



Town & Parish Briefing 42

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Welcome

From Cllr Charlie Hastie, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities at West Northamptonshire Council

Since announcing our commitment to improving our working relationship with local councils, I have continued to engage with parish councils, both inside my ward and elsewhere.

What you have shown this new WNC councillor is your true grit! With obvious dedication and drive, you give your time and energy tirelessly to serve and strengthen your communities.

We are shortly starting a piece of work, which was initiated following the annual conference, to focus on how best West Northamptonshire Council ward members can engage with the parish councils within their wards.

We want to ensure parish councils get good value from their relationships with their ward councillors, and I'm looking forward to working with you all to make practical, positive steps that support every community across West Northamptonshire.



Latest news



Have a say on Plan to shape West Northants

Residents, businesses and community groups across West Northamptonshire are being urged to take part in a major consultation that will shape how the area grows and develops for decades to come.

The eight-week consultation on our draft Local Plan will open on Thursday 29 January and run through to Saturday 28 March, giving people an opportunity to share their views at www.westnorthants.gov.uk/local-plan

We are keen to gather the views of as many people as possible, and any help you can give us to share this information in your town and parish council areas would be very much appreciated.

As key stakeholders, we would also encourage parish councillors to complete the survey and share your views.

This key document will shape the future of development across West Northamptonshire up to 2043, setting out how land will be used for housing, employment, green spaces, and infrastructure, while supporting regeneration and protecting the environment.

We first consulted on the Local Plan in summer 2024, but this fresh draft takes into account a number of national policy changes, including an increase in the Government's housing requirements.

We now need to plan for around 2,500 homes per year, adding 9,000 extra homes compared to the previous plan, and a number of new housing and employment sites have been allocated across West Northamptonshire as a result.

As part of the consultation we are hosting a series of public engagement events where people can learn more about the proposals and speak directly with council officers:

- Monday 2 February: **Moulton Community Centre**, NN3 7AX from 1.30pm to 4.30pm
- Friday 6 February: **The Forum, Towcester**, NN12 6AF from midday to 5pm
- Tuesday 10 February: **Wootton Community Centre**, NN4 6ED from 2pm to 7.30pm
- Wednesday 11 February: **Middleton Cheney Village Hall**, OX17 2LT from Midday to 4.30pm
- Thursday 12 February: **Mercure Hotel, Daventry**, NN11 0SG from 3pm to 6.30pm
- Thursday 19 February: **The Grosvenor Centre, Northampton**, NN1 2EW from 12.30pm to 4.30pm
- Wednesday 4 March: **Long Buckby Community Centre**, NN6 7QB, from 3pm to 7.30pm
- Wednesday 11 March: **Brackley Town Hall**, NN13 7AB from 12.30pm to 6pm

Following this consultation, responses will be analysed and used to shape the next stage of plan development. A further draft Local Plan is expected to be published later in 2026, informed by feedback, before the full plan is submitted for independent examination by planning inspectors. Once examined and updated as needed, the final Local Plan will guide planning decisions across West Northamptonshire through to 2043.



[New Cabinet Member appointed](#)

Councillor Michael Stratton has been appointed as our new Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education.

Cllr Stratton, who serves on Northampton's Upton ward, takes on the portfolio role from Cllr Kathryn Shaw, who stepped down from the position earlier this month.

Originally from Gravesend in Kent, Michael has lived in Northampton for over 40 years where he raised his family, during which he also became heavily involved and interested in family and education matters, including spending time as Vice Chair of the Board of Governors at St Luke's School in Northampton.

He has an extensive career background in international sales and marketing within the food and leisure industries, with strong organisational and strategic planning skills he intends to draw upon in his new Cabinet post.

[Find out more about Cllr Stratton and his new role on the Cabinet](#)

Our Cabinet structure:

The full Cabinet arrangements are as follows:

Cllr Mark Arnull – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategy

Cllr James Petter – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Culture & Leisure

Cllr Andrew Last – Cabinet Member for HR, Corporate Services and Regulatory Services

Cllr John Slope – Cabinet Member for Finance

Cllr Laura Couse – Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Public Health

Cllr Richard Butler – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Cllr Nigel Stansfield – Cabinet Member for Environment, Recycling and Waste

Cllr Thomas Manning – Cabinet Member for Planning and Communities

Cllr Charlie Hastie – Cabinet Member for Housing

Cllr Michael Stratton - Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

For more information, including a list of responsibilities for each of these portfolios, [please visit our Executive Posts page](#)



Better burning survey returns

Residents across West Northants who burn solid fuels or feel the effects of neighbours' burning are invited to take part in a survey exploring the impact of domestic burning on air quality and health, as part of a two-year DEFRA-funded research project.

The survey builds on last winter's findings, which revealed that while solid fuel burning is common across West Northants, there is limited local awareness of the health risks associated with Particulate Matter (PM), the tiny airborne particles released when fuel is burnt.

More than 750 residents took part in the first phase, helping us better understand local burning habits, fuel types, and the range of burners used. [The new survey will help assess how awareness has changed](#) and gather further insights into how and why people burn solid fuels at home.



Time running out on budget consultation

Thank you to Town and Parish Councils who have helped us spread the word about the consultation on our budget proposals for 2026/27.

The survey continues through to 11.59pm on Tuesday 3 February, and we're keen to hear from as many people as possible before the deadline.

In the Council's toughest budget-setting task to date, a range of proposals are set out for meeting a £50m budget shortfall for 2026/27 whilst protecting essential services as much as possible.

Proposals include over £32m in efficiency savings across the organisation, reviewing fees and charges for services including car parking and garden waste, and increasing our part of the council tax in line with Government allowances.

Earlier this month we held our Council's first-ever Question Time-style event, giving people a chance to hear from senior councillors and staff, as well as to ask questions. [A recording of the event is available on our YouTube channel](#)

People can find out more about our budget proposals and [have a say by completing the survey on our Consultation Hub](#)



News round-up

Community groups invited to bid for funding: Voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in West Northamptonshire are [invited to apply for a share of £343,750 funding to deliver the Grow, Cook, Eat programme](#) to help people learn how to grow food, cook healthy meals, and make better choices about nutrition.

Celebrating inspirational women: Our Women's Forum has launched this year's Inspirational Women Awards, now in their 14th year. Nominations are now open until Sunday 8 February, with [people invited to nominate the women who inspire them every day](#)

Lots book a festive trip to the tip: We're thanking residents for their continued support of the Household Waste Recycling Centre booking system, after a smooth and [well-used festive period that saw increased visitor numbers with no queues or delays on site](#)

Former bus depot regeneration continues: Work to [prepare the former St James Bus Depot in Northampton is moving into its final stages](#), ahead of the regeneration of this vacant brownfield site.

New toilets for Abington Park: Plans have been unveiled for [new public toilets at Abington Park](#) in a safer and more visible location close to the park's popular playground.

Disappointment over lack of response to asylum hotels request: The Leader of the Council has expressed his deep disappointment with the Home Office after it [failed to respond to the authority's request for information](#) about its use of three hotels as asylum accommodation.

National recognition for outdoor learning centre: Everdon Outdoor Learning Centre has been awarded the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge, [gaining national recognition for the high standard of its educational visits](#).

Start the year strong with free, flexible weight management support: We're encouraging residents to [take advantage of free, flexible and supportive weight management programmes](#) designed to help them feel their best in 2026.

Find out more

- Read all of our news releases at [westnorthants.gov.uk/news](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news)
- [Sign-up to our newsletters here](#)

Town and Parish Council updates



Parishes invited to apply for grants from new Community Investment Fund

At last year's Parish Conference a number of you asked about the availability of grants that town and parish councils could apply for.

Well Town and Parish Councils are eligible to apply for up to £7,500 from a new Community Investment Fund which will support local projects that help improve health and wellbeing.

Launched earlier this week, the fund is designed to support initiatives that build on local strengths and enhance community assets [within each of our Local Area Partnership \(LAP\) areas](#), or neighbourhoods within a LAP.

The fund is open to voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations, as well as Town and Parish Councils, and community groups working in partnership with these bodies, where an eligible partner can act as the accountable organisation.

Applicants will need to demonstrate how residents have influenced the project, provide evidence of partnership working, and show a strengths based approach that builds on the assets already within their community.

To request an application form and accompanying guidance, email laps@westnorthants.gov.uk

Forms can be requested until Friday 20 February, with the fund opening on Wednesday 21 January and the final deadline for submitting applications on Thursday 26 February. All funding allocations will be confirmed by the end of March 2026.



[Larger Parish Councils Forum](#)

The Larger Parish Councils Forum meets quarterly in person and has shorter online meetings each month between these quarterly meetings.

The online meeting in January discussed a proposed expression of interest form for any council who would like to take on a WNC asset within their parish area. This is part of a piece of work that was initiated after the WNC Parish Conference held in October, looking at devolution.

The aim of this project is to have a universal process for the transfer of assets and/or services that all partners know and understand. WNC has identified a project manager to lead this piece of work. Further updates will appear in future briefings.

[Spotlight on your good work](#)

We are keen to highlight initiatives from town and parish councils that showcase how local action can make a real difference in our communities. The aim is to share ideas, celebrate successes, and inspire others with practical examples of what can be achieved at parish level.

We would love to feature more examples in future editions. If your council has a project, initiative, or activity that you would like to share, please get in touch so we can include it in an upcoming **Town & Parish Briefing**. Please email sophie.ellidge@westnorthants.gov.uk or alan.burns@Westnorthants.gov.uk – we look forward to hearing your stories!

Planning matters

Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks are invited to book dedicated sessions with Stephanie Gibrat, Assistant Director for Planning to discuss current planning matters, upcoming proposals, or any issues where guidance would be helpful.

These sessions are designed to provide the opportunity to ask any questions on the planning process and allow two-way conversation relating to planning matters.

They will take place on:

- Thursday 19 Feb 9.30am to 11.30am
- Thursday 26 March 2pm to 4pm
- Thursday 23 April 2pm to 4pm

If you would like to raise a specific topic or explore planning considerations for your area, please book a slot at one of the times offered by contacting Linda Aphalé

Linda.Aphale@westnorthants.gov.uk. Please note spaces are limited and are allocated on a first come basis.

Focus on...



Falls prevention

As the colder months set in, staying physically active can feel more challenging, but it's essential for keeping warm, maintaining physical health, and supporting mental wellbeing.

Even small movements make a big difference. For those who are less mobile, simple actions like stretching arms and legs regularly throughout the day can help improve circulation and strength. Every move counts.

While many people believe that falling is an unavoidable part of growing older, this isn't true. [Northamptonshire's Steady On Your Feet website offers](#) free self-assessment tools, practical tips, and personalised action plans to help residents stay active, safe, and independent this winter.

For those looking to build strength and balance, [the Get Up & Go programme](#) provides specialist classes across West Northamptonshire. With over 35 sessions running weekly and more than 500 participants, these classes give people the confidence and skills to stay healthy and active. Making strength training a regular habit throughout the year helps people stay stronger for longer and continue living life to the fullest.

Staying connected is just as important as staying active. Loneliness can affect both mental and physical health, especially during winter. Here are some simple ways to reduce isolation:

- Join a local activity or class such as Get Up & Go sessions to meet new people while improving your strength and balance.
- Reach out to friends or family, a quick phone call or video chat can brighten your day.
- Explore community groups and volunteering opportunities to stay engaged and give back.
- Use online resources like Steady On Your Feet for advice and ideas to stay active and connected.

Call to Action

Parish councils play a vital role in helping this information reach those who need it most. We encourage parish clerks to:

✓ Share falls prevention messages

Include short falls prevention tips in parish newsletters, websites, noticeboards, and social media, especially during winter.

✓ Signpost local support

Encourage older residents and their families to use the Steady on Your Feet website and also the WNC webpage [Preventing falls | West Northamptonshire Council](#)

✓ Look out for vulnerable residents

Encourage councillors, volunteers, and community groups to check in on older or isolated residents, particularly those who may be unsteady or concerned about falling.

✓ Promote community activity

Where possible, highlight local coffee mornings, gentle exercise groups, lunch clubs, or social activities that help older people stay active and connected.

✓ Cascade this message

Please share this information with village halls, churches, community centres, and local voluntary groups so it reaches as many residents as possible.

If you are interested in building a Health & Wellbeing Plan, please see the guidance document here: Parish and Town Council Health and Wellbeing Guidance and feel free to contact me for support - Emily.Burton@westnorthants.gov.uk”



Events and activities



[Appeal to avoid fireworks on Remembrance Sunday](#)

As planning begins for community events in 2026, the Armed Forces Covenant would like to share an important request raised by local veterans and their families.

This year, several veterans told the Covenant that fireworks taking place on Remembrance Sunday were particularly difficult for them. For many who have served, Remembrance Sunday is a deeply emotional day, a moment of reflection, remembrance and connection with people they have loved and lost. For those living with PTSD or anxiety, the sudden bangs, flashes and smell of fireworks can trigger painful memories linked to the sights and sounds of conflict.

With Remembrance Sunday 2026 falling on Sunday 8 November, Town and Parish Councils, community organisers and residents are being asked to plan next year's fireworks displays with care, by avoiding Remembrance Sunday where possible.

This simple consideration can make a meaningful difference for many veterans, serving personnel and their families, showing awareness, compassion and respect for the experiences of those who have given so much for our country.

[Find out more on the Armed Forces Covenant website](#)



[West Northants to mark Holocaust Memorial Day](#)

Our Council will join communities across the country in [commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day on Tuesday 27 January](#), reflecting on the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered during the Holocaust, along with millions more who lost their lives under Nazi persecution.

To mark the day dignitaries and community groups will come together for a ceremony in the Great Hall, in the Guildhall, Northampton from noon.

Our One Angel Square building will also be lit up at 8pm to coincide with the Light the Darkness National Moment where people can light candles and place them safely in their windows to stand against prejudice and hatred today.



Money and wellbeing roadshows

Our series of money and wellbeing roadshows will continue in the new year, offering free advice and support to help people stay well and manage their finances during the colder months.

The aim is to give residents a chance to speak directly to local experts and receive practical help on everything from home energy efficiency and debt advice, to mental health support and family wellbeing.

Roadshows have already been held in Kingsthorpe, Daventry and Towcester, and we have two more planned:

- **Brackley Saints Football Club** (St James Park, Churchill Way, Brackley, NN13 7EJ) - Wednesday 11 February 2026, 10am - midday
- **The Spring Charity, Northampton** (Annex Community Centre, Spring Lane NN1 2JW) - Friday 20 February 2026, 10am–12pm

Each event features stalls and drop-in sessions from local services offering energy-saving tips, budgeting help, wellbeing resources, and information about grants and support schemes. [Find out more about the roadshows](#)



Discover more events

- [Visit the events page on our website](#)

Have your say



Details of some of our current consultations are listed below, but don't forget you can [visit our Consultation Hub](#) throughout the month to discover and take part in all of the consultations and engagement activities run by Council

Current consultations

Budget proposals for 2026/27:

We're asking for people's views on our budget proposals for the 2026/27 financial year.

[Have your say on the budget by 3 February 2026](#)

Transport strategies:

We're inviting comments on three draft transport strategies that will shape how people travel across the area in the years ahead.

- [Have your say by 27 January 2026](#)

Smartphones in schools:

Young people, parents, carers and teachers are among those being encouraged to have their say on the use of smartphones in schools and colleges. This consultation has been extended to the end of January to allow more people a say.

- [Complete the survey by 31 January 2026](#)

Private hire and taxi, driver and operator licence fees:

We are seeking views on our fee proposals for taxis and private hire operator, driver and vehicle licensing

- [Fill in the survey by 5 February 2026](#)

Housing Allocation Policy:

We are consulting on proposed changes to our Housing Allocation Policy. The changes could remove some applicants who do not have a priority band from the housing register waiting list.

- [Share your views by 22 February 2026](#)

Francis Jetty PSPO:

We're reviewing the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour, drug use, and criminal activity in Francis Jetty in Northampton and would like to hear people's views.

- [Complete the survey by 1 February](#)

Town and Parish Council Help Centre



Town and Parish Councils have dedicated officers at our Council who can be contacted for help and support with all things WNC.

Connected Communities Coordinator Alan Burns and Community Cohesion Officer Sophie Ellidge have a remit to maintain and enhance good working relationships between West Northamptonshire Council and Town and Parish colleagues.

Find out more on the [Town and Parish Council help centre on our website](#), or email alan.burns@westnorthants.gov.uk or sophie.ellidge@westnorthants.gov.uk for more information.

Clerks are also encouraged to [use the self-service options on our website](#) to ask questions and access Council services.