



Town & Parish Briefing

Edition 3 | 9 May 2022



Welcome to the latest new Town and Parish Briefing, bringing you a monthly round-up of news, activities and information about West Northamptonshire Council.

We hope you'll find this briefing informative and we encourage you to share it widely within your organisations. If you have ideas and suggestions for future content, please email us at communications@westnorthants.gov.uk

Covid fund supporting our communities

Some fantastic projects in towns and parishes across West Northamptonshire are being supported through the Councillor Covid Support Fund. As many of you will be aware, the fund allows councillors to support local community and voluntary organisations who rely on small grant awards to remain sustainable. The grant must be used within the electoral ward they represent and needs to be used to empower local residents to be active in their communities' recovery from the impact of COVID-19.

Who has been supported so far?

A total of 180 applications have been supported since the scheme started, to the value of more than £126,000.

Grants have been used to help groups right across West Northamptonshire, from Duston United Reformed Church to West Haddon Players, Abington Youth Group to Hardingstone Village Hall, Kingsheath Boxing Academy, and many more.

It's bought new instruments for Towcester Studio Band so they can start a junior section, supported Community Health Works to provide weekly cooking sessions for residents in Deanshanger, and helped South Northants Volunteer Bureau run a scheme to provide refurbished computer equipment for school children in need.

Long Buckby Youth Centre are using a grant to fund the renovation of their building and enable it to reopen, while Walgrave Community Cinema have been able to resume screenings for the first time since the pandemic as a result of a grant.

Councillor Andrew Kilbride, Ward Member for **Riverside Park**, recently used a grant to help a local Brownies group fund a climbing activity at Pinnacle Climbing Centre in Far Cotton. It proved a huge success, building confidence in the young people who took part, as well as giving the adult volunteers who run the group a very welcome boost as they watched the girls enjoying and succeeding at a new activity. And Councillor Stephen Clarke, Ward Member for **Hackleton and Grange Park**, is using grants to help put on a Coronation Tea Party for Pensioners in Brafield, as well as a Children's Jubilee Celebration event in the village of Denton.



If you have a project or activity in your area which you think could benefit from the fund, please contact your WNC ward councillor.

5,000 care worker thank-you bonuses paid out

We are delighted to share the news that more than 5,000 care workers from across West Northamptonshire have benefited from a £600 thank you bonus scheme this spring.

Our Council has distributed the funding to a total of 207 care homes and community care providers which applied to receive the payments, to pass on to their eligible staff members.

The bonus, which was offered on a pro-rata basis, is in recognition of the dedication and hard work shown by all care workers during the ongoing pandemic and the recent winter months. So far providers have been awarded retention payments for 4,798 care workers and recruitment payments for 376 care workers, on a pro-rata basis, across West Northamptonshire.

The offer was made to all care providers in West Northamptonshire delivering Care Quality Commission (CQC) Regulated Care Services, with 90 per cent of them coming forward. The remaining 10 per cent of providers who did not apply were contacted by WNC but did not respond.

The majority of care providers received their payments from the Council in early April and all providers which received the payment are responsible for passing on the taxable sum to their employees.

Cllr Matt Golby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health said:

"We are delighted that 90 percent of providers came forward for the bonus payment in West Northamptonshire and we hope the money will go some way in showing our appreciation of the vital work carers do.

"It was hoped that the extra payment would also act as an incentive for care workers to keep going and remain in their jobs in CQC regulated settings over the winter, and for new starters to join the caring profession. The care sector does such a remarkable job in looking after our most vulnerable and the past two years, with rising demand and the challenges of the pandemic, has shown that they are absolutely invaluable to our communities."



Groups urged to apply for community grants

Community and voluntary groups who deliver important services in West Northamptonshire have another chance to apply for grants of up to £15,000.

A fresh round of Community Funding Grants opened for applications recently, and applications should be submitted no later than Sunday, 15 May.

The grant scheme is open to community and voluntary sector organisations, registered charities and not-for-profit organisations, for projects that support one or more of the council's corporate plan priorities.

Groups can find out more about the criteria and how to apply [on our Community Grant Funding webpage](#)



Payment rollout due for £150 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 is being paid to help with the rise in the cost of living and applies to households in Council Tax Bands A to D, of which there about 147,000 in West Northants.

Direct Debit payers

- For the 99,000 homes in Bands A to D which pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit it is hoped that the first payments will be made by the end of May.
- If any bank accounts require any further information or validation this will be done as soon as possible.

Non-Direct Debit payers

- For around 48,000 Council Taxpayers in Bands A to D who do not pay by Direct Debit, we are currently identifying eligible households, and will write to them in the week beginning 16 May. An application process is required to confirm bank account details to enable payment to be made and to prevent fraud and error.
- The letters will invite people to make claims online using a secure pin number, and 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 and for whom bank account details are not known 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 deemed vulnerable. Further information about this will be published in the coming weeks.

[Find more information about the energy rebate on our website](#)

Structural changes will help drive transformation

The Council has recently made some changes to its structure so that it has the right people in the right place to help it continue to grow and drive transformation of services.

In March, Jane Carr was appointed as the Director of Communities & Opportunities, which brings together housing and communities services as well as a range of place-making services including libraries, economic regeneration and cultural services.

These changes aim to bring our community-focussed services together and help us join the priorities of these services more collaboratively, ensuring we engage with communities and deliver to our residents in a 'one council' approach.

Let's work together to tackle poverty

West Northants Council is encouraging town and parish colleagues to join in a fresh approach towards tackling poverty and deprivation across our area.

At their meeting last month, our Cabinet members approved the Council's new Anti-Poverty Strategy, setting out how we will support people struggling financially, what we will do to stop people falling into poverty and how we will work to influence the Government and other national organisations to get the best deal with the people of West Northants.

The timing of the strategy also comes as many households face incredible pressure from rising energy prices and the effects of inflation, which is pushing up the cost of living. The COVID pandemic has also played a huge part, damaging the economy and forcing people out of work.

The new strategy also forms part of our bold new approach to improve social, environmental and economic sustainability, which will help protect communities for future generations.

Members from across the political groups have worked together towards developing the strategy, which has also involved input from the Poverty Truth Commission and people who are currently living through the experience of poverty – important engagement which the Council will be continuing as the future work is shaped.

Cllr Matt Golby, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration said: "Our Anti-Poverty Strategy is a strong and collaborative piece of work which we should all be really proud of. "Our Council has made a clear commitment that we want to drive better outcomes for people to help them live their best lives and this new approach is a real credit to the direction we are heading in.

"It's not just something that will sit on a shelf or to tick a box on, we will hold ourselves accountable to it each year with real actions for tackling these issues that we can keep measuring to see if we're doing enough."

[The Anti-Poverty Strategy can be viewed on our website.](#)



Signposting residents to financial support

Residents who are struggling financially can turn to a range of local organisations – including our Council – for help, advice and support.

Our Council can offer a range of support including benefits, housing and discretionary schemes as well as the distribution of government support funding when available.

Residents can also contact local organisations, including:

- Citizen's Advice Bureau (Northampton - 03444 889 629/03444 111 444; Daventry - 01327 701646; South Northants - 01327 227721)
- Community Law Service - 01604 621038
- National Debt line – Freephone 0808 808 4000
- Food Aid Alliance West Northants (helping people in food poverty) – 01604 21430

Plans for new highways service moves forward

By Cllr Phil Larratt, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport, Highways & Waste

Work on shaping an innovative new highways service for West Northamptonshire is nearing completion, with the Council on course to appoint its new contractor.



The Council is now in the final stages of an 18-month process to obtain a new supplier for the service, which included matters such as maintaining local roads, footpaths, highways drainage and signage, repairing potholes and winter gritting.

Town and parish councillors will be aware that highways maintenance is currently delivered Northamptonshire-wide under arrangements inherited from the previous county council, and the new plans will instead see WNC and North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) run their own separate contracts and services.

The final three bidders have now submitted their tenders for the West Northants contract which, at approximately

£30m a year, will be one of the highest value awarded by the Council and is set to run for seven years, with the potential to extend to a maximum of 14 years.

At the forefront of our Council's priorities is to appoint a contractor that will not only achieve greater value for money but work innovatively, tackle climate change, communicate effectively with the public and add social value, such as things that will collectively benefit the wider community.

We have worked closely with NNC on the process for procuring the new highways contracts, which started in November 2020 and has involved several selection stages to narrow down and shortlist prospective suppliers.

The next steps taking place in the coming weeks will be to identify the preferred bidder, followed by a 'standstill period', with the successful bidder then announced in June.

There will then be a three-month mobilisation period as the new contractor makes preparations to start running the service from September.

Free specialist legal advice for residents

Free, independent, confidential and specialist legal advice is being offered to all Northamptonshire's residents by Community Law Service (Northampton and County).

The registered charity offers a range of services in the One Stop Shop at Northampton's Guildhall between 9.30am and 12.30pm, 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 part funded by: West Northamptonshire Council, North 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 and The National Lottery Community Fund.

Share your views so we can work better together

Work is under way to review the different ways that your councils interact with us and how we keep you informed, to strengthen how we work together for the benefit of our residents.

As part of that work, we would welcome your feedback on the interactions your council has had with our services, and the different ways we keep you updated.

Honest feedback is vital in helping us understand what works well and what could be improved from your point of view.

Your opinion will help us shape our approach to working with you in the future, recognising any areas of good practice as well as understanding the cause of any frustrations you have experienced over the last 12 months.

The survey takes approximately five minutes to complete and is open until 5pm on Tuesday 31 May.

If you would like to have a conversation about the survey, please contact Seb Greene, our Strategic Relationship Manager in the Communities & Opportunities team, on 07912 892124, or your locality lead.

[Give us your feedback by completing the survey here](#)

Help us shape our future housing strategy

With the population of West Northamptonshire set to grow by 7 per cent by 2030, the Council 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.

Cllr Adam Brown, WNC's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture and Leisure, said:

"Housing is one of the most important political issues in the country right now, and we recognise just how vital it is to put together a Housing strategy that will enable residents of West Northamptonshire to find the homes they want and need.

"It's not just about building new houses and making sure people aren't homeless, having a safe and stable home impacts education, health, employment, and life chances. Good housing is an essential part of a happy and cohesive society, and it is a key priority of West Northamptonshire Council."

Results of the consultation will feed into the drafting of the new Housing Strategy.

[People can have their say on the Housing Strategy by visiting our Consultation Hub](#)



Health and Wellbeing in our communities

Supporting Independence Programme

Residents in your town and parishes may be interested to find out more about, 'The Supporting Independence Programme' which is a free countywide service provided by Public Health Northamptonshire.

The programme is tailored to prevent, support and manage the health and wellbeing needs of anyone eligible over the age of 18, who may be showing signs of reduced independence.

With up to 12 weeks of one-to-one support, a team of dedicated Wellbeing Advisors are committed to providing people with the knowledge and resources needed to make their wellbeing a priority.

Examples of support include:

- Opportunities to meet with an Advisor to 'Walk and Talk' with the aim of becoming more active and increasing socialisation
- Support to access social opportunities within local communities, to reduce isolation
- Advice, information and support on managing the long-term effects of COVID-19
- Support with daily life, including housing support and money advice
- Support for low-level mental health and emotional difficulties, as well as lifestyle issues such as nutrition, smoking and alcohol use

More information, together with a referral form and short eligibility assessment, can be found via the [Supporting Independence page on our website](#)

Living safely with Covid-19

As many of us gradually return to pre-pandemic life, it's important to remember the basics of good hygiene as we learn to live safely with COVID-19. Following simple guidance will help protect all of us from COVID-19 as well as many other common infections.

Coughing and sneezing increase the number of particles released by a person as well as the distance those particles travel and the time they stay in the air.

An infected person who coughs or sneezes without covering their mouth or nose significantly increases the risk of infecting others around them.

Covering nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing reduces the spread of particles carrying a virus. So cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough using a disposable tissue.

Dispose of the used tissue in a bin as soon as you can and wash your hands thoroughly or use a hand sanitiser. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow not into your hand.

Sanitising your hands is a good temporary measure after coughing or sneezing but should only be used as a short-term alternative to thoroughly washing your hands. Washing your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds kills most germs, including those responsible for sickness bugs like norovirus which aren't killed by sanitiser.



Shaping arrangements to support Ukrainian guests

Our ongoing work to support people coming to the UK as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme continues.

There are 244 generous sponsors across West Northants, who between them will welcome around 500 guests.

Around 100 people have arrived so far, and our teams are in the process of carrying out home and welfare safety checks to ensure everything is in place for them, and to arrange support such as the £200 payment that each guest receives for subsistence costs.

On the rare occasions where issues are found, alternative accommodation is being sought.

A range of [detailed information about the Homes for Ukraine scheme has been published on our website](#), so if anyone with questions about the scheme approaches your council, please point them in that direction in the first instance.



Workshop for town and parish councils

You will shortly receive an invitation to our second Homes for Ukraine workshop for parish councils. The virtual workshop will provide you with an update on what is happening with the scheme across West Northamptonshire and how your council can be involved. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions. We look forward to welcoming you to the conversation.

Other ways to help

People who are not in a position to act as a sponsor for a Ukrainian guest but who would like to help, can [donate to the Northamptonshire Welcome Fund](#)

Individuals, charities, community groups and businesses can also record their interest in supporting Ukrainians fleeing the war by [completing the online form on our website](#)

Plans to improve public transport continue

A plan underlining the council's commitment to improving public transport and connecting rural communities has been approved by our Cabinet.

The [Enhanced Bus Partnership Plan \(EPP\)](#) sets out the high-level vision and objectives for bus services over the next three years, showing how we will work with partner organisations to ensure they are delivered reliably, efficiently, and affordably. It also puts in place binding commitments on the council and our partners to provide the necessary improvements to make buses more attractive and easier to use.

Shaped by feedback from a public consultation held last September, its aims include:

- Faster and more reliable journey times
- The introduction of newer, cleaner, more environmentally friendly buses
- Simpler fares and smart ticketing
- Improvements to networks, including links to visitor attractions

Local attractions can join Heritage Open Days

A series of Heritage Open Days will be taking place at historic and cultural venues across West Northamptonshire later this year.

Stately homes, historic buildings, museums, places of worship, archaeological sites and more are invited to take part in the event, which runs from 9 to 18 September and represents England's largest annual festival of history and culture.

This is a great opportunity to share our local history and culture with the public, by showing people around places that may normally be closed or organising special events such as talks and tours.

If you are aware of any venues in your parish which may be suitable and willing to participate, please make them aware and ask them to email us at economy@westnorthants.gov.uk to request a registration form.



The venue will then be included in the Heritage Open Days brochure, which lists all the venues taking part in the event. [Find out more information about the Heritage Open Days](#)

Jubilee event offers sponsorship opportunities

Businesses across West Northants are being encouraged to play a key role in supporting local celebrations to mark Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this summer.

The Council has put together a range of sponsorship packages for its Big Jubilee lunch event at Delapre Abbey on 5 June, to help businesses promote their product or brand, network with potential customers, or secure high-quality product placement opportunities.

The high profile event will feature live music and arts performances as well as the chance to watch the national jubilee celebrations live on a big screen.

All 5,000 tickets for the event were snapped up within hours of being made available last Friday, offering a fantastic platform for businesses to showcase themselves. Businesses can find out more by visiting our [Big Lunch sponsorship page](#)



Children invited to enter Queen of Arts competition

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 our website](#)



Join in countywide jubilee pageant

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee long weekend will also be marked with a spectacular countywide pageant through Northampton town centre on Saturday, 4 June.

Participants, including military and emergency services personnel, youth and community groups and businesses from across Northamptonshire will parade through the town centre, starting at 11am and finishing around 1pm.

The pageant will begin at the top of Abington Street and follow a route down the street, along George Row, up The Drapery and onto the Market Square, where a celebration service will take place.

Find out more on our Jubilee pages



This month's news releases from WNC

Here's a monthly roundup of the news releases and updates published by WNC in recent weeks. Don't forget you can keep up-to-date with these and search the news archive by [visiting the News section of our website](#)

- [Meet the Vikings at Abington Park Museum this Sunday](#)
- [Electrical items recycling service extended to Daventry area](#)
- [Northampton's archaeological collections find a new home](#)
- [Litterer pays a heavy price following prosecution](#)
- [A 40-year-long career caring for others](#)
- [Historic and cultural sites invited to take part in Heritage Open Days](#)
- [Platinum Jubilee Pageant to take place in Northampton](#)
- [Children asked to get crafty for the Queen](#)
- [Anti-Poverty Strategy to be considered by Cabinet](#)
- [Digital talent showcased at fourth annual Merged Futures event- 8 April](#)
- [There's still time to subscribe to garden waste service](#)
- [Cabinet to discuss bus improvement plans](#)
- [Parking restrictions to start at charging bays](#)
- [Northampton regeneration set to continue at pace](#)
- [Weedon Road bus lane officially changed to morning rush hour enforcement](#)
- [Call for residents to help shape future housing strategy](#)
- [Fire safety warning following illegal tobacco seizure](#)
- [West Northamptonshire Council to mark Stephen Lawrence Day](#)
- [Thousands of pupils allocated primary school places across West Northamptonshire](#)
- [Update on arrangements for Ukrainian guests](#)
- [Towcester Rock Snake given new home](#)
- [St James Library set to reopen at new location](#)
- ['It Only Takes One' campaign to tackle violence against women](#)
- [Get your tickets for the Big Jubilee Lunch celebration](#)
- [Free specialist advice on offer at One Stop Shop](#)
- [West Northamptonshire's new highways contract set to be awarded soon](#)
- [Fresh round of Community Grants opens this month in West Northamptonshire](#)
- [Northampton Bike Park On Track for development](#)
- [Businesses urged to join in Jubilee celebrations](#)
- [West Northamptonshire businesses congratulated on Queen's Award for Enterprise](#)
- [In a museum not far away...](#)
- [Busting the myths of council procurement](#)