



# Town & Parish Briefing 45

**Edition 45 - Friday 24 April 2026**

## Latest news



### A blooming good idea

Green-fingered residents can apply to garden parts of parks and open spaces under a new scheme to support wellbeing, strengthen community pride, and enhance the environment.

Our new Community Gardening Policy will allow individuals and voluntary and community groups to apply to garden appropriate areas of land, such as sections of parks and other open spaces, where this does not affect general public access.

Suitable sites will be identified and made available through a simple application process, with successful applicants offered a five-year licence. The scheme is also helping to [support our new Food Plan, which was launched earlier this month](#).



### Artists helping transform public spaces

A creative approach to tackling graffiti is seeing our council work with local artists to deliver new artwork in public places across West Northamptonshire.

Alongside increased graffiti removal resources, including a new dedicated van, our Community Safety Team is delivering a growing programme of street art designed to improve the look of neighbourhoods and protect areas that are frequently targeted by vandalism.

Artists are creating murals and designs on utility cabinets, shop shutters, roadside walls, pillars and an underpass, turning previously blighted locations into vibrant community features. Many of the designs have been developed with local community groups and reflect simple, locally inspired themes.

The programme is already underway, with plans in the coming month to deliver three wall murals, 24 pillars, four roadside murals, three shop shutters and additional underpass artwork. Work on a further 25 utility cabinets is continuing throughout spring.

These creative projects sit alongside targeted graffiti removal along key gateway routes into Northampton, such as Kettering Road, helping to improve first impressions of the area.



### Voters set to go to the polls on 7 May

Preparations for the by-election taking place in our Council's Hackleton and Roade ward on Thursday, 7 May are in full swing.

People living in the ward will be able to vote for a new councillor to represent their area, which includes Milton Malsor, Blisworth, Shutlanger, Stoke Bruerne, Ashton, Roade, Hartwell, Courteenhall, Quinton and Hackleton.

We are also reminding people that this by-election is for the Hackleton and Roade area only. If you live anywhere else in West Northamptonshire, there will be no local elections, as those were held in our area last year.

[Polling stations will be open from 7am to 10pm on 7 May](#), and anyone voting in person is reminded they must bring photo ID, such as a passport or driving licence.



### Why good food matters

A new Food Plan has been launched to help residents across West Northamptonshire access healthier, more affordable and sustainable food, while supporting local communities and producers.

Launched by the [West Northamptonshire Sustainable Food Network \(WNSFN\)](#) as part of Harvest, the area's flagship celebration of community, local food, growers and healthy eating, the West Northants Food Plan sets out how partners will work together to improve food choices and food security for people living in the area.

It was developed in partnership with our Council, the University of Northampton and a wide range of local charities, growers, health professionals, businesses and community groups, and focuses on the real challenges residents face, including the rising cost of living, access to nutritious food and the impact of diet on health and wellbeing.

Key priorities include promoting healthy eating, reducing food insecurity, supporting local food producers, cutting food waste and encouraging more sustainable and responsible food procurement. Together, these actions aim to help families eat well for less, improve long term health and ensure that good food is accessible in every neighbourhood across West Northamptonshire.

The HARVEST 2026 campaign will celebrate the food related projects already making a positive difference for residents, from community larders and school food programmes to neighbourhood led initiatives and local farming projects. These schemes are helping people access nutritious food, build food skills and strengthen local communities.

For more information, to read the full Food Plan or to get involved, visit [goodfoodwnorthants.org](https://goodfoodwnorthants.org) or email [hello@goodfoodwnorthants.org](mailto:hello@goodfoodwnorthants.org)





## News round-up

**Government pressed for clarity and action over St Andrew's:** Our Council is escalating concerns to Government and national NHS bodies, [pressing for clear answers and assurances over the future of St Andrew's Healthcare in Northampton](#), following serious concerns.

**Thousands of children secure school places:** Families across West Northamptonshire this week found out which primary school their children will attend from September this month, with [the percentages of children securing a place at their first preference school slightly up on last year](#).

**Further A43 work on the horizon:** Work to [improve the A43 between Northampton and Kettering is moving forward](#) following confirmation of Government backing. Our Council and North Northamptonshire Council have been given the green light to continue work on a business case to turn another section of the road into dual carriageway.

**Plans to strengthen Adult Social Care agreed:** A clear [roadmap to strengthen Adult Social Care was agreed at Cabinet this week](#), with carers and residents at the centre of how services will improve. This follows the Care Quality Commission's first assessment of how the Council meets its responsibilities under the Care Act.

**Spring vaccination programme to offer protection:** The [spring COVID-19 vaccination programme has been launched](#), offering enhanced protection for older and more vulnerable people those considered most at risk from the virus.

**Sponsorship opportunities at Pride:** The Northampton Pride Committee are looking for local groups, organisations and [businesses wishing to sponsor Northampton Pride 2026](#). The event will take place on Saturday 11 July in Northampton Market Square.

**New grant scheme for local organisations:** Charities, social enterprises and community groups across West Northamptonshire are set to benefit from the [new £260,000 Local Infrastructure Organisation grant](#) – a fund to help this sector grow skills and volunteering, strengthen their voice in local decision making, and support them to unlock more funding.

**Illegal tobacco seized in Trading Standards raids:** Thousands more illegal cigarettes have been removed from sale thanks to the latest crackdown by [West Northamptonshire's Trading Standards Team](#)



Find out more

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

## Town and Parish Council updates



### Chance to discuss 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.

Upcoming sessions will take place on:

- Wednesday 20 May 10am to midday
- Monday 22 June 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

[Leanne.Howells@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:Leanne.Howells@westnorthants.gov.uk)

Please note spaces are limited and are allocated on a first come basis.





### [Larger Parish Forum meeting](#)

This month's Larger Parish Forum, held online, provided updates on a range of local parish activity, including public space improvements, funding opportunities, and ongoing projects.

Updates were shared on current priorities, wider sector developments, and engagement work across parishes, along with planning for future events and continued collaboration.

### [Spotlight on...](#)



### [Cabinet Member Councillor Laura Couse](#)

**Cllr Laura Couse is the Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Public Health on West Northamptonshire Council**

I was born and grew up in Zimbabwe, and always found myself looking after elderly or unwell people, from an unwell neighbour to my own grandparents and at times my own Mum.

Health and wellbeing was always my passion and I volunteered with St John Ambulance and DASH Ambulance for some time as a first responder. I became the carer for my own grandparents through their end of life process too.

I moved to the UK in 2001 when the Zimbabwean economy collapsed and inflation rates went up by 400% or more every month. I worked as a live-in carer for a few years, working with end of life, strokes, MS, and simple companionship and then moved into office based work as PA in a law firm, a loss adjuster firm and in a health care facility until roughly 2014.

I then opened my own successful practice in Remedial Massage and Lymphatic Drainage treatments, later moving into more specialised treatment. My practice grew stronger as there is no dedicated NHS lymphoedema clinical for non-cancer related lymphoedema in Northampton and I had a significant client base of over 65s along with a number of younger clients - all struggling to manage their symptoms.

In May 2025, I was elected as Councillor to represent my ward, Nene Valley. When I was asked if I would accept the role of Cabinet for Public Health and Adult Social Care I immediately said yes. I came into the role thinking I knew quite a lot - and found out how little I knew.

It has been a very sharp steep learning curve; I had to close my clinic which sadly has let down my client base who were relying on me - however I made that choice as I have been given an opportunity to really make a difference in an area I am already so familiar with.

I'm passionate about every aspect of my portfolio and love getting involved in workshops, programs, initiatives, as well as trying to find ways to cut through red tape to make our services more user friendly and more effective – while acknowledging the difficulties we face with lack of adequate funding to support an ageing population.

It is a roller coaster - but I am determined to do the best I can do in the best way possible.





### Our clothing recycling service

Did you know? Our Council offers free collections of unwanted clothing, textiles, books, bric-a-brac, CDs, toys and more.

Operated in partnership with Anglo Recycling, [the service allows people to book a free collection from their home](#) - with the majority of items donated reused, and anything that can't be reused sent for recycling wherever possible.

The service also supports local charities, with the 200 tonnes of items collected last year helping to raise more than £3,800 for the St John Ambulance, Animals in Need Northamptonshire, Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service, Northamptonshire Search and Rescue, and Cynthia Spencer Hospice in the last year.

Following a public vote, five new local charities will be supported over the next year:

- Baby Basics Northampton
- The Hope Centre
- RSPCA Northamptonshire Branch
- SAF Cat Rescue
- South Northants Community Responders

The scheme offers a great way for residents to declutter, allowing others to make use of their unwanted items and supporting local good causes.

Any help Town and Parish Councils can offer in terms of promoting the service to local residents would be greatly appreciated.

The link to book a collection can be found here [Clothing collections | West Northamptonshire Council](#) and please feel free to use the attached image and any of the

information in this article to help share information about the service on your social media channels, websites or newsletters.

Donate old toys,  
clothes and more  
from your doorstep!



Search  
'clothing collections'  
at [www.westnorthants.gov.uk](http://www.westnorthants.gov.uk)



 West Northamptonshire Council in partnership with  Doorstep Collections

## Events and activities



### Fostering Friendly pledge encourages support

The Fostering Friendly Pledge is a new initiative from Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) that encourages local businesses and organisations to actively support foster carers in their communities.

By signing the pledge, organisations commit to offering practical support such as:

- Discounts or priority services
- Wellbeing or lifestyle benefits
- Flexible or tailored services that recognise the demands of fostering.

NCT are holding a Fostering Friendly Pledge launch and networking event at The Old Savoy Theatre, Northampton on Wednesday 13 May. This event aims to bring together local businesses, partners and foster carers to share ideas and learn how small gestures can make a meaningful difference.

Organisations interested in signing the pledge or attending the launch event can email [nctcommunications@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:nctcommunications@nctrust.co.uk) or visit [www.fosterme.co.uk](http://www.fosterme.co.uk)



**CALLING ALL LOCAL BUSINESSES**

# Fostering Friendly pledge launch event

Are you a local business that wants to make a difference to local foster carers and children?

**What is the Fostering Friendly Pledge?**  
This is a commitment from local businesses to offer practical discounts and benefits that help foster carers feel valued and supported in their community.

**What are benefits for your business?**

- Offer discounts or benefits set entirely by you
- Support foster carers in a meaningful way
- Recognition as a Fostering Friendly and Socially Responsible business
- Connect with other like-minded local businesses

**13<sup>th</sup> May 2026**  
**8.30-10am**  
**The Old Savoy Theatre**

**FREE TO ATTEND**  
Tea, coffee and breakfast refreshments provided

For more info, contact:  
[nctcommunications@nctrust.co.uk](mailto:nctcommunications@nctrust.co.uk)

 Northamptonshire  
Children's Trust

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 pages](#) throughout the month to discover and take part in all of the consultations and engagement activities run by the Council

#### Current consultations

##### **SEND Strategy**

Partners, families, children, and young people across West Northamptonshire are being invited to share their views to help shape the area's next Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy

- [Have your say by Friday 8 May](#)

##### **Greyfriars redevelopment**

People across are invited to share their views on an updated masterplan for the future of Greyfriars, ahead of a planning application which is set to be submitted later this year.

- [Complete the survey by Sunday 24 May](#)

## Town and Parish Council Help Centre



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

### **Help and support for your council**

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



*1 - Alan and Sophie*