



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Cllr Adam Brown

Annual Report 2024/25

I am pleased to be able to provide an overview of the activity of West Northamptonshire Council for the year 2024/25. Of course this is the last year of the current administration before the elections for West Northamptonshire Council on 1st May 2025. Of the current villages within Bugbrooke Ward, Bugbrooke, Harpole, Kislingbury, Nether Heyford, Rothersthorpe and Upper Heyford will join Flore and Brockhall in the new Campion Ward.

The Council has made significant progress on delivering new road schemes, additional highways repairs worth over £10m, town centre regeneration projects in Northampton and improving Children's Services. We have secured a 9 figure investment from the English Cities Fund in the area to the north of Market Square, and completed the renovation project at the market, as well as at Fish Street. The works to Abington Street are nearly complete.

In the Bugbrooke ward over the last year I have worked with residents on major Highways issues, flooding, and significant planning concerns to name but a few. The Sandy Lane Relief Road in Harpole is on course to be completed next month and a number of streets across the ward have seen improvements to roads and/or pavements.

We continue to take a prudent approach to managing the Council's finance, with over £115m saved across the first four years and the budget balanced. We are starting to realise some of the benefits from the use of information technology, artificial intelligence, and other service transformation projects resulting in cost savings and service improvements.

I hope that the summary of WNC's delivery over the last 12 months demonstrates just how much hard work is taking place, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank residents across the Bugbrooke Ward for their support and engagement over the last four years.

April – June 2024

At the Council's annual meeting I was elected to serve as the second leader of West Northamptonshire Council for the remainder of the four year term.

The next stage of our Community Governance Review launched, giving residents, parishes and businesses across West Northamptonshire a chance to shape electoral and governance arrangements for our town and parish councils. Ultimately none of the changes affected any of the Parishes in the Bugbrooke Ward.

A new pay by phone service was launched by WNC for parking in Northampton. The app offers motorists flexibility in their parking stay, allowing people to set up reminders of when their parking time is due to expire, and giving them the ability to remotely top-up their parking stay.

Plans to invest an extra £1.35 million into services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those in need of alternative provision were approved by Cabinet. The investment will help address a significant and ongoing rise in service demand, which in the last three years has seen a 40% increase in requests for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) – an important document that sets out the specific educational needs of a youngster with SEND and the support they require.

An independent review of how our Council is working three years after inception highlighted our strong positive start as a new unitary authority with 'much achieved at pace'. Feedback from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge also emphasised the 'positive culture' and 'tangible upbeat energy' of staff at WNC, who it said took a 'thoughtful people-centred approach' to engaging with residents, with many examples of frontline workers 'going the extra mile' to support their needs. It cited 'good and constructive working relationships between all councillors and officers, having 'mutual respect and support' particularly observable between the senior management team and Cabinet members. A report of the peer challenge's findings said that external partner organisations described relationships with the Council as 'the best they have ever been' and WNC now needed to work more closely and strategically with them to shape the future of the area, including developing a long-term Place vision.

A draft masterplan for Daventry Town Centre was launched ahead of a month-long consultation.

Cabinet received the year-end financial report for 23/24 showing an underspend of £220,000.

Thousands of people lined the streets on Sunday for an open-top bus parade celebrating Northampton Saints' victory in the Premiership final. The parade was facilitated by our Council following meetings with Saints officials in the run-up to the weekend, so that plans could swiftly be put into action should the team bring the trophy home. The parade made its way through a sea of black, green and gold as thousands of fans celebrated Saints' famous victory. The players then stepped out in front of the crowds on a stage at the Guildhall to lift the Premiership trophy.

July - September 2024

Additional funding of £10m for Highway repairs was approved at Council. It followed on from the £2.8 million investment in new machinery in 2023, which has already increased the efficiency of road maintenance and repairs in our area. We understand that the state of our roads is extremely important to residents and we're keen to make sure we're doing everything we can to maintain and improve them. This additional investment will allow us to carry out even more much needed resurfacing and repair works and explore innovative new technologies that will improve our service. We will continue to keep residents informed on the progress of works with the hope that once works have concluded there will be a visible difference.

Local leaders from across the South Midlands joined forces, establishing a new group to champion economic growth by supporting businesses, improving skills, and enhancing career opportunities. The Authorities will also oversee the work previously managed by the Central Area Growth Board, the Growth Hub and Careers Hub.

Council approved a capital budget of £12.372 million to provide relocatable temporary accommodation as part of our ongoing efforts to address the rising need for temporary housing in the area. The plan include the delivery of around 100 units of relocatable temporary accommodation across two sites in Northampton, reducing the reliance on expensive and less stable options like nightly lets and bed and breakfast accommodation.

Superstars of world cycling competed in West Northamptonshire as the 20th edition of the Tour of Britain, the country's biggest professional cycle race came to the area. Eighteen of the world's top cycling teams, including the likes of Team GB Olympic gold medallist Tom Pidcock, double Olympic gold medallist Remco Evenepoel, and double world road race champion Julian Alaphilippe were on start line at the University of Northampton's Waterside Campus, for the penultimate stage of the 2024 Lloyds Bank Tour of Britain.

October – December 2024

Serious flooding hit several parts of the district, including several villages within the Bugbrooke Ward in both October and November. We are prioritising flood management work, with a range of schemes and projects progressing, including:

- Updating the area's Flood Risk Management Strategy which reflects the current position.
- Securing £6.2 million for the award-winning Resilience & Innovation in Northamptonshire (RAIN) project, which is developing tools and funding local projects to help reduce flood risk to properties not covered by major flood defence works.
- Securing £400k of further funds from the Environment Agency for local measures, such as at a school where the playground will be replaced with permeable material to reduce run-off.

Our Council and North Northamptonshire Council partnered with four other authorities in the South Midlands on an expression of interest to Government toward devolution for the region. Unfortunately later in the year some of our neighbours backed out of this EOI to pursue an alternative geography.

We submitted an updated version of the Draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to DEFRA as part of our work to improve air quality within our existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and to support removing two of these AQMAs where significant improvements have already been seen. It followed a review of the draft by DEFRA earlier in the year which highlighted some further work, including a local technical study, that needed to be carried out ahead of publishing the final version.

The much-anticipated grand opening event to celebrate Northampton's revitalised Market Square took place on Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 October. The event marked the transformation of the historic Market Square into a vibrant, inclusive space for the entire community to enjoy.

WNC officers met with partners from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to agree a joint communications approach to further encourage take-up of Pension Credit across West Northants, ahead of the Government's removal of the Winter Fuel Payment later in the year.

The first West Northamptonshire Area Climate Summit saw members of our Council, Northampton Town Council and other town and parish councils from across the area discuss the climate challenge and how they can work together to make a difference locally. More than 50 people attended the event at Delapré Abbey, and it was wonderful to see so many people representing their local communities and coming together to focus on this critical issue.

Organisations from across West Northants joined us at Catesby Innovation Centre for the launch of One West Northamptonshire – a new partnership vision for improving outcomes for residents and businesses across the area by 2030. This new joint Plan will be shaped around how organisations can work together over the next five years to make a real difference to people’s lives.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) has accepted a judgement issued by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) which has found serious failings in the way its housing is managed by Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH). Immediate action is already under way to address the issues, with NPH prioritising safety concerns, including carrying out essential safety checks such as fire risk assessments for properties with a communal space. Tenants whose properties are affected by these issues were contacted directly by NPH and checks of all 11,500 properties were completed by the end of December.

With the effects of Storm Darragh felt across West Northants in mid-December, our highways partner Kier were out and about, dealing with 83 reports of trees and branches falling onto roads, footpaths and overhead cables, and a further 15 reports of flooding on local roads.

January – March 2025

Recycling centres across West Northants were confirmed to be opening 7 days a week from April 1. It's one of a number of improvements being made as part of a new contract with FCC Waste Services, who have taken over management of our six recycling centres at Sixfields, Ecton Lane (Northampton), Daventry, Towcester, Brixworth and Farthinghoe.

Proposals for a new Health and Wellbeing Surgery in Moulton took a step forward thanks to an investment by WNC to unlock the development. The new facility would enable the expansion of the established GP practice into larger premises, along with additional supporting medical services. The project is led by the Integrated Care Board, working closely with the practice, Moulton Parish Council and our Council.

More than 270 people joined us to mark the opening of the first Family Hub in West Northamptonshire. Based at The Forum, the Towcester Family Hub, offers services for children, young people, and their parents from pre-birth to 19 years, and up to 25 years for those with additional needs, providing a variety of bookable and drop-in sessions. Following the successful opening, we will be consulting this May on proposed locations for additional Family Hubs.

The Council launched a new Resident Access Strategy. By embracing digital technology and improving traditional methods, the Council aims to cut wait times with a new SMS service that will direct people straight to the forms or information they need, reducing unnecessary delays. The webchat function on our website will continue to be improved to offer real-time support online, guiding residents to solutions in seconds. People will also receive updates on processing times, so they always know what to expect, while step-by-step video guides will make navigating services simple and stress-free.

Council approved an annual revenue budget of £431.8m which included service efficiencies of £24.6m to mitigate demand pressures within the base budget of £44.2m. This was a balanced budget with no forecast need to rely on reserves.

A new SEND school in Tiffield is nearing completion and will open in September. With a total investment of £21.4 million. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is working with Willmott Dixon through the Department for Education's Construction Framework, to deliver this project which is set to be completed by summer 2025. The Council is also working closely with the Greenwood Academies Trust who will run the school from September. The school will have a number of specialist facilities, including dedicated teaching spaces, a soft playroom, a sensory room, a rebound therapy room, and expansive outdoor play areas.