

## Silverstone Ward Report to Syresham Annual Meeting May 2023

I am Dermot Bambridge and along with fellow councillors Alison Eastwood and Charles Manners, we are the three West Northamptonshire Councillors for this the Silverstone Ward. To optimise our coverage of the Ward, which is the largest in West Northants with 26 parishes and over 10,300 electors, we have divided the Ward between us to best represent the parts we know and live in, such that Alison looks after the northern part with HS2 matters that affect her part most, Charles covers the middle with Greens Norton, Blakesley, and across to Helmdon and I cover the southern part of the ward, with Syresham, Silverstone – where I live - Abthorpe, Wappenham, Radstone and Whitfield – attending their parish meetings. However, there are likely to be changes because of the recent Boundary Commission review and consultation, which is due to see its results published soon. Alison, Charles and I have supported their latest proposals, which suggest this ward further includes villages to the north including Farthingstone, Everdon and Stowe Nine Churches as well as Whittlebury, which is currently in the Deanshanger Ward but has far more in common with this Ward. The proposal is to remain with three councillors with the only downside being that the number of parishes increase from 26 to 30. When WNC was formed out of NCC, SNC, DDC and NBC there was not time to review the wards so the current map follows the former NCC divisions. The review has set out to reduce the number of councillors and ensure that wards best group parishes together.

So West Northamptonshire Council has now started its third year, and on the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month, Councillor John Shephard was appointed the third Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council and a lot has happened in the two years since the authority was formed but I am glad to say that we have managed to keep to our previous budgets and have a balanced budget going forward.

The budget is crucial to funding all the services the council provides and achieving a balanced budget means the money coming in balances with the money going out. We have done that, which was not easy under the current economic climate, mainly because of rising costs due to children's services and adult social care, not to mention increasing salaries and other costs but we have a balanced budget.

The average Council Tax rise was 4.99% as shown in your Council Tax literature. This is significantly below current inflation rates and in line with the Government's allowance, crucially generating extra funding of around £12m – with 2% of the increase going towards funding adult social care. This represents an average increase on a Band D property of £1.65 a week.

This year, as required by law, all households in the former Daventry, Northampton and South Northants areas now pay the same Council Tax band charges. Unfortunately for us, both here and in the Daventry we have to pay more but Northampton pays less to bring all into line.

The budget follows a commitment to making services as efficient as possible and to maintain and protect services, with £32.3m of savings achieved, primarily through productivity gains and operating costs savings. There are increases in discretionary fees and charges for services residents can choose to use, including aligning fees with national averages and raising charges not reviewed for years, to fairly reflect today's operating costs.

The one fee that residents including myself are really not happy with is the cost for green bin collection which has gone up from £43 to £55. There is a misconception that this service was free under SNC. It was not as the cost of collection of all waste was included in the council tax charge. Your black and blue bins as well as the food waste caddy collection services are mandatory for all households, but garden waste collection is discretionary. Costs for collecting all waste has increased significantly particularly in the last year as has diesel fuel, and the income from selling recyclates – such as paper, plastics, cardboard, metal and glass has dropped and in some cases we now have to pay for their

disposal. The £55 cost for garden waste is in line with most other authorities' charges and indeed some are considerably higher.

So on to planning and the issue that is foremost in most Syresham residents' minds - the application for a truck stop.

The latest information I have is that National Highways submitted comments on 10<sup>th</sup> May, extending its holding direction until 9<sup>th</sup> Aug. This means that no decision can be made until after this date unless National Highways responds to the contrary. Further to this, comments from WNC Highways are still awaited in relation to the re-consultation sent to them on 8<sup>th</sup> March and from the Environment Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority. Once those are received, the applicant is likely to submit further highway information. It looks like September is likely to be the earliest date it could come to committee.

Environmental Protection, has responded to the acoustic report that residents in High Cross commissioned. This relates to noise related to the campsite but such objections if challenged would not be upheld as the predicted noise levels would not cause significant adverse impact. However, if consent were to be granted, conditions would be required by WNC including a noise management plan to minimise noise impact and to investigate any complaints and ensure that action is taken to limit noise to 0dB above background. This full response is on the WNC website at the bottom of the list of consultation responses to this application.

I also understand that our MP, Dame Andrea Leadsom, has delivered a petition to the House of Commons on behalf of Syresham local residents, who oppose the Truck Stop. It was signed by over 450 residents and collated in just two weeks. Apparently more residents would have signed, had it not had such a tight deadline to submit it.

There is nothing new to report on the Shacks Barn Silverstone, DHL and other employment site applications around Towcester. The sites have been requested to submit further traffic modelling information, which will take into account the combined effect of the proposed sites rather than each in isolation. June will be the earliest that any will come to committee.

Lastly on planning, the committee structure has now changed and instead of four committees there are now three. The strategic committee, looking after major housing and large employment applications, continues but there will now only be two covering the rest. That is a North and a South Planning committee. For this area the Planning Committee South will cover South Northamptonshire – as did the former one, but now has part of Northampton as well. Another change is that the two committees will take care of housing developments of up to 200 dwellings and commercial developments up to 10,000 square metres. I am a member of the South committee.

Looking a bit further afield to Northampton, I am delighted to say that there is a lot going on to improve the town and make it attractive. Work has started on the multi-million-pound transformation of Northampton's Market Square to make it a vibrant place for the market and focal point for the town and the goal is to get life back into the town and make it somewhere people want to visit. There are major plans on Abington Street where we have purchased some of the old larger empty stores and are working on redeveloping them into quality apartments with smaller shops below.

I had hoped to announce that the Sponne Arcade Car Park in Towcester is fully open today but it is very nearly ready. The car park will have more than doubled in capacity to boast 150 spaces, with additional lighting, CCTV, landscaping, and new walkways for greater safety and accessibility. New motorcycle parking and a bike shelter are also included. It will remain free of charge with a 3 hour limit.

Thank you.

Councillor Dermot Bambridge 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023