

2025 Annual report and budget

Good evening

And so, we have reached the end of first 4 years of the Unitary Council which has continued to protect essential services and tackle significant challenges whilst setting a balanced budget for the year ahead

At the meeting on 20th February Councillors agreed the authorities' final budget and housing revenues whilst setting council tax for 2025/2026

WNC along with Council's across the country continue to face severe financial pressures caused by increasing costs for both Children's services and adult social care. Despite this ,the council has managed to set a balanced revenue budget for 2025/2026 of 956.6 million (431.8 million excluding the dedicated school grant)

WNC started its budgetary process this year with an anticipated short fall of £53m for 25/26 and embarked on an early review of its finances reducing the spend to 39m by July, followed by a major drive over the autumn to close the gap.

The budget includes a council tax rise of 4.99% whilst balancing the books into its 5th year. It is in line with the government's threshold and an average increase on a band D property £1.71 per week or £88.00 per year. This generates extra funding of around 19m per year with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care.

Cllr Malcom Longley, who sadly does not stand for re-election at the WNC this May, stated that setting the budget has once again been complex and challenging.

The election falls on Thursday 1st of May with final results confirmed on 2nd May Our Silverstone Ward will be renamed Rural South Northants. Charles Manners and I stand again with Councillor David Smith replacing Dermot Banbridge.

David currently holds the role of Community cabinet under the current Council.

Purdah commences on March 18th and we will be canvassing busily across 29 villages . Of course we are here to answer questions at all times Our fliers have a telephone number and an e-mail printed especially for your use.

South Midlands are not currently included in the Government's Devolution programme; Milton Keynes and Luton refused to join the party as part of the priority programme. It will happen in the future and we will continue to work with the government.

OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

Recycling centres are to be opened 7 days a week as new contracts are signed.

In the past year the cycling tour of Britain boosted our economy by £3.6m coming from attendee spending

This year Women's Rugby world cup comes to Northamptonshire. The trophy has already made various stops over the past 2 months, organised by WNC and All Saints in anticipation of the incredible event.

Final construction has begun on the Sandy Lane relief road along the A4500, and the Towcester by-pass/relief road finally moves to its last stages of construction.

We will celebrate the Great Fire of Northampton 1675 with events starting with OAK APPLE DAY outside All Saints church at the end of April. There will be exhibitions on the Great Fire across the county, with a son e Lumiere outside All Saints, and Carnival to celebrate the event. Concerts and art exhibitions will be held over a period of 3 months throughout the summer. Watch WNC space for information.

I lead a scrutiny enquiry into the consultation of Voi Scooters, which amongst poor and good press had been a tremendous asset in Blackmills industrial estate. The project is monitored on a 3 monthly basis, and the consultation period extends for another 18 months.

Schools

In May 2021 Fiona Baker assumed the position of local minister in charge of education. She and her team have done a terrific job raising the standards according to Ofsted dictates from POOR to outstanding in one case. SEND needs continue to be a challenge, however the purpose-built school for SEND pupils opens at Tiffield this Autumn.

HS2 continues to be a bug bear. We have successfully negotiated a new road design in Boddington, however it still involves extensive closure along the

Banbury Road , and Spella Road Our two new MPs Sarah Bool and Stuart Andrew have both taken enormous interest in trying to mitigate on your behalf.

Extra traffic travelling the B4525 from Middleton Cheney has resulted in appalling road damage and numerous car accidents. We are working with the Northamptonshire police to reduce the travel of speed.

DHL As you may be aware the appeal against the refusal of planning consent for the DHL site in Towcester concluded on Friday 28th February. The inspectors' findings will be announced on or before 23rd April Once again Sarah Bool has actively opposed the DHL development; see Sarah Bool DHL appeal submission; The development of 5 sites with storage units along the A43 is a hot potato. The confirmation of work on all 5 sites will probably await the Inspectors report

Maggies Cancer support centre; Finally after 8.5 years, we have managed to raise the funds to begin development and build the unit adjacent to the oncology department at Northampton General on the Billing Road. A brilliant scheme implemented 33 years ago at the Edinburgh infirmary by Maggie. There are now 26 support units attached to principal hospitals across the country We become 27 th unit, with future units planned for Cambridge and Coventry. Free at the point of access, they are staffed with available help to support families tackling cancer whether it be domestic, financially, or to discover further information on the dreaded affliction

Finally with the pending elections on May 1,st we say farewell to Cllr Dermot Bambridge; He will not be joining Charles Manners and myself on the election panel. He has served the County for 23 years as a councillor, chairman and cabinet member. A very faithful servant We thank him for his extraordinary sense of duty and commitment.

Four years have passed since the UNITARY council was formed and I was elected to represent you locally I love all that I do within our villages, but I thank you for your support and patience;

Should you have and questions my email and telephone number are below.

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