



Town & Parish Briefing 46

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Latest news



[Cabinet arrangements confirmed](#)

Our [Cabinet has been confirmed for the year ahead](#) as we continue work towards improving services and outcomes for communities.

The Cabinet has received a slight reshuffle after Cllr James Petter decided to stand down as Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Culture and Leisure as the Administration's first year in office came to an end.

Cllr Charlie Hastie has been appointed Deputy Leader of the Council alongside his role as Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities and Cllr Kamala Guliyeva takes on the position of Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Culture and Leisure. All other portfolios within the Cabinet remain unchanged.

The full list of confirmed Cabinet positions are as follows:

- Cllr Mark Arnull – Leader of the Council
- Cllr Charlie Hastie – Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
- Cllr Kamala Guliyeva – Cabinet Member for Local Economy, Culture and Leisure.
- Cllr Michael Stratton – Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education.
- Cllr Andrew Last – Cabinet Member for HR, Corporate 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.



[New Chairman takes the chains of office](#)

Two good causes supporting young people are set for a boost after the new Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council pledged to support them during her year in office.

Cllr Fiona Baker will help raise funds for both Springs Family Centre and New Leaf Learning in the coming year, after receiving the chains of office from the outgoing Chairman Cllr Alison Eastwood at last night's (Thursday 21 May) Full Council meeting.

Cllr Anthony Lock, who represents Daventry South, will serve as Vice Chairman.

Based in Spring Boroughs in Northampton, [The Springs Family Centre](#) offers a range of activities to support young people, including youth groups, a jobs club, music recording studio, cookery courses and much more.

[New Leaf Learning](#), meanwhile, offers outdoor learning opportunities at the Courteenhall Estate for children who are not engaging in learning at mainstream schools.

[Find out more about the new Chairman of the Council here](#)

Cllr Baker is keen to get out and about visiting parishes across West Northamptonshire during her year in office. To invite the chairman to your community event, please get in touch with us using [our online Chairman engagement form](#).



1 - New Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council, Cllr Fiona Baker, with Vice Chairman Cllr Anthony Lock

[Council to work with communities on three-weekly collections](#)

We will spend the year ahead engaging with communities ahead of the introduction of three-weekly waste collections across West Northamptonshire in spring 2027.

The move will bring collections in the Northampton and South Northamptonshire areas in line with homes in the former Daventry District, where black bins have been collected every three weeks since 2018.

The three-weekly collections will only apply to residual waste across the area, with recycling bins continuing to be collected fortnightly and food waste weekly.

Residents in flats and other households who use communal bins, and terraced properties who use sacks for their general waste and recycling will continue to be collected on a weekly basis.

Support will be available for larger households, families with babies, and residents with medical needs. Larger black bins can be provided where households are eligible, and recycling capacity can be increased.

No households will move to three weekly collections until spring 2027 after residents have been fully engaged on the changes and received clear information about dates, support available, and how to make the most of food waste and recycling services.

Clinical waste collections and assisted collections will continue for residents who need them.

[Find out more information about how the collections would work in West Northamptonshire](#)



[Join the national conversation](#)

Town and Parish Councils are invited to take part in the National Conversation - a UK-wide listening initiative, inviting people across the country to share what they value about community life and the kind of communities they want to build together.

You can complete the survey at [Homepage - The National Conversation](#) and please feel free to share it with local residents



[New family hubs in Daventry and Northampton](#)

New Best Start Family Hubs are set to come to Daventry and Northampton town centres as part of our ongoing work to give children the best possible start in life.

In Daventry, [plans are underway to make use of the two empty units at Mulberry Place](#), next to the Arc Cinema, offering a more central, modern and accessible site for families, compared to the current hub in Staverton Road.

An in Northampton, a new Hub is set to open on the ground floor of the Central Library in Abington Street, alongside the Children's Library.

Part of our Best Start in Life programme, Family Hubs bring a range of support services together under one roof, offering information, advice and activities.

Work on both Hubs is set to start later this year.

[Find out more about our Best Start Family Hubs](#)



[Free sim cards to help people get online](#)

People who are struggling to afford to get online may be able to [access a free sim card from our libraries](#) as part of a news scheme.

Our library service is working with the [Good Things Foundation's National Databank initiative](#), which helps people facing digital hardship to stay connected by providing sim cards offering free data, calls and texts, supplied by Vodafone, Three, Virgin and O2.

If you know someone aged 18 or over who is on a low income and has little or no internet access, please tell them to pop into their nearest council-managed library and speak to a member of staff to find out if they qualify.



[West Northants benefiting from cleaner air](#)

Four sites previously designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) have had that status removed after showing signs of steady progress.

The AQMAs covering Watling Street in Towcester, and Victoria Promenade, Campbell Square and St Michael's Road all in Northampton, have all been removed after the [latest findings showed nitrogen dioxide \(NO₂\) levels have remained below national objectives for at least three consecutive years](#).

We will continue to monitor air quality across West Northamptonshire, and our three remaining AQMAs - covering Bradshaw Street, St James and Harborough Road, all in Northampton - will remain in place and continue to receive focused attention in line with our published Action Plan.

Air quality monitoring is ongoing at more than 140 locations across West Northamptonshire to ensure continued compliance with national air quality objectives.



News round-up

New Youth Council announced: Fresh members of our Youth Council and our new Youth Parliament Members are getting [settled into their new roles after their recent election](#).

Free sim cards to help people get online: People struggling to afford to get online are encouraged to head to one of our libraries to [see if they could be eligible for a free sim card](#).

CCTV camera set to return to improve safety: Camera coverage at the Wathen Wigg Bridge over the River Nene in Northampton is set to be [reinstated to help improve safety in the area](#).

Gym extension project to get underway: The gym at Danes Camp Leisure Centre is set to be extended as [part of a range of upgrades being put in place by the new operator Everyone Active](#).

Northamptonshire County Mortuary officially opens: A new £9.4 million facility at Riverside Business Park in Northampton has [brought post-mortem services together under one roof for the first time](#).

Extra storage space marks new chapter for Northamptonshire Archives: Drawings that shaped Northampton's streets, and records marking life's most solemn moments are being carefully [rehoused in new storage space at Northamptonshire Archives](#).

Refunds on parking charges launched in error: Information on how to [get a refund on parking charges that were applied incorrectly is now available on our website](#)

Court order granted to tackle anti-social behaviour: The Partial Closure Order [places strict limits on access to St Stephen's House in Northampton](#), banning anyone who is not a resident from entering the building or its shared areas, including entrances, stairwells, car park entrances and bin stores.

New four-year plan to give young people a stronger start in life: The [Youth Strategy 2026–2030 sets out how we will work with partners to support young people](#) to stay safe, build confidence, develop skills and have a stronger voice in decisions that affect their lives.

Fairer housing allocations policy: Our refreshed Housing Allocations Policy is set to make access to social and affordable housing fairer, clearer and more consistent while [ensuring those most in need of a home are given the highest priority](#).





Find out more

- Read all of our news releases at 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.

The next sessions takes place on:

- 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 by contacting Leanne.Howells@westnorthants.gov.uk

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



Spotlight on...



East Hunsbury Parish Council's Big Sing group





We asked for your examples of successful projects you run that could inspire others to do similar. In this week's Spotlight, East Hunsbury Parish Council tell us about The Big Sing – a different sort of singing group....

The Big Sing is a key part of East Hunsbury Parish Council's Get Active Project, an offshoot of the Parish Council's long-running Seniors Club programme. Developed to provide older residents with opportunities to be more active physically, mentally, creatively, and socially, The Big Sing has grown far beyond its original audience. By being delivered in a welcoming public space, the sessions now attract residents from across the parish and wider community, creating new social connections across different ages and backgrounds.

One of the project's biggest successes has been **THE BIG SING** — a lively, hour-long monthly singing session which has now been running for more than five years.

Like many of the Get Active sessions, the original idea came directly from local residents. A small singing group was looking for a venue and support to help reach a wider audience.

At first, the idea of running a singing group in a library during public opening hours seemed unusual. However, libraries already host activities such as children's Rhyme Time sessions, so The Big Sing simply brings that same spirit of participation and enjoyment to adults.

Instead of nursery rhymes, however, the group sings Beatles classics, ABBA favourites, songs from the shows, and Dolly Parton hits. It is not unusual to hear Tom Jones being enthusiastically belted out amongst the bookshelves!

A major part of the success of the sessions has been the commitment and energy of the volunteer team. Two talented volunteer singers, Theresa and Graham, take turns leading the sessions and creating the song lists.

Very early on, the volunteers decided they wanted to include a pop-up café to help create an even more welcoming and social atmosphere. With donated vintage teacups and the support of

volunteers including Renee, Steph, and Teresa, the team now opens the space well before the singing begins.

People who initially attended on their own now arrive early knowing they will meet familiar faces. What began as a singing session has grown into something much more — a place for friendship, conversation, laughter, and social connection.

Importantly, The Big Sing is deliberately not described as a choir. The sessions are promoted as “Rhyme Time for Grown Ups” — especially for people who feel they “cannot hold a note in a bucket.” Removing the pressure to perform encourages people of all abilities and confidence levels to take part.

Participants regularly describe how much they enjoy the opportunity to sing in the same carefree way they would at home or in the car, but alongside others. The atmosphere is joyful, relaxed, and often hilarious.

From an original group of just six people, the monthly sessions now regularly attract up to 100 attendees.

Why does The Big Sing work?

- A welcoming team with smiling faces ready to greet people, especially those attending alone
- A strong buddying culture, helping new people feel included quickly
- An open and inclusive approach with absolutely no requirement to be able to sing
- A volunteer-led pop-up café supported through donations and local Tesco support, encouraging social interaction before and after sessions
- Dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers
- A highly visible public location in the middle of Hunsbury Library, where visitors often stop, smile, and sometimes join in themselves
- Innovative use of a public library space, bringing many people through the doors who may not otherwise visit the library

Can this work elsewhere?

The short answer is yes.

The key is understanding your own community and what sort of music and atmosphere would appeal locally. Finding volunteer singing leaders is often simpler than expected — many people simply love to sing and enjoy encouraging others.

The overall cost can be minimal if a welcoming community venue is available. Song sheets can be printed and reused, and public spaces such as libraries, parks, or community venues can help attract interest and encourage wider participation.

During Covid restrictions, sessions even successfully operated outdoors in a socially distanced format.

Equally important is the social element. Volunteers willing to run a small pop-up café and welcome people with a cup of tea can make a huge difference in helping people feel comfortable and included.

The Big Sing demonstrates how low-cost, volunteer-led community activity can transform public spaces into welcoming environments that improve wellbeing, reduce isolation, and strengthen community connection.

If you would like to know more about starting your own Big Sing, the team would be delighted to share advice and experiences.

Email: community@easthunsburyparishcouncil.gov.uk

[Our weight management service](#)

People looking to improve their health and wellbeing are urged to find out if they are eligible for free support from our weight management service.

The Gro Health Service offers free digital or face-to-face group programmes over a 12-week period, centred around nutrition, physical activity, sleep and mental wellbeing, to truly support all areas of a healthy lifestyle.

On joining Gro Health, participants have additional continued support for up to 12 months through the Gro Health digital platform, where they can access tailored educational articles and videos, and support from Gro Health's coaches.

The programme is suitable for adults with BMI of 30 or above (or 27.5 and above for people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds) who are motivated to improve their health - and is free to eligible people across West Northants.

How to access the service:

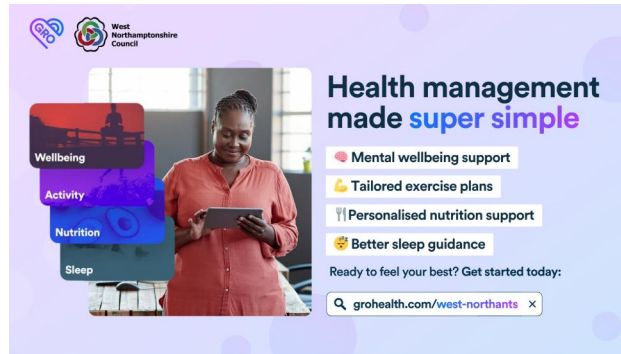
- Self- referrals via online referral form: - web.grohealth.com/west-northants
- Call Gro Health on 0330 133 0307
- Speak to your GP surgery to request a referral to Gro Health

Can you help us promote this service?

We would be grateful to Town and Parish Councils for your assistance in promoting this offer to residents.

Gro Health has offered a DropBox of materials to help promote the service, including social media graphics, leaflets, posters and suggested articles for newsletters.

- [Download the promotional assets here](#)



Events and activities



[Pop-up Planetarium coming to Northampton](#)

A mobile planetarium is coming to Northampton Market Square this spring, offering an exciting and educational experience for the whole family.

Planetarium Go! invites audiences of all ages to explore the wonders of the universe inside a large spherical dome. Visitors are surrounded by a 360° screen - offering an immersive experience for families, schools and visitors through engaging 20–30 minute films.

Running from 29 May to 21 June, the project is a partnership between our Council and Planetarium Go!

[Book your places for Planetarium Go here](#)



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

People are encouraged to take part in a set of surveys shaping the area's next Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy. There are two surveys, one for young people and one for families and professionals, and the deadline for comments is Wednesday 17 June.

- [Survey for children and young people](#)
- [Survey for families and professionals](#)

People are also invited to join a number of in-person sessions taking place in Daventry, Towcester, Brackley and Northampton in June. [Find out more and register your place here](#)

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 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.



2 - Alan and Sophie