

Town & Parish Briefing 41

Edition 41 - Tuesday 23 December 2025

Latest news



Your chance to have a say on our budget proposals

A six-week consultation on our budget has launched today (Tuesday 23 December), giving people the opportunity to have a say on the proposals for the 2026/27 financial year.

This has been our Council's most difficult budget to date, with our authority facing no choice other than to explore tough options to tackle the significant financial challenges we face.

We are exploring various ways to bridge the £50m funding gap we face while protecting frontline services supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities, including children, adults and those facing homelessness.

That's why we're encouraging everyone in West Northants to take the opportunity over the next six weeks to complete our survey and share their views on the proposals we have put forward.

People can find out more about the budget and share their views on our Consultation Hub

Residents invited to online discussion to find out more

Residents, businesses and community groups are invited to take part in the first-ever Budget Question Time - an online event giving people the chance to understand, explore and discuss the Council's draft budget proposals for 2026/27.

The session is designed to open up the budget conversation and give residents a clearer picture of how decisions are made, the challenges the Council faces, and the choices that lie ahead. It also creates space for people to ask questions, share views, and raise the issues that matter most to them and their communities.

Your Money, Your Say: Budget Question Time will take place on Tuesday 13 January 2026, from 6.30pm to 8.30pm, and will be held online via Microsoft Teams.

Find out more about the event here



Christmas and New Year arrangements

Arrangements for a range of Council services over the Christmas and New Year period have been published on our website.

It includes details for our offices and customer service arrangements. Our offices will be closed from 5pm tomorrow (Wednesday 24 December) through to 9am on 2 January. Find out more about our office and customer service opening times here

Residents can also find information about our Christmas bin collections, including date changes to cover Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Our Household waste and Recycling Centres will close early tomorrow (Christmas Eve), at 2pm, and will be closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day but will otherwise be open as normal. People are reminded of the need to book a slot in advance.

More information on services, including our Family Hubs, schools, buses, country parks and leisure centres can be found on the **Christmas and New Year pages of our website**



News round-up

Search for a new Chief Exec continues: Our Council has paused plans for appointing a new permanent Chief Executive until later next year so we can refocus the approach. The decision was made earlier this month by the Council's Senior Appointments Committee of cross-party councillors after interviewing candidates for the role.

North West Relief Road opens: Travel across Northampton has been improved with the opening of the North West Relief Road.

Deadline issued as we continue planning enforcement process: We have given the Home Office a 21-day deadline to provide information about its use of three hotels in West Northamptonshire as asylum accommodation.

Early success for recycling centre booking system: A new booking system at West Northamptonshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres cut queues and received more than 21,000 visits in its first few weeks of operating.

Winter shelter for rough sleepers: We're working with Northampton Hope Centre to once again open a Winter Shelter from January to March, offering a safe and welcoming space for people sleeping rough during the coldest months of the year.

Continuing our action against asylum hotels: A taskforce of senior officers has been created as we continue to progress our action against the use of three hotels in the area being used for asylum accommodation.

Breathe easy: Our latest Air Quality Annual Status Report has confirmed air quality continued to improve throughout 2024, helping to make our communities safer, healthier and more pleasant places to live, work and visit.

Mental health and suicide prevention training: Organisations across Northamptonshire are being encouraged to register for the latest round of fully funded Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Training

Housing stock to be brought in-house: Plans to bring over 11,000 council homes back under the direct management of our Council are set to move forward following further scrutiny by councillors.

New leisure services contract: Everyone Active is set to deliver significant investment and improved facilities to leisure centres in the Daventry and Northampton areas after being awarded the contract to operate them over the next ten years.









Find out more

- Read all of our news releases at westnorthants.gov.uk/news
- [Sign-up to our newsletters here]

Focus on...



Health and wellbeing - a seasonal reminder

Whether Christmas is part of your tradition or not, this time of year can be joyful but also exhausting. For Parish Clerks, Councillors and the wider staffing team, it can be an especially period. You do so much for your communities, and it's important to look after yourselves too.

This month, *Action for Happiness* is sharing their **Do Good December** daily calendar, full of small, meaningful actions that support kindness, connection, and mental health.

Each day offers a gentle prompt to help us look after ourselves and others during a busy season.

Explore the calendar here: Do Good December

Additional support and guidance

Our Workplace Wellbeing Toolkit offers a self-help guide full of action plans, practical tips, and signposting resources to support you and colleagues across a wide variety of wellbeing needs.

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing Support pages offer information on local and national services, self-help tools, and places to seek help if you or someone you know is struggling.

As we move through Christmas and into the New Year, please remember to pause, take breaks where you can, and check in with colleagues. You don't have to carry everything at once, and it's okay to set boundaries and make space for rest.

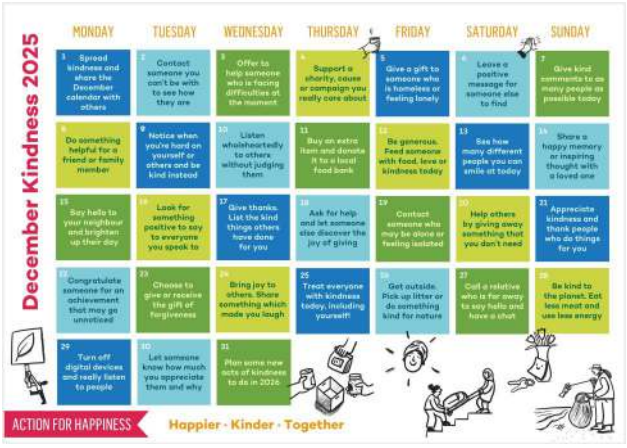
Kindness Countdown

If you're sharing a seasonal message with residents, you might like this simple idea:

Do one small act of kindness each day, a smile, a hello, a compliment, or checking in on someone. These small gestures brighten communities and remind us to be kind to ourselves as well.

Wishing you a peaceful, restorative Christmas, and strength and positivity as we head into the New Year.

If you are interested in building a Health & Wellbeing Plan, please see the guidance document here: Health and Wellbeing Plan Guidance Document and feel free to contact me for support - Emily.Burton@westnorthants.gov.uk



Efforts to increase food waste recycling

Our Waste Services team has been working hard this year to encourage more people to recycle their food waste.

Over the summer they took a range of pop-up roadshows to locations across West Northamptonshire to promote their Food Waste Recycling competition. More than 4,000 people took the quiz and pledged to recycle their food waste for a chance to win prizes offered by local attractions.

The team also visited many of West Northamptonshire's Community Larders, speaking to thousands of residents about food and food waste recycling.

And they are in the process of rolling out food waste recycling collection services to flats in Northampton in a project that is due to be completed next year.

People can also continue to buy food waste liners for £1 a roll at many libraries, but residents are also reminded that when it comes to lining their food caddy - any bag will do! You do not need to buy compostable bags, as they are removed as part of the recycling process anyway. An old bread bag or cereal packet is perfect for the job - we just ask that people do not use black bags.

Some other key messages for residents include:

- **Recycling your food waste is free, easy and hygienic to do.** It's collected weekly and helps free up space in your black bin as well as keeping any smells away.
- **Recycling even small amounts of food waste is worthwhile.** Did you know that recycling just 6 teabags will produce enough energy to boil a kettle for another cuppa!
- **Recycling your food waste reduces your carbon footprint.** It is recycled into green energy and a liquid fertiliser - which is used on local farmers fields to grow more food.

Of course Christmas is a time when we all tend to eat - and unfortunately waste - a lot of food. Did you know for instance that in the UK we throw away 8.2 million potatoes every day That's 41% of all the potatoes we buy. Potatoes can be stored in the fridge to keep them up to three times longer.

More excellent tips like this, plus a guide to Christmas food planning can be found on the Love Food, Hate Waste website

And if you have Christmas leftovers, the Love Food, Hate Waste website also offers some amazing tasty recipes for using them up

We would like to thank everyone who is doing their bit by recycling not only their food waste, but also using their blue-lidded recycling bin for their cans, paper, cardboard, glass bottles/jars, foil and plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays too.

Find out more about food waste recycling



Town and Parish Council updates



Larger Parish Council forum

Each month, we host a Larger Parish Council Forum to bring together representatives from across our communities.

It provides the opportunity for clerks of the 14 largest town and parish councils in West Northamptonshire to co-ordinate and discuss ways of working better and more closely together, with our Council acting as critical friend, providing challenge, and offering advice on local implementation. The forum will also be encouraged to engage with and explore closer working arrangements with other Council partners.

To ensure the information discussed at these forums is visible to all Town and Parish councils we will now begin to share a summary in this briefing, highlighting the themes explored and the ideas raised so that every council can consider how they might apply them locally.

This month's Larger Parish Forum centred on the theme of Health and Wellbeing, recognising that happier, healthier communities are built not only through our clinical services but also through everyday local action.

The forum hosted a packed agenda with key speakers from:

Dr David Smart (**Action for Happiness**), Natalia Lays (**WNC Wellbeing Service**), Sarah Hillier (**CEO, Northamptonshire MIND**) and Adam Smith (Director of Mental Health, **Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust**)

The discussion highlighted:

- The importance of shifting focus from "illness" to "wellness" - building resilience, connection, and kindness across communities.
- Evidence that positive emotions and small daily habits can improve health outcomes, strengthen relationships, and reduce isolation.
- The role of local councils in embedding wellbeing into places where people live their lives -libraries, schools, faith centres, parks, and community hubs.
- The value of partnership working, with councils, health services, voluntary groups, and residents collaborating to create supportive networks.
- The WNC Wellbeing Service, which provides practical support to residents across West Northamptonshire, was highlighted as a key resource for councils to signpost.

How Town & Parish Councils Can Support Wellbeing

Councils are uniquely placed to make wellbeing part of everyday community life. Some practical ways include:

- **Creating welcoming spaces**: investing in parks, benches, allotments, and community gardens to encourage connection and pride of place.

- **Promoting social activities**: hosting clubs, coffee mornings, and events that reduce loneliness and build networks.
- **Championing wellbeing resources**: signposting residents to services like the WNC Wellbeing Service and Action for Happiness programmes.
- **Embedding wellbeing in local assets**: libraries, schools, and faith centres can become hubs for wellbeing information and activities.
- **Supporting volunteers and champions**: training local people to lead wellbeing conversations, run groups, and share resources.
- **Encouraging active lifestyles**: promoting walking routes, exercise classes, and community sports as part of everyday life.
- **Fostering kindness and belonging**: small initiatives such as "kindness campaigns," local recognition schemes, or intergenerational projects can strengthen community trust.

Parish conference - your questions

We've answered more of the questions you posed at the Parish Conference

Can community health offer Covid jabs for those now outside of the Government 75 monument age?

We are only able to provide COVID vaccinations in line with the NHS national eligibility criteria. This means that vaccinations cannot be offered outside of those current priority groups. If you wish to receive a COVID vaccination but do not meet the NHS eligibility requirements, it is possible to arrange this privately through participating pharmacies or healthcare providers.

We would like to see more collaboration from Public Health, to support health and wellbeing within parishes. How can we work better together?

Thank you to colleagues who raised the importance of stronger collaboration between Public Health and Parish Councils. We recognise that parish level insight and connections are vital for improving local health and wellbeing, and we are committed to working more closely with you.

Parish Councils can access several West Northants Council funding routes for health and wellbeing activities. If you are developing a health and wellbeing plan or a local health initiative, Public Health can help you shape proposals and signpost the most suitable WNC funding route.

We have included some useful links below:

- WNC Community Funding Grants
- Well Northants – Health & Wellbeing Programme

- Cost of Living & Welcoming Spaces Support
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy (our Public Health priorities)
- Community Safety & Prevention Funding

Town and Parish Spotlight

In this new feature we will highlight an initiative from one of our councils that showcases how local action can make a real difference in our communities. The aim is to share ideas, celebrate successes, and inspire others with practical examples of what can be achieved at parish level.

This month's spotlight is on **Moulton Parish Council**.

Moulton Parish Council has worked with Action for Happiness to produce a **"Being Well" leaflet** — a simple, accessible guide for residents who may feel low or unwell.

The leaflet will be delivered door-to-door in January, offering practical steps and signposting to support. This initiative shows how parish councils can take proactive, local action to make wellbeing resources available to everyone in their community.

We would love to feature more examples in future editions. If your council has a project, initiative, or activity that you would like to share, please get in touch so we can include it in an upcoming Town and Parish Briefing.

Please email us sophie.ellidge@westnorthants.gov.uk or alan.burns@Westnorthants.gov.uk – we look forward to hearing your stories!



Chance to discuss

Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks are invited to book dedicated sessions with Stephanie Gibrat, Assistant Director for Planning to discuss current planning matters, upcoming proposals, or any issues where guidance would be helpful.

These sessions are designed to provide the opportunity to ask any questions on the planning process and allow two-way conversation relating to planning matters.

They will take place on:

- Tuesday 20 January 2pm to 4pm
- Thursday 19 Feb 9.30am to 11.30am
- Thursday 26 March 2pm to 4pm
- Thursday 23 April 2pm to 4pm

If you would like to raise a specific topic or explore planning considerations for your area, please book a slot at one of the times offered by contacting Linda Aphalé

Linda.Aphale@westnorthants.gov.uk. Please note spaces are limited and are allocated on a first come basis.

Events and activities



Money and wellbeing roadshows

Our series of money and wellbeing roadshows will continue in the new year, offering free advice and support to help people stay well and manage their finances during the colder months.

The aim is to give residents a chance to speak directly to local experts and receive practical help on everything from home energy efficiency and debt advice, to mental health support and family wellbeing.

Roadshows have already been held in Kingsthorpe and Daventry, and we have three more planned:

- **Towcester Family Hub** (The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester NN12 6AD) - Thursday 22 January 2026, 2pm–4pm
- **Brackley Saints Football Club** (St James Park, Churchill Way, Brackley, NN13 7EJ) - Wednesday 11 February 2026, 10am - midday

- **The Spring Charity, Northampton** (Annex Community Centre, Spring Lane NN1 2JW) - Friday 20 February 2026, 10am–12pm

Each event features stalls and drop-in sessions from local services offering energy-saving tips, budgeting help, wellbeing resources, and information about grants and support schemes. Find out more about the roadshows



Hundreds enjoy ice skating fun

Hundreds of people have been getting their skates on to enjoy a festive experience at Northampton Market Square's real ice rink.

The rink is open through to 4 January, whatever the weather, as part of our efforts to encourage visitors to explore the town centre and support local businesses, particularly in the approach to Christmas.

Tickets are available now and early booking is encouraged to secure your preferred session time.



Discover more events

- Visit the events page on our website

Have your say



Details of some of our current consultations are listed below, but don't forget you can visit our Consultation Hub throughout the month to discover and take part in all of the consultations and engagement activities run by Council

Current consultations

Budget proposals for 2026/27

As highlighted in our top story, we've launched a six-week consultation on our budget, giving people the opportunity to have a say on the proposals for the 2026/27 financial year.

Have your say on the budget by 3 February 2026

Transport Strategies:

A public consultation has been launched on three draft transport strategies that will shape how people travel across the area in the years ahead.

The consultation is supported by two online information events on Thursday 8 January. These will be from 11am to 12.30pm and 6pm to 7.30pm on Microsoft Teams and will feature a

presentation followed by a chance to ask questions.
Email LocalTransportPlan@westnorthants.gov.uk to register.

- Have your say by 27 January 2026

Abington Active Travel:

People are urged to have their say on proposed traffic and active travel changes in the Abington area of Northampton.

- The consultation closes on 18 January 2026

Smartphones in schools:

Young people, parents, carers and teachers are among those being encouraged to have their say on the use of smartphones in schools and colleges.

- Complete the survey by 4 January 2026

School admissions:

Residents across West Northamptonshire are being asked to help shape the school admission arrangements for 2027 intakes for local authority-maintained schools as well as those run by academy trusts and governing bodies.

- The deadline for comments is 31 December 2025

Traffic enforcement cameras:

We're seeking feedback on the proposed placement of road traffic enforcement cameras new and existing locations.

- The survey closes on 5 January 2026

Town and Parish Council Help Centre



Town and Parish Councils have dedicated officers at our Council who can be contacted for help and support with all things WNC.

Connected Communities Coordinator Alan Burns and Community Cohesion Officer Sophie Ellidge have a remit to maintain and enhance good working relationships between West Northamptonshire Council and Town and Parish colleagues.

Find out more on the Town and Parish Council help centre on our website, or email alan.burns@westnorthants.gov.uk or sophie.ellidge@westnorthants.gov.uk for more information.

Clerks are also encouraged to use the self-service options on our website to ask questions and access Council services.