

Ward councillor's report (Barby & Onley) January 2025

The Government's [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](#) was published on 16th December 2024. WNC is West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is part of the South Midlands Authorities Board along with five other local authorities: Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and North Northamptonshire. These authorities were invited to join a priority programme for devolution meaning additional support to establish a mayoral strategic authority would be provided and a mayoral election held in May 2026.

At a meeting of full council on 9th January the majority of councillors voted to support submitting an expression of interest for a new strategic mayoral authority. As I and other Lib Dem councillors do not support investing so much power in one individual mayor I voted against this motion. A new south Midlands partnership will not replace the unitary authorities, rather add another layer of local government with additional packages. The mayor will have executive powers to make decisions on matters such as transport and housing. A mayoral precept would be an additional cost in council tax bills.

The proposal is something of a Hobson's choice in any event. The option of not pursuing devolution could result in West Northants missing out on funding and investments in the short term and in any event devolution would be later by imposed by a ministerial directive. There is some uncertainty about some of the potential partners willingness to enter a combined authority with Northants. Concerns have been raised about our county by Luton and Milton Keynes, who have indicated they would prefer to go ahead with a devolution deal without Northants. It seems that some of their councillors regard our county as the "naughty boys" or the "Milwall" of local government.

WNC Draft Budget 2025/26

Next year's draft Budget is now out for public consultation until 21st January. There has been a major drive since July when the projected £38.5m overspend was identified to close the budget gap and deliver a balanced budget. Council tax will again be rising by 4.99%, taking the average charge for band D equivalent property to £1,866.98 per year (an average rise of £1.71 per week on a band D property). The rise is in line with the maximum increase permitted by government without the need for a referendum. Essential services are to be protected and efficiency savings of £26m are anticipated next year. £155m is proposed to be invested in a capital programme in the next four years to improve local land, buildings and equipment. [West Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2025 to 2026 Consultation - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

Other Consultations

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

A draft vision for West Northants "One West Northamptonshire" proposes a roadmap to achieve WNC's ambitions by 2030. Priorities include an enterprising and inclusive economy, better connectivity to support growth and reduce rural isolation and more and better quality homes. One of the comments arising from the LGA Corporate Review of WNC last year was that the Council lacked an overall vision which would be *particularly helpful for economic*

development and regeneration, and for housing supply, as well as to help partners to understand how they can contribute to the area's development and success. [West Northamptonshire Corporate Peer Challenge | West Northamptonshire Council](#)

[Provide your views on Solid Fuel Burning - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

Consultation ends 31st January

This initial consultation is part of a 2 year DEFRA funding domestic burning research project. Through participation WNC is seeking a baseline understanding of how residents burn wood, coal, briquettes etc, their understanding solid fuel and its potential impacts on respiratory conditions such as asthma. The purpose of the project is also to see if there are any links between what is burnt and the impacts on our most vulnerable adults and children. The project will support the national target for particulate matter emissions (PM2.5).

Volunteers are being sought to have small indoor air quality monitoring equipment in their homes for a temporary period.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

12th January 2024

Casework

It might be of interest to know what work I am involved in in addition to attending parish council meetings of the 7 villages that make up the Braunston and Crick ward. It's no surprise that planning and highways are the main issues for which parish councils, as well as residents, seek help. In addition to sitting on two WNC committees – Strategic Planning and Adult Social Care and Health Committee – in my day to day work I deal with very varied

queries, from residents from the villages and the two estates in Daventry which are also part of the ward at present.

My casework over last year has included supporting a children's home (there are 662 children in care in West Northants), assisting a housing association tenant with severe mould problems in her property, helping an elderly resident who had been the victim of a scam and the family of child with special educational needs. There are nearly 4,000 children in West Northants who have an 'Education and Health Care Plan' or EHCP – these identify educational, health and social needs a child may have and set out how they will be met by the local authority. The Council's poor performance in providing these plans within the prescribed timetables continues to be highlighted after a highly critical Ofsted report earlier last summer.

Cllr Rosie Humphreys

3rd January 2025