

## Ward councillor's report (Barby & Onley) January 2024

### Council Draft Budget Consultation 2024/25

The draft budget was approved by Cabinet last month and the consultation ends on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. [West Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2024/25 Consultation - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#) It's proposed that council tax will again be raised to an average increase of 4.99% and rents, service charges and garage rents will rise by 7.7%. These increases are due to severe financial pressure on the Council from the increasing demand of Children and Adult Social Services and increasing need of costly temporary accommodation for rising numbers of homeless families.

The Council's draft Budget was published before the provisional local government settlement was announced just before Christmas. This settlement is the annual determination of funding by central government to local government and West Northants Council was disappointed to learn that it is likely to be awarded £1.73m less than anticipated. This will need to be funded from a contingency fund in order to have a balanced budget. The Local Government Association had this comment to make on the provisional settlement:

*"The LGA has long highlighted that council tax rises – particularly the adult social care precept – have never been the solution to the long-term pressures faced by councils, particularly in social care which is desperately in need of reform. Increasing council tax raises different amounts of money in different parts of the country, unrelated to need."*

### Unspent S106 Monies

A local newspaper article recently highlighted that West Northants Council has £83m in unspent S106 funds from the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23. These financial contributions negotiated with developers are used to pay for infrastructure development, affordable housing community facilities, environmental mitigation and public services.

This information was obtained from a Freedom of Information request by the Northampton Chronicle & Echo. This astonishing sum is the total of unallocated funds relating to the legacy boroughs – Daventry District Council, South Northants Council and Northampton Borough Council – the unitary authority is still in the process of amalgamating the data from the legacy areas. In its comment on the article WNC announced its intention to create a database to make this information "more transparent and accessible" but has not confirmed whether any of these funds were time limited and have had to be returned to developers.

### Inspirational Women Awards

Nominations are running until 4<sup>th</sup> February for the 12<sup>th</sup> Inspirational Women awards. So if a woman in your community or workplace has made a tangible and inspirational difference why not put her name forward for a community or business award. The annual ceremony is organised by the Council's Women's Forum.

[Nominate someone for the Inspirational Woman awards - Introduction - Online form \(achieveservice.com\)](#)

## **West Northants Council By-election**

Suresh Patel, a Northampton councillor resigned last month for health reasons, triggering a by-election to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> February. Mr Patel was the main witness in the recent political donations trial of former Northampton MP and council leader David Mackintosh and businessman Howard Grossman, both defendants were acquitted.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

7<sup>th</sup> January 2024