

## **Ward councillor's report (Barby & Onley) February 2025**

### **Barby Sporting Club planning applications -update**

WNC has promised an update on the applications by 10<sup>th</sup> February so I shall bring this to the meeting.

### **Increase in social housing applications**

WNC has seen a doubling of the number of households applying for social housing in the last year from an average of 335 per month in 2023 to 700 applications a month on average during 2024. Only 1,500 homes on average become available over a 12-month period, so only those in the greatest need and in the highest priority bands have any prospect of being housed by WNC.

When WNC became a unitary authority there was a legal requirement to bring in a single housing allocations scheme. A significant backlog has been caused as a result of having to re-register applicants from the three former housing lists as well as the extra documents now needed to assess eligibility. There are now long waits for people to even find out if they are eligible to register on the housing list, however no details have been given as to backlog numbers, information I shall be asking for. The cabinet member for housing Cllr Rosie Herring has apologised for the delay.

In November WNC launched its Affordable Housing Delivery Plan which has ambitions to deliver a minimum of 650 affordable homes per year by 2029/30. However affordable rents are on average 30% more expensive than social rents so there will continue to be a demand for social housing which completely outstrips the supply of available homes.

### **Current Consultations**

[Help shape the One West Northamptonshire Plan - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#) Consultation closes 20<sup>th</sup> February

I reported on this consultation last month and some further background to its ambitions might be helpful.

The aim of this Plan is to “develop West Northamptonshire into the ‘beating heart of England’ by 2030, where communities flourish and businesses prosper.” Unfortunately our economic pulse is not quite as healthy as other areas. We in West Northants have a productivity gap, producing £2.80 less output per hour than the English average. We also have a declining business base and a concentration of low value employment, in transport, storage, health and social care. These jobs provide fewer opportunities for progression and higher paid jobs.

The Council will be working with sectors with existing strengths, such as advanced manufacturing and motorsports which are important to the areas of economic growth. This will require growing a skilled workforce to meet the needs of these sectors. How this will work with the Chancellor Rachel Reeves’ recent announcement about the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor with its potential to be “Europe’s Silicon Valley” will be interesting to see. Milton Keynes is in the middle of this growth corridor and will be connected to Oxford this year when the East-West line opens. Milton Keynes together with Luton withdraw their

support for a devolution deal with West and North Northants in favour of a bid with Bedfordshire. All these South Midlands authorities, including Northamptonshire have now missed out on the fast track devolution programme announced for 6 other regions this week.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

7<sup>th</sup> February 2025