

## Silverstone Ward Report for Syresham Village Meeting May 2024

Many apologies for my absence and that of your other West Northamptonshire Councillors, Alison Eastwood and Charles Manners. This is due to the Annual meeting of West Northamptonshire Council, which we must attend. At this meeting, the civic heads are appointed for the coming year as too are the committees and other appointments including the election of a new Leader.

In my report, I would like to start by highlighting a few updates on local amenity news -

It is great to see The **Towcester Town Centre regeneration project** completed. As well as the Forum council offices and state-of-the-art library, there are new shops on the High Street and Whitton's Lane, as well as new housing. Increased free car parking is another vital element so too are refurbished short and new long stay car parks on Northampton Road and the **Towcester centre car park** has had its capacity increased from 70 to 150 parking places. The £850,000 work also includes car charging points and upgrading the public toilets. We will try to ensure that car parking in our local towns remain free of charge. Also part of this project, was the acquisition of the **Towcester Watermeadows**. These have seen significant work including seating, a play area and a hard surfaced pathway, suitable for wheelchairs and buggies, and made the Saturday morning Park Runs possible.

West Northamptonshire Council has secured £25 million from the Government's Town Fund to regenerate **Northampton Town Centre**. This project is the first to benefit from the funding. It will complement the wider regeneration of Northampton Town Centre, where works are nearly complete on the rejuvenation of the historic Market Square and restoration work to bring the Old Black Lion Pub back into use for the community. Over the next decade, Northampton Town Centre is going through extensive transformation with the appearance of Fish St and Abington St being sympathetically enhanced to match the neighbouring St Giles St area, and a new heritage park being built in Marefair offering community facilities and dedicated green space. The gateway to the town from the Railway Station and main roads will be transformed to offer grade A offices, high-quality homes and a hotel as the expansive 5-acre Four Waterside is regenerated

Next, I would like to talk about the **West Northants Council budget** for the 2024 – 2025 civic year started on 1<sup>st</sup> April. Despite the financial pressures, we are in a relatively good situation and the budget will protect frontline services and tackle those challenges. We have a **balanced revenue budget of £889.5m** (£414.5m excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant).

The main issue is an increase in demand for services, particularly supporting **children in care and vulnerable adults**. We have to provide care, but budgeting is impossible because we don't know what to expect. A vital area is support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As part of our improvements, work has started on a much-needed **250 space special school at Tiffield**, for children and young people with SEND between the ages of four and 18.

The budget includes a Council Tax increase of 4.99%, in line with the Government's threshold, generating **extra funding of around £13.1m** – with 2% going towards funding adult social care.

Over **£164m will be invested in the capital programme**, to improve local infrastructure and assets such as land, buildings and equipment.

An estimated **£20m will be spent in public health support**, which is funding from the Government to progress a range of schemes.

**£59m to be invested in social housing**, part of a five-year capital programme, amounting to £287m.

Approximately £65m will be spent on managing and maintaining the existing housing stock, which is funded primarily by Housing Rents.

**We restructured a range of service areas** to improve efficiency, including bringing our community-focussed services together, including libraries, economic regeneration and cultural services.

Last year was the first full year where **public health** has sat solely within West Northamptonshire Council, working closely with partners to serve its residents with services that meet their needs.

On to **planning**. I want to start with an update on applications for the truck stop at Syresham and the major employment sites that are causing concerns related to increased heavy goods vehicle traffic in the area -

It was hoped that the application for a **Truck Stop at Syresham**, which has a recommendation for refusal, would be going to the Strategic Planning Committee on May 21<sup>st</sup> but this is not the case.

The DHL warehouse application on the A5 at Towcester was also hoped to be coming before the Strategic Planning Committee this month, but that is not the case either. The National Highways traffic response received recently for this application is 13 pages long. They have withdrawn their objections, which are replaced by recommendations focussed mainly on the A5 Tove roundabout and drainage. The adjacent Bell Plantation application is still working on its traffic modelling.

Regarding the **Shacks Barn** warehousing application on the A43 near Silverstone, WNC Highways has now responded to an amended transport assessment and it is expected to go to committee soon.

The next date for the Strategic Planning Committee to sit is June 18<sup>th</sup>.

**Consultation has started on the new West Northants draft Local Plan to 2041.** This will replace the three local plans from South Northants, Daventry District and Northampton, which were adopted for West Northants. The new plan sets out a vision and objectives for the area, its ambitions for new development and commitment to dealing with climate change. It allocates land for housing and employment and contains policies and other topics such as leisure, transport, health and wellbeing, infrastructure, and the environment, and where development can and cannot take place.

**West Northamptonshire residents are encouraged** to have their say as too, as are Parish Councils, which are already engaged in the process. When adopted, the final version will enable the Council to plan for the future positively and sustainably by guiding decisions on future development proposals and creating places where people wish to live, work, and visit. This with the National Planning Policy Framework and other adopted policies, will form the rules by which planning decisions will be made.

The aforementioned planning updates highlight how important an up-to-date Local Plan is, because when the current plan covering South Northants, which was adopted by WNC, was first approved in 2011, the type of development causing the current concerns in this area was not foreseen as suitable sites close to motorways were available and the demand for such delivery hubs, fuelled by on-line shopping, did not exist in this area.

The **consultation ends on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June** and you can take part by going on line at **West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space**.

**I just want to end by talking about potholes**, which affect virtually everybody. WNC has neither the resources nor the money to fix them all at present – not even close to it as is the case for most UK authorities. However, we are doing something about reducing the number and to gradually reduce the total number. We have recently bought new equipment to both improve the speed and quality of repairs. In August we bought a machine called a JCB Pothole Pro. This machine has repaired more than 12,500 square metres of West Northants roads since its roll-out. It is a mobile self-contained machine which repairs potholes four times faster than standard methods, by digging out the damaged area, filling it and topping it off with surfacing, which the machine heats and rolls in. The joints are taped and the job done.

Please report any road defects on Fix My Street West Northamptonshire. Council This allows photos to be downloaded and the map marked exactly where the problem is. If you include your name and contact details, you will be kept informed of progress if appropriate.

**Local communications** if you want to ask me a WNC-related question or bring something to my attention – which please don't hesitate to do – contact me direct by email or phone and not via Facebook. There are three Silverstone Ward Councillors and we look after 26 parishes between us.

**Dermot Bambridge 07900 886850** [dermot.bambridge@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:dermot.bambridge@westnorthants.gov.uk)

Charles Manners 07836 550356 [charles.manners@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:charles.manners@westnorthants.gov.uk)

Alison Eastwood 07967 867726 [alison.eastwood@westnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:alison.eastwood@westnorthants.gov.uk)

**West Northamptonshire Councillors for Silverstone Ward**