

Ward councillor's report (Barby & Onley) March 2024

Draft Local Plan

A revised draft Local Plan will be considered by the Planning Policy Committee for approval this week and then referred to the Full Council on 21st March. The new Plan identifies a need for 4,000 new homes for the plan period of up to 2041 and 10 hectares of strategic employment land.

The 2 potential employment sites included in the 2021 consultation, one of which would have directly affected Kilsby and the other Yelvertoft, Lilbourne and Crick are not included for allocation in the draft Plan. Similarly the employment and housing sites between Braunston and Daventry are not being brought forward. While the DIRFT sites are not included in the draft Plan WNC intends to support high quality sustainable logistics development at DIRFT and Northampton Gateway. Land to the south of the Northampton Gateway at J15 has been allocated in the Plan. For more details see [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Planning Policy Committee, 14/03/2024 18:00 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#) An 8 week consultation on the Plan will open after Easter.

A survey has been sent to all parish councils regarding the new settlement hierarchy for West Northants asking for information on their villages and their aspirations. The responses will influence how parishes will be classified in the new Local Plan. The survey needs to be completed by 2nd April.

Plans to improve Air Quality – have your say

A consultation is open on WNC's proposals to reduce pollution and improve air quality, set out in a draft air quality action plan. All councils have a duty to monitor local air quality and ensure that it meets certain standards and West Northants has seven air quality management areas. The consultation closes on 17th March. [Have your say on our plans to improve Air Quality - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

Transport is the sector with the largest carbon emissions, accounting for 45% of total emissions in West Northants. WNC was criticised last month by campaigners during the meeting of the Full Council at the Guildhall for delaying publishing an air quality action plan until sent a final warning by Defra in December, despite Northampton being one of the most polluted towns in the UK.

Budget Report

At the recent Full Council meeting the final budget, Housing Revenue Account and the setting of Council Tax were approved for 2024/2025. A 4.99% rise on council tax bills is being imposed which will generate an extra £13.m with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care. Due to escalating demand and inflationary pressures the adult social care budget has been increased by 9.5% and the budget for children's services increased by a huge 22%.

£164m will be invested in the Council's capital programme to improve local infrastructure and assets such as land, buildings and equipment. All of the amendments to the budget by the opposition parties were voted down. For more details: [Choose agenda document pack - Council 22 February 2024 - West Northamptonshire Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Last week there was a media report referring to WNC as one of the 19 local authorities that were to be allowed to sell assets to pay for services in the coming financial year to cover their day to day spending. The government announced that these 19 authorities had requested exceptional financial support (EFS): [Exceptional financial support for local authorities for 2024-25 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) While some local authorities are using EFS because they are in financial distress the WNC finance officer has given assurance that the £6.6m agreed funds relate to a capital sum unused since April 2021 which could only be authorised to be used via the EFS mechanism – it is not a reflection of WNC's financial viability or a sign that it could go bankrupt. The funds will be used to deliver new and preventative projects for the benefit of the Children's Service such as early help hubs and work to reduce placement costs of children in care.

Postal vote applications for Police and Fire Commissioner Election 2nd May

Residents wishing to vote by post are encouraged to apply early ahead of the deadline of 5pm 17th April. Those wishing to vote by proxy (when someone votes on your behalf) can do so in advance also ahead of the deadline of 5pm 24th April. [Apply for a postal vote or proxy vote West Northamptonshire Council \(westnorthants.gov.uk\)](#) Those not registered to vote can register via [Register to vote - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

A reminder that those voting in person are now required to bring photo ID to the polling station

By-election result

West Northants had its first by-election last month at the ward of Hunsbury and Shelfleys in Northampton. This was triggered by the resignation of Conservative councillor Suresh Patel who resigned in December for health reasons. The seat was won by the Liberal Democrat candidate.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

8th March 2024