may be required. Please do not try to report issues and defects via Twitter or on any other social media channels. Some lesser-known issues you can report using Street Doctor are:

Rights of way e.g. gates, livestock, stile

Winter maintenance e.g. grit bins, gritting, snow

You can tell us about most problems on the roads or highways (apart from those listed above) - or you can track a problem you have already logged.

<http://ow.ly/bOUQ50FjHu1>

Resurfacing Works Bedford Road, Denton

I spoke to Highways regarding your recent questions about the resurfacing works on Bedford Road, Denton and I have the following responses to the questions you ask:

Is access to the Denton Surgery impacted?

Access will be maintained for surgery users and residents but there may be short delays depending on work movements at any particular time.

Why do we choose to do it when it will cause problems with access to the school?

At the moment, we have supplier material availability plus driver availability issues but; to lessen the problem, our supplier will complete the works in two phases.

- From the Church up to Vicarage Lane Junction then
- Vicarage Lane Junction out to the A428. The junction across Vicarage Lane will be completed outside of school drop off and pick up times.

Also, we currently consider the ever-increasing material costs for any scheme delays (tarmac has risen 30% in the last few months).

If you need any more information, just let me know.

Weedon Road/St James Road Bus Lane

After the 24-hour bus lane camera in Weedon Road, St James was switched off in December 2021; a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) has now been passed changing its operational hours to the morning rush hour.

Motorists can now be fined if they use the bus lane between the hours of 7:30am and 9:30am, Monday to Saturday.


The new TRO follows a public consultation on the scheme this autumn, which received a total of 2,752 responses from residents, businesses, and local organisations.

The feedback received showed that half of all respondents were in favour of the Weedon Road/St James' Road bus lane continuing to be enforced to

Northamptonshire Highway Bedford Road, Denton - Carriageway Resurfacing

Please look out for advanced warning signs and details of vehicle towaway.

Start date of works – Tuesday 19th April 2022
Completion – Wednesday 27th April 2022 (Weather dependant)
Scheme type – Carriageway resurfacing and maintenance works on Bedford Road, Denton
Traffic management – Road closure
Hours of work – 08:00 – 17:00



What we are doing/the benefits – Northamptonshire Highways are scheduled to carry out resurfacing works on Bedford Road, Denton. These works will improve the structural stability of the road and improve safety for road users. Works include replacement of ironwork where required, road markings will be reinstated and gullies cleaned to ensure best use is made of the closure and to minimise disruption for residents in the future.

Vehicle parking

To eliminate the need to knock on doors and help us with our work, please could you move any vehicles parked within this section of the road. Please do not park on Bedford Road, Denton and a minimum 20 metres of any junction with Bedford Road throughout duration of the works. Thank you for your understanding, patience and co-operation.

Traffic management

When programming works, we consider the impact on all network users and plan our works to minimise disruption as much as possible. The road will be closed to ensure the safety of the public and our workforce within the highlighted areas in red. During working hours, vehicle access will be restricted for residents of Bedford Road, Wareing Lane, By Pass Way, Vicarage Lane, Windmill Lane, Orchard Lane. We aim to maintain access for emergency vehicles. Pedestrian access will not be affected. During the road closure a diversion route, as shown in blue, will be in place at all times. The red line shows the works extents and the blue line is the diversion.



Access: Traffic management will be in place for the duration of the works, and vehicle access to your properties will be restricted. Please refer to the below information regarding vehicle access.

Pedestrians: During the works, pedestrian marshals will be on site to assist.

Cyclists: Please dismount and walk through the works area.

Public transport: during the closure, bus routes 41 will not service the bus stops on Bedford Road. However, they are able to use the diversion. For more detailed arrangements during the works, please visit www.stagecoachbus.com/service-updates

Stagecoach Midlands Head Office operates from 08:30 to 17:00, Monday to Friday.

Delivering high quality, sustainable transport and highway services in Northamptonshire



some degree, but nearly two-thirds of those thought it should be limited to morning peak times. Motorist are reminded they must update the DVLA if they change address, failure to do so could mean they do not receive or respond to enforcement correspondence, which in turn could lead to instructions being issued to collection agents.

Anyone who feels they received a fine unfairly should make use of the appeals procedure promptly via <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../pay-or-appeal....>

Government Funding Allocations for Bus Services

On the 5th April the Government announced its long-awaited funding allocations for Bus Service Improvement Plans. The headline to the Government's announcement is misleading in referring to a £7 billion package to level up transport outside London. Only £1.08bn has been allocated to Bus Service Improvement Plans. £5.7bn is in respect of 'City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement' announced by the Chancellor in the Autumn Statement.

Authorities (and operators) have spent the past 12 months developing a Bus Service Improvement Plan, followed by an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, which are now largely redundant. Most of the Enhanced Partnerships were, heavily caveated with "subject to the award of DfT funding", as have many of the commitments required of operators. Without the funding then, clearly, these commitments can no longer be met. That said it is clear the Enhanced Partnership arrangements have to remain in place as other funding (from Bus Service Operator Grant, for example) is conditional upon that. The offer of capacity support sufficient to employ an Enhanced Partnership Officer for the next three years is certainly helpful – but details are awaited.

Councils have been told, *"this is not a final no, and while we can make no promises, you should not give up hope of funding. It is possible that further BSIP funding will become available in the coming months. Other funding streams, such as round two of the Levelling Up Fund (for which applications close at 12:00 noon on Wednesday 6 July) can also support investment in aspects of BSIP"*. We are still waiting for any news on a Rural Bus Strategy following the call for evidence over 12 months ago on *"Future of transport: rural strategy"*.

Councils had to publish and submit to the Government, their Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) by the end of October 2022 – and formed their Enhanced Partnerships. This involved huge amounts of work in very tight timescales. Allocations were supposed to have been known by the end of February 2022. Only 31 of the 70 BSIP's have been funded in the indicative allocations announced. These are three-year, capital and revenue allocation.



In respect of the rural county/unitary areas, which are to receive funding there are concerns that most of that will, in practice go into the more urban parts of those areas as negotiations with the government, directs (they will not have received all they bid for). Yes, there have been some piecemeal allocation of funding to reinstate long lost tendered services, but now rural areas, Councils and Operators face a much

bigger crisis. As well as having no certainty of future (COVID) recovery funding beyond autumn this year there is ongoing revision to the “emergency” payment of Concessionary Fares reimbursement to operators and the reform of Bus Service Operator Grant (what was fuel duty rebate) remains on the horizon. With patronage hovering around the 80% mark nationally, many services show little sign of returning to commerciality. In addition, there are driver shortages in many areas. Rural Councils on the “not funded” list don’t stand much hope of replacing these with contracted replacements. Especially given the unfair funding for rural councils generally.

In the RSN **Rural Lens Review of the National Bus Strategy**, they said

“We are left wondering how much of the funding/opportunities will really come into rural areas and benefit rural communities? Will rural proofing before the setting of policy details and specific budget allocations actually take place? One-off allocations are one thing but guaranteed on-going finance to LTAs to enable them to support essential, but non-commercial, services (including Demand Responsive Transport, across rural areas is essential”.

“The budget reductions by rural councils for bus support over the past decade have largely been because such support is discretionary expenditure and government support to meeting the costs of statutory services (adult and children’s social care in particular) has been woefully inadequate. These are issues, which the Government must address as a matter of great urgency. The full range of rural delivery costs must be fully recognised and reflected in all future funding formulae”.

We will need to continue to seek additional funding for the BSIP if we are to see any improvements in Rural Bus Services Funding.

Content includes some of RSN’s Chief Executive, Graham Biggs’s recent comments.

POLICE FIRE & CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Knife Angel



I attended the service to welcome the KNIFE ANGEL (The National Monument against Violence and Aggression) at All Saints Church, Northampton yesterday evening, Saturday 30 April 2022 at 7.30pm.

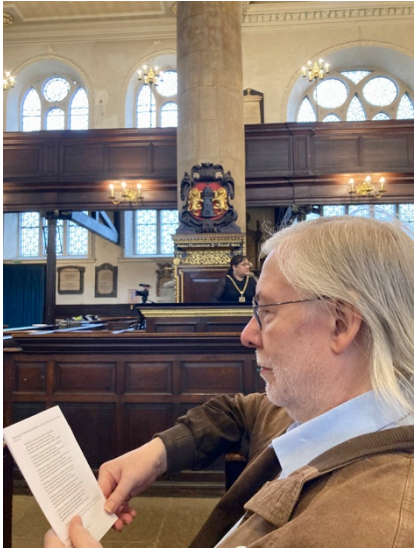
The contemporary sculpture, which is formed from 100,000 knives, was created by artist Alfie Bradley and the British Ironworks Centre in Oswestry, England. It was completed in 2018 and is 27ft tall. The iron works produced 200 knife banks and amnesties were held for individuals to anonymously donate their knives.

During the service Clive Knowles, Chairman of the British Ironworks Centre, introduced the Knife Angel and told us about its background and purpose and handed out certificates to those who had been instrumental in getting the monument to Northampton. Stephen Mold, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire and Angie Kennedy, Chief Executive of C2C Social Action were there to collect their certificates.

There was a short service led by Reverend Oliver Cross. After the final hymn and blessing we left the church to gather around the Knife Angel in the Piazza in front of All Saints Church where candles were distributed. Once we were all assembled, there was a prayer of dedication, followed by two minutes silence for the victims of violence. We closed by saying together the 'Declaration of Hope' and laying our candles at the foot of the Knife Angel.

Councillor Stephen Clarke
Member for Hackleton and Grange Park
West Northamptonshire Council
stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

Standing tall outside All Saints Church in the centre of Northampton the Knife Angel served to highlight knife crime in the United Kingdom and remind us all about the harmful effect violent behaviour can have on our communities.



Northamptonshire has a special connection to the statue – former Northamptonshire Police Chief Superintendent Dennis Murray took Northamptonshire’s knives to Oswestry and actually welded one of the knives in place.

The Angel arrived on 29 April at the All Saints plaza where it will stay until May 13 when it will move to Corby for two weeks, travelling through Wellingborough



on its way.

During the visit there will be various activities to try and raise awareness and reduce violence and aggression.

A knife amnesty will also be taking place, with anyone able to dispose of blades with no questions asked and no fear of reprisals.

We are looking to sign up 10,000 Anti-Violence Ambassadors during the Angel’s visit to the county. Do come along to one of the events for free emergency first aid training sessions and find out more about becoming an Ambassador.

The Explore Northampton app (downloadable for free from the App Store and Google Play) will offer an interactive experience with the option to view the Knife Angel in augmented reality along with other activities.

Download our calendar of events <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/community.../knife-angel>

Would you be able to spot the signs if your child was being groomed?

The Community Safety Team at West Northants Council will be running a series of safety sessions for parents and guardians to help them recognise any signs of concern with their children. The sessions are part of a series of events taking place to mark a two-week visit from the iconic Knife Angel to Northampton in May. They will look at how and why children get involved in gangs and carrying weapons and how to recognise if your child might be the victim of grooming. Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know. These sessions, which will be delivered by Northamptonshire Youth Offending Services, will offer support and advice to parents on what to look out for to help keep their children safe from harm. Face to face sessions will take place in Daventry and Northampton on the following dates and a virtual session is also available.



- 5 May in Daventry - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../parent-education-session...>
- 6 May in Northampton - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../parent-education-session...>
- 12 May - Virtual - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/.../virtual-parent-education...>

The sessions are free to attend but spaces are limited.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & SPORT

Armed Forces Community Hub

New Armed Forces Community Hubs have launched across West Northants, offering serving personnel, veterans and their families a warm and welcoming place to go. Please see this link for more information:

[About Us \(vcn.org.uk\)](http://vcn.org.uk) or [Veteran Community Network \(VCN\) Beds, MK, Northants | Facebook](#)

- **Corby- West Glebe Pavilion, Cottingham Road, Corby NN17 1SZ** Tuesday 17 May 1pm to 3pm, Tuesday 21 June 1pm to 3pm, Tuesday 19 July 1pm to 3pm
- **Daventry- Daventry Volunteer Centre, New Street, Daventry NN11 4BT** Thursday 26 May 2pm to 4pm
- **Kettering- Kettering Room, Corn Market Hall, 42 London Road, Kettering NN15 7QA** Thursday 12 May 1pm to 3pm, Thursday 9 June 1pm to 3pm, Thursday 7 July 1pm to 3pm
- **Northampton- Tomkins Centre/ Café, St Andrews Hospital, Northampton NN1 5DG** Tuesday 3 May (Due to Monday being a Bank Holiday) 1pm to 3pm, Monday 6 June 1pm to 3pm, Monday 4 July 1pm to 3pm

Archaeological Resources Centre (ARC) at the Chester House Estate

A large collection of archaeological objects owned by the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery has moved to the new state-of-the-art, publicly accessible Archaeological Resources Centre (ARC) at the Chester House Estate near Wellingborough.

The collections and archives include excavated objects from Northampton's medieval streets such as building materials from religious houses, jewellery, costume fittings and ancient pots, which were previously spread across two stores in Northampton and Daventry.

The ARC has a dedicated curator who can provide access by appointment to researchers, members of the public and school groups, allowing them to view material excavated from Northampton and across the county. The move was supported by 21 volunteers from the museum and the Chester House Estate, who gave over 300 hours of time across two weeks to photograph the boxes being moved, label crates and repack boxes.

In total, 9114 boxes and 153 crates of stone objects were moved in 23 lorry loads, including quern stones used 1400 years ago to grind grains at Hunsbury Hillfort and painted plaster from Roman Villas.

The ARC offers unique access to the archaeology of the county and collections can be viewed during tours aimed to inspire the next generation of archaeologists. To find out more and to book a visit, see the Chester House website



The ARC

Visit to Chester House Estate

I visited Chester House Estate with a number of other West Northamptonshire Councillors on 29th April 2022. Jack Pishorn, Business Development Manager gave us a great presentation and we had a tour afterwards.

The Chester House Estate is designed to offer something for everyone, whether it's participating in one of the education programmes, discovering archaeological materials within the Archaeological Resources Centre (ARC) or simply a family day out.

I heard more about the things on offer such as:



- Learning Programmes
- Seasonal Events
- Volunteering Opportunities
- Bed & Breakfast
- Conference Space
- Museum
- Farmyard Shopping Courtyard

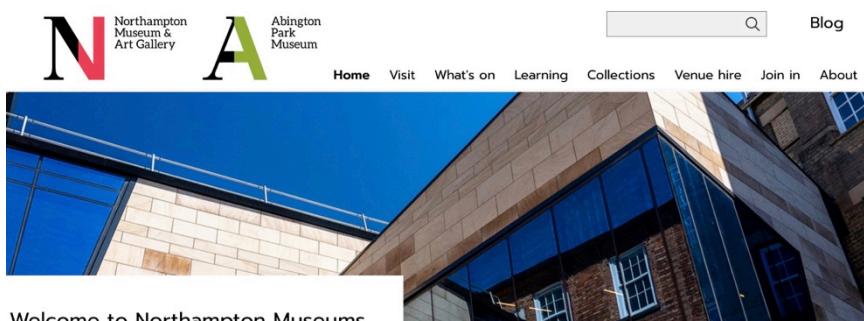
You can sign up to their mailing list to access their newsletter where you can find all updates, upcoming events and opportunities.

Some of those who visited fed the new lambs during the tour. I was most interested in the unique access to the archaeology of the county and collections, which we viewed during the tour. We saw a complete vessel, which is an unusual find as the artefacts are normally fragments of a past life. Seeing some of Brafield's archaeological past caught my attention.



Having family members with an interest in archaeology, I intend to visit Chester House Estate again for a closer look at our heritage.

'May the Toys be With You'



One of the UK's finest collections of vintage Star Wars toys and original cinema posters is going on display at Northampton Museum & Art Gallery from Saturday, 30 April. 'May the Toys Be With You' features toys and

collectibles never exhibited before and is a celebration of the highly collectable vintage toy line and the iconic design work and art of the Star Wars movies. For little kids and big kids alike, this is an unmissable opportunity to view rarely seen treasures such as the fantastical designs of X-Wing Fighters and lightsabers, which have fired imaginations and stamped their place on the cultural landscape.

“The exhibition has already broken visitor attendance records at a host of museums around the country. We anticipate that it will be one of the most popular exhibitions at the museum since its reopening.” When the movie Star Wars broke box office records in 1977, no one could have predicted that the merchandising would go on to earn even more than the film itself. From 1977 to 1985 an estimated 300 million action figures were sold, allowing children to re-enact the adventures of Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia and Han Solo.

Matt Fox attended the museum on Saturday, 30 April to mark the opening day of the exhibition by giving a talk on the untold story of how Star Wars was made, while sharing trivia and his collecting secrets.

More information about the exhibition and the accompanying programme of Star Wars events and activities can be found on the museum’s website and social media channels @NorthamptonMuseum (Facebook) @NorthamptonShoe (Twitter / Instagram)

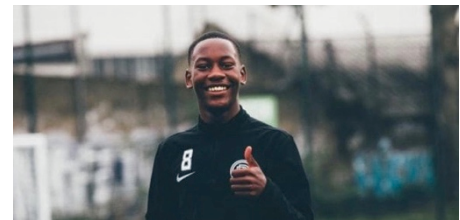
May The Toys Be With You runs until 4 September. Entry is free.

Football Foundation grants

The Football Foundation provides grants for building or refurbishing grassroots facilities, such as changing rooms, 3G pitches, fencing, portable floodlights, pitch improvements and clubhouse refurbishment. Grants are available for between £10,000 and £500,000. The Fund is available to football clubs, schools, councils and local sports associations and gives grants for projects that:

- 1) Improve facilities for football and other sport in local communities.
- 2) Sustain or increase participation amongst children and adults, regardless of background age, or ability.
- 3) Help children and adults to develop their physical, mental, social and moral capacities through regular participation in sport.

<https://footballfoundation.org.uk/looking-for-funding>



Heritage Open Days

Historic and cultural sites across the west of the county are invited to take part in this year’s Heritage Open Days, which will take place between 9 - 18 September. Venues such as stately homes, buildings of historic interest, museums, places of worship and archaeological sites can now register to participate in Heritage Open Days, which is England’s largest annual festival of history and culture. The festival offers the public free entry to places which might normally be closed, or have an entrance fee, and many venues taking part will be connected by Northampton Transport Heritage buses, offering a free hop-on hop-off service.



Take part in Heritage Open Days 2022 - Register your event now!

Take 5 and discover more on the blog ►

West Northamptonshire Council is producing a Heritage Open Days brochure, which will list all participating attractions and events, to promote the festival and boost visitor numbers. The event has taken place in Northampton for over 25 years, so it is already extremely popular, and we are now looking to make it even bigger and better, by inviting venues from across West Northamptonshire to take part. Brochure

registration is open until 6 May and can be completed by emailing economy@westnorthants.gov.uk. For more information, please visit www.westnorthants.gov.uk/heritageopendays

Please note that sites will still be able to register on the national Heritage Open Days website after this date - www.heritageopendays.org.uk - but they will not be featured in the event brochure, due to production timescales.

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons Event

If you intend to have a beacon event then you should register it by the 31st May 2022. The Beacons in the Commonwealth Countries & United Kingdom Overseas Territories will be lit at 9.15pm local time, The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Anchor Chain will be lit at 9.30pm and the Beacons along Hadrian's Wall will be lit at 10pm. All other Beacons throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man will be lit at 9.45pm.



Communities with pre-existing beacons are encouraged to light these on the night of the Platinum Jubilee, June 2nd 2022.)

Please find below details of how to register your local beacon event:

<https://www.queensjubileebeacons.com/beacon-events>

Towcester Rock Snake given new home

The organic display of community spirit, which emerged during the Covid-lockdown and became known as the Towcester Rock Snake, has been given a new home. Before lockdown 'Love Rocks' was a common pastime throughout the country, which saw children decorate stones, sometimes with greetings, which they would then hide for someone else to find, photograph, share on Facebook and then re-hide.

During the Covid-lockdown that morphed into the Towcester Rock Snake, with messages dedicated to the NHS and support for the wider community, designs of favourite animals and superheroes, and messages to lost loved-ones.

Around 1,600 stones were decorated and placed along the spiral walkway around Bury Mount, the remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle in the centre of Towcester. So many the Snake reached the top and began to loop back on itself.

However, the stones were not fixed in place and began to be moved around so the decision was made to clear them and store them away until a permanent home could be found.

Potterspury mural artist Sarah Hodgkins was commissioned to design and install the snake and a selection of stones have now been cemented into place on the Towcester Watermeadows, a short distance from Bury Mount.



Towcester resident Karyna Clifford took charge of the stones after they were cleared and worked with West Northamptonshire Council's Communities Team to find a location and funding.

Mrs Clifford said: "Joan Tear has to be credited for bringing 'Love Rocks' to Towcester and has been instrumental to the Rock Snake. "During lockdown, when my little ones were missing their friends and family, we painted some rocks of encouragement and placed them at the Mount with an unpretentious handmade sign to see if anyone else would engage. And

it helped us all to feel connected to the community. "As each day passed, we walked through the snake of rocks climbing up Bury Mount on our hour of exercise and found more reassurance that we were all, as a community, hopeful and waiting for better days when the world would make sense again."

The image above. Caption: (Right to left) Ralph (on lead), Anna Earnshaw, mural artist Sarah Hodgkins of Charlotte Designs Potterspurpy, Karyna Clifford and daughter Katheryne.

Queen of Arts

Do you have links with local schools that might want to enter our Jubilee-themed art challenge? The 'Queen of Arts' activity is encouraging young people to decorate everyday household items in honour of Her Majesty – from mugs to T-shirts, tea towels to photo frames...the possibilities are endless.

Children could also create a picture, portrait or poem about the Queen, with the best creations set to be showcased in libraries across Northamptonshire. Entries must be sent to queensjubilee@westnorthants.gov.uk by Friday, 13 May and include the entrant's name and age as well as a couple of lines stating what the Queen means to them. More information about the competition can be found on

<https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/.../children-and-young...>



Her Majesty's 96th Birthday



The Queen travelled to Sandringham, her estate in Norfolk, eastern England, for a private break on the occasion of her 96th Birthday on 21 April 2022.

A portrait released to mark the occasion shows the monarch standing between two fell ponies named Bybeck Nightingale and Bybeck Katie. The photo was taken in the grounds of Windsor Castle in March, according to the royal family Twitter account.



This year the Platinum Jubilee marks seven decades since the Queen ascended to the throne in 1952, making her both the longest-reigning British monarch and the longest-serving female head of state in history.