

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

Support for unpaid carers in West Northants

The Council has set up a scrutiny review panel to examine how it supports unpaid carers in our area, which I will be chairing. It's estimated that there are 37,000 unpaid carers in West Northants, including children and young people. NHS England describes an unpaid carer as "...anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid."

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 will be law on 1st April 2024 and the panel will want to ensure that the Council is prepared as an employer to meet the new requirements relating to supporting its staff with caring responsibilities. From April all employees will be entitled to a flexible one week's unpaid leave per year if they provide or arrange care for a relative or dependent. [Boost for carers who will receive new unpaid leave entitlement under government-backed law - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boost-for-carers-who-will-receive-new-unpaid-leave-entitlement-under-government-backed-law)

Any local residents who would like to share their experience of being a carer please get in touch with me – it will be very useful for this scrutiny review to hear what impact caring responsibilities have and the perception of current support for carers locally. The Council is developing a Carers Strategy which the scrutiny review aims both to support and inform.

West Northamptonshire Local Plan

The new Local Plan is being developed over a three year period from January 2024 to September 2026. The Plan will review and replace the policies in the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) and the adopted Part 2 for Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire areas. There will be a public consultation on the draft Plan opening in April 2024 (not this month as indicated in my December report).

Climate change resilience will be a cross cutting theme run through the Plan's strategy and policies and "*there will be a particular emphasis on place making for our communities to ensure that development and associated infrastructure is delivered through a plan led approach which ensures development of the right quality, in the right place and at the right time*". This statement and much more information comes from the Local Development Scheme which sets out the timetable for local plan preparation, recently approved by the Planning Policy Committee. ([Public Pack](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/30/01/2024/18:00)) [Agenda Document for Planning Policy Committee, 30/01/2024 18:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/30/01/2024/18:00)

WND/2021/0767 Barby Sporting Club 2023/5783/MAF Barby Sporting Club

I have had a further discussion with the acting Assistant Director for Planning, James Rodger, who is well aware of the delay in making a recommendation, in particular WND/2021/0767, now in its third year of awaiting determination. I will continue to press for the applications to come to committee as soon as possible. I am keeping a regular eye on the documents uploaded on the portal in connection to the applications and note that Warwick Highways objection to 2023/5783/MAF was recently added.

Post 16 School travel consultation

Comments are invited on new proposals for a revised policy on transport services for post 16 students. WNC has reviewed its current Transport Policy Statement for over 16s and is introducing changes which apply to young of sixth form age or young people up to age 25 with Education, Health and Care plans. The changes are needed to meet high demand and operating costs and and to offer greater flexibility to parents or carers while supporting young people's independence and encouraging sustainable travel.

Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are entitled to a reduction to their contribution to their transport costs (there is no legal duty to provide free transport to over 16s) as are students from low income families. Where sole transport is the only option a *Personal Travel Budget will be the Council's default offering.* A personal budget could pay for the running costs of a parent/carer's own vehicle or be used to pay some one else to take a young person to school, for example. The intention is to give parents and carers greater freedom of choice and to reduce the Council's costs in funding individual taxis for students. [Post-16 Transport Policy Statement Consultation 2024 - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

Daventry Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – draft for consultation

The Daventry "LCWIP" sets out a prioritised list of schemes to deliver over a 10 year period to make it safer and easier for people to walk, wheel, cycle or scoot for shorter journeys. Carbon emissions from transport account for 50% of West Northamptonshire's total carbon emissions, a huge challenge given the Council's commitment to be net zero in its own emissions by 2030 and those of its residents and businesses by 2045. Making active travel accessible, safe and enjoyable so it becomes the natural choice for short, everyday journeys will help reach these net zero targets. The Government's objective is for 50% of trips in towns and cities to be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2030.

Although Barby is not included in the four villages close to Daventry identified as proposed routes to link them to the town, neighbouring Braunston has been selected. All residents interested in promoting walking and cycling are encouraged to comment on the consultation, which closes on 25th February:

[Have your say on Daventry Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

Rural Community Needs Fund

Grants of up to £10,00 are being made available following Northamptonshire Community Foundation's campaign to "Shine a spotlight on rural community needs." The aim of the fund is to address urgent needs to support rural communities to address issues such as fuel poverty, refurbishment of community building and equipment, support for older people and activities and education services for young people. Applications must be submitted by 5th April.

[Northamptonshire Community Foundation - Rural Community Needs Fund \(ncf.uk.com\)](#)

By-election result

West Northants had its first by-election yesterday 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

9th February 2024