

Leader's Update

24 February 2023

Introduction and welcome!

Welcome to my latest Update.

Today (Friday 24 February) marks the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. One year ago today, North Northamptonshire Council condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and vowed to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Today at 11am the Council took part in the national moment of silence. I have provided a summary of the Council's support of the Government in its efforts to help resettle people and families from Ukraine via the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We will continue to do all we can to help.

The Full Council (Budget) meeting took place yesterday (Thursday 23 February) in the Council Chamber at Corby Cube. The Draft Budget 2023-24, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme 2023-26 were presented and approved. If you missed the live streaming, you can watch the recording on our YouTube channel. The agenda and papers are on our website. The Council has approved a balance budget. This was no easy feat given the globally driven inflationary pressures driving up costs. However, the budget we have approved will both protect and invest in vital local services.

Communities across North Northamptonshire are being encouraged to get involved in a bank holiday weekend of special events and activities being planned to mark the Coronation of King Charles III. Plans are under way to organise a packed weekend of festivities in North Northamptonshire from Saturday 6 to Monday 8 May. Thousands of events are expected to take place in every corner of the United Kingdom as people take to their streets, gardens, parks and community spaces to join the Coronation celebrations and mark this historic occasion.

North Northamptonshire Council has signalled its intent to enter into an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to acquire 30 homes for people and families who have settled in the area through either the Afghan Resettlement or Homes for Ukraine Programmes.

The Council's Community Grants Programme has been allocated £100,000 of Shared Prosperity Funding. Voluntary and community groups in North Northamptonshire are encouraged to apply for grants to help improve the lives of local residents. The application deadline is midnight on Tuesday 7 March.

Bus operators in the North Northamptonshire Council area will continue to receive extra financial support to bolster services under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. A thriving bus network plays such a significant role in our area so it's essential that we provide whatever support we can to ensure it continues to function in leaner times. Public transport is so important not just for connecting communities but to facilitate a healthy, growing economy.

Roadworks will be taking place in Geddington next week. The maintenance works on Kettering Road and New Road will require full road closures on weekdays from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March and from Friday 10 March for six days (including the weekend). A diversion will be in place during this time.

Maintenance works will begin on Rothwell Road on Sunday 26 February until Sunday 23 April (excluding 9 April and 16 April) between 12 noon and 9pm to improve the structural stability of the road and increase skid resistance. During the works, the road will be closed to through traffic, with a diversion in place. Emergency vehicles will be able to access the hospital at all times, using an alternative entrance separate to the works.

Following the formal approval to amalgamate Tennyson Road Infant School and Alfred Street Junior School, a new primary school will open in Rushden on 1 September to meet the needs of the pupils and the wider community. The two school sites will open as a new primary school operating on both sites.

Whatever your plans are, I hope you have a great weekend!

Standing in solidarity with Ukraine: One year on

Today (Friday 24 February) marks the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.

One year ago today, North Northamptonshire Council condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and vowed to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. At a meeting of Full Council on 24 February 2022, I moved a motion speaking out against the act of aggression in Eastern Europe. The motion was seconded by the Labour Group and supported by the Green Alliance, giving cross-party support.

In March 2022, North and West Northamptonshire Councils announced that they would support the Government in its efforts to help resettle people and families from Ukraine via the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

In the evening of Thursday 3 March 2022, North Northamptonshire Council held a vigil at the Corby Cube as a show of solidarity and support for the people of Ukraine. Members of the public attended for a moment of quiet reflection. The Cube was chosen by the Council as it is the heart of North Northamptonshire's democratic decision making and symbolised the democracy which is under attack in Ukraine.

In December 2022, to help cover rising living costs, North Northamptonshire Council increased payments for Homes for Ukraine hosts from £350 to £550 a month from November through to March 2023.

Since the Homes for Ukraine scheme was launched, the Council has supported 374 Ukrainian guests and 229 sponsor households under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (data correct as of 4 January 2023). There are currently 181 guests remaining in sponsor placements, others have either moved out of area, returned to Ukraine, have made their own arrangements or have been supported to move into the private rented sector (67 guests).

Today at 11am the Council took part in the national moment of silence. We will continue to do all we can to help.

Further information

Please visit the [Ukraine](#) section of our website.

Related press releases

- [Homes for Afghan and Ukrainian families on Executive agenda – 9 February 2023](#)
- [Payments to Homes for Ukraine sponsors increased - 7 December 2022](#)
- [Support for Ukraine refugees to be discussed at Executive - 7 July 2022](#)
- [Homes for Ukraine support session held in Irthlingborough - 28 April 2022](#)
- [Incredible response to appeal for Ukraine support - 1 April 2022](#)
- [Homes for Ukraine scheme co-ordination in Northamptonshire - 28 March 2022](#)
- [Vigil to show solidarity with Ukraine to be held - 2 March 2022](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council condemns invasion of Ukraine and stands in solidarity with Ukrainian people - 25 February 2022](#)

Local Authority Housing Fund: Homes for Afghan and Ukrainian people and families

Following agreement at last week's meeting of Executive, North Northamptonshire Council has signalled its intent to enter into an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to acquire 30 homes for people and families who have settled in the area through either the Afghan Resettlement or Homes for Ukraine programmes.

The Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) identified the Council as suitable for capital grant funding from the new Local Authority Housing Fund.

The fund aims to ensure that the recent humanitarian schemes being run by local authorities, which offer sanctuary, via an organised safe and legal entry route to those fleeing conflict, provide sufficient longer-term accommodation to those they support.

Executive also approved the repurposing of £3.711m capital funding already committed to the Homelessness Prevention programme to enable the Council to provide the required match funding against the central government grant for this programme.

The agreement with DLUHC to acquire the homes during 2023-24 is designed to alleviate the increased demand on homeless services and temporary accommodation, as well as assist people and families to move on from bridging hotels or sponsor placements.

The proposal will help increase the overall supply of affordable rented housing available in North Northamptonshire for all our residents in the future. The fact that we are receiving funding from the government to assist is important as it will help us better meet our local housing needs. This initiative will be beneficial for everyone, not only for those who have had to flee their countries and homes in such awful circumstances.

Further information

If you missed the live streaming of the Executive meeting (Thursday 16 February), you can [watch the recording](#) on our YouTube channel. The [agenda and papers](#) are on our website.

Full Council (Budget) meeting

The Full Council (Budget) meeting took place yesterday (Thursday 23 February) in the Council Chamber at Corby Cube.

The Draft Budget 2023-24, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programme 2023-26 were presented and approved.

The Council's budget for 2023/24 will provide important stability for public services in the local area. North Northamptonshire Council is a major employer in the area with over 3,000 staff. It is also a key service provider.

For 2023/24, the Council is proposing to set a net budget of £336.59 million over the year.

Through its budget, the Council will:

- Invest in the region of £57m in protecting and improving local services.
- Continue to improve local schools, town centres, transport and rural neighbourhoods.
- Tackle climate change, continuing the use of a dedicated £1m fund for this purpose.
- Invest in adult social care and in care and support for children and families.
- Help those on low income by maintaining the Local Council Tax Support Scheme at the current level.
- Continue to support and develop the local economy, housing, education and skills.
- Provide grants to local community and voluntary organisations.

If you missed the live streaming, you can [watch the recording](#) on our YouTube channel. The [agenda and papers](#) are on our website.

Forthcoming meetings

Executive: Thursday 16 March from 10am.

Full Council: Thursday 30 March from 7pm.

The agendas will be displayed on our [website](#) the week before the meetings.

Removal of trees in Wellingborough

I wanted to say a few words about the removal of the trees from the land forming part of Route 2 at Wellingborough's Stanton Cross development.

I am very aware of the strength of public feeling in relation to the removal of the trees and I have listened to the concerns of many local residents.

North Northamptonshire Council assessed the works to be undertaken by the developer, which I understand are necessary to facilitate the diversion of essential utilities including a high-pressure gas main, water, fibre optics and electricity.

Although any tree removal is regrettable, the developer is entitled through legislation to remove those required to facilitate essential utilities works to help deliver the development.

I did meet with the developers and I asked them if they would pause their works. I was bitterly disappointed that they would not agree to this request, but they did commit to reduce the number they were going to remove.

I have stressed to them the need to use the wood from any trees removed for local purposes.

Stanton Cross will see hundreds of new trees planted, the creation of parks and green spaces, as well as the provision of thousands of new homes. Many of these will be designated as affordable housing with homebuilders contributing more than £200 million to infrastructure improvements over the course of the project.

£100,000 of Shared Prosperity Funding available for community projects

The Council promotes and supports voluntary and community activity that improves the quality of life for local residents and increases community involvement.

Our Community Grants Programme has been allocated £100,000 of Shared Prosperity Funding. The scheme is open to community and voluntary sector organisations, registered charities and not-for-profit organisations.

The [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#) is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.6 billion of funding for local investment by March 2025. The fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills.

Applications

- **Grants up to £2,500** - apply by Tuesday 7 March.
- **Grants of between £2,500 and £5,000** - apply by Tuesday 7 March.

Activities funded must be consistent with our corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities.

Key priorities

- **Active, fulfilled lives** - helping people live healthier, more active, independent and fulfilled lives.
- **Better, brighter futures** - caring for young people, providing them with a high-quality education and opportunities to help them flourish.
- **Safe and thriving places** - enable a thriving and successful economy that shapes great places to live, learn, work and visit.

- **Green, sustainable environment** - taking a lead on improving the green environment, making the area more sustainable for generations to come.
- **Connected communities** - ensuring our communities are connected with one another so they are able to shape their lives and areas where they live.
- **Modern public services** - providing efficient, effective and affordable services that make a real difference to all our local communities.

Examples of suitable applications could be a project encouraging wildlife in a local pocket park, or sports and play equipment for a community group.

Further information

For more information, including available funding and criteria for applying, please visit our [Community funding](#) web pages. Alternatively, you can email communityfunding@northnorthants.gov.uk for more information.

Extra concessionary fare support to help boost bus services

Bus operators in the North Northamptonshire Council area will continue to receive extra financial support to bolster services under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

Under the scheme, the Council has a statutory duty to reimburse bus operators for free travel by eligible older persons' and disabled persons' pass holders.

In North Northamptonshire, operators were reimbursed at 100% of pre-Covid levels until 30 September 2022. They have since been reimbursed at 90% of pre-Covid levels.

Subject to Parliament approving the necessary secondary legislation, the Executive agreed that reimbursement would continue at 90% of pre-Covid levels until 31 March 2024. This will provide consistent funding for operators to minimise the likelihood of further reductions to bus services.

A thriving bus network plays such a significant role in our area so it's essential that we provide whatever support we can to ensure it continues to function in leaner times. Public transport is so important not just for connecting communities but as a means to facilitate a healthy, growing economy.

The Coronation of The King and The Queen Consort

Communities across North Northamptonshire are being encouraged to get involved in a bank holiday weekend of special events and activities being planned to mark the Coronation of King Charles III.

His Majesty will be crowned at Westminster Abbey in London on Saturday 6 May, the first of three days of celebrations as towns, parishes and communities across the country come together to celebrate the historic occasion.

National events

- **Saturday 6 May:** Coronation Service, coronation procession, Buckingham Palace balcony appearance by members of the royal family.
- **Sunday 7 May:** Coronation Concert and lightshow at Windsor Castle, Coronation 'Big Lunch' street parties held by communities.
- **Monday 8 May:** Big Help Out encouraging people to get involved in local volunteering.

Local events

Plans are under way to organise a packed weekend of festivities in North Northamptonshire from Saturday 6 to Monday 8 May. Thousands of events are expected to take place as people take to their streets, gardens, parks and community spaces to join the Coronation celebrations.

- **Street parties** - If you are organising a street party, a range of helpful guidance is available on the [Street Party](#) and [Big Lunch](#) websites.
- **The Big Help Out** - [The Big Help Out](#) will provide an opportunity to reflect on the legacy of His Majesty's service and showcase the impact of volunteering within communities.
- **The Coronation Big Lunch** - Share food and fun together in a nationwide act of celebration and friendship from 6 to 8 May with a [Coronation Big Lunch](#) in your neighbourhood.

Advice

- **Hosting an event** - If you are planning to host an event to celebrate the Coronation, it is recommended that:
 - You conduct a risk assessment.
 - If planning to hold a street party, make sure you speak to your neighbours - not everyone may want to be involved.
 - For events in public places, make sure you have permission from the landowner.
 - Consider whether you need insurance cover.
 - Make sure you have suitable signage, especially if arranging a road closure.
 - Ensure you have access points for emergency services.
- **Road closures** - If you are holding a street party, it is advised that a physical barrier is used at each end of the closure to indicate the closure to approaching drivers. Your local school or community centre may have cones or barriers you can borrow, or you can hire some from local companies. [Applications for Coronation road closures](#) should be made by Monday 27 March 2023. There is no charge for Coronation commemoration road closures from 6 to 8 May 2023.
- **Food safety** - Whether you are attending a community party or hosting one of your own, it is important to be aware of food safety and hygiene. The [Food Standards Agency](#) provides useful guidance, practical tips and advice on best practice so that everyone can trust the food they're eating.

Further information

Please visit the [Coronation](#) section of our website.

Roadworks to take place on Kettering Road and New Road, Geddington

Residents will soon benefit from an improved road surface through Geddington.

Maintenance works taking place on Kettering Road and New Road will require full road closures on weekdays from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March and from Friday 10 March for six days (including the weekend).

The works will improve the structural stability of the road, increase skid resistance and improve safety for road users. Works include carriageway resurfacing, installation of road markings and high friction surfacing, which reduces the risk of vehicles skidding in both wet and dry weather.

During the works, a closure will be in place to through traffic on Kettering Road and New Road from the Weekley roundabout to Newton Road. A diversion will be in place at all times and can be viewed on the [Roadworks](#) section of our website.

Residents and businesses will still have access but will need to enter from the North of the village at the Newton Road closure point and should plan their journey accordingly.

Updates will be provided on the [NNC Highways Twitter](#) and [NNC Highways Facebook](#) pages.

Further information

Please visit the [Roadworks](#) section of our website.

Maintenance works planned for Rothwell Road, Kettering

Road users in Kettering will soon benefit from improved road surface as maintenance works start from this weekend. Given the proximity to Kettering General Hospital, works will only take place on Sunday afternoons and evenings.

Works will begin on Rothwell Road on Sunday 26 February until Sunday 23 April (excluding 9 April and 16 April) and between 12 noon and 9pm to improve the structural stability of the road and increase skid resistance. Works will include resurfacing the road, new road markings and high friction surfacing. Gullies will also be cleaned to make best use of the road closure and minimise future disruption.

Access to Kettering General Hospital and for residents

Resurfacing works will be split into two sections - Northfield Avenue to the hospital entrance and then from the hospital entrance to the ambulance entrance. Traffic marshalls will direct traffic during the road closure, but drivers are asked to follow all signs and allow plenty of time for your journey.

Emergency vehicles will be able to access the hospital at all times, using an alternative entrance separate to the works.

Updates will be provided on the [NNC Highways Twitter](#) and [NNC Highways Facebook](#) pages.

Further information

Please visit the [Roadworks](#) section of our website.

New Primary School opening in Rushden on 1 September 2023

Following the formal approval to amalgamate Tennyson Road Infant School and Alfred Street Junior School, a new primary school will open in Rushden on 1 September 2023 to meet the needs of the pupils and the wider community.

The two school sites will open on 1 September as a new primary school operating on both sites. Any proposed change to this arrangement will be led by the Governing Body of the new school and be subject to a further consultation process.

North Northamptonshire Council is currently working with the Shadow Governing Board and the school community on the processes required to achieve a smooth opening at the start of the 2023/2024 academic year, including choosing a name for the new school and creating a new school website.

Staff, pupils, parents, carers and the wider school community will be kept informed as milestones are achieved on this exciting journey.

Initially to address several financial and operational challenges at Alfred Street and Tennyson Road schools, the Council was approached by the governing bodies from both schools to support an amalgamation.

Council officers supported the request of the governing bodies and agreed that the proposed amalgamation would be to the benefit of children in the local area and continuing to ensure the best outcomes for children at the schools.

For the amalgamation to progress, one of the schools had to 'technically' close – in this case by the formal closure of Tennyson Road Infant School and by expanding the age range of Alfred Street Junior School to provide education for children aged 3 (Nursery) to aged 11 (Year 6).

An initial consultation took place which showed majority support for amalgamation of the schools with a further consultation proposing the 'technical' closure of the Tennyson Road Infant School.

Open activities on the Consultation and Engagement Hub

Please find below details of our open consultation and engagement activities. I would welcome your feedback on the following:

- [Local Government Boundary Commission for England - North Northamptonshire Electoral Review](#). North Northamptonshire Council has been asked to promote the next round of consultation activities. A new pattern of wards is being developed, with a change to councillor numbers. Views on which communities should be part of the same ward, which facilities are shared and common issues for neighbouring communities are also being sought. Closes 6 March 2023 (extended from 6 February 2023).
- [Hanwood Park Secondary School Consultation](#). In February 2021, as part of the Wave 14 free school application process, Orbis Education Trust (OET) had a bid approved to open a new secondary free school for boys on the Hanwood Park Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE), by the Department for Education (DfE). The Council and OET are seeking views as to whether the new school should be a boys school (as initially planned) or be a mixed sex provision. Closes 5 March 2023.

Further information

Details of all open and closed consultation and engagement activities are available on the [North Northamptonshire Consultation and Engagement Hub](#).

If you have any questions, please email the Consultation and Engagement Team at CET@northnorthants.gov.uk.

A6 cleared of nearly 3 tonnes of litter during road closure

North Northamptonshire Council's Waste Team took advantage of a recent road closure along the A6 near Higham Ferrers to litter-pick the area.

Working alongside the Council's Highways service provider, Kier, a team of three waste officers collected nearly 2.7 tonnes of rubbish (the weight of two average-sized cars or four cows) along the stretch across 7 hours during the planned road closure.

This type of litter-pick can only be done when there is a road closure in place to keep workers safe.

The road repairs completed along the A6 are part of a wider improvement plan in North Northamptonshire and part of a significant programme of repairs.

Press releases

To help you stay abreast of the key things the Council has been doing, I have included some links to the latest press releases below (starting with the most recent):

- [Roadworks to take place on Kettering Road and New Road, Geddington](#)
- [New Primary School opening in Rushden - 1 September 2023](#)
- [Statement on felling of trees from Wellingborough Walks](#)
- [Affordable housing scheme discussed at Executive](#)
- [Final budget proposals for 2023-2024 to be discussed by North Northamptonshire Full Council](#)
- [Communities urged to join in big bank holiday weekend of Coronation celebrations](#)
- [£100,000 of Shared Prosperity Funding available for community projects](#)
- [Have your say – survey launched to help shape the future of Northamptonshire's tourism and visitor economy](#)
- [Extra concessionary fare support to help boost bus services](#)
- [Homes for Afghan and Ukrainian families on Executive agenda](#)

Social media: Top stories

Follow our social media accounts and share our [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#) posts when you can.

Top Facebook posts so far this week (20 to 22 February)

- Residents in North Northants can now buy a 220L home composting bin for just £5 plus delivery. To order yours, visit: <https://getcomposting.com/>
(Reach 3,840, Post Clicks 699)
- NN Job Club is in Corby tomorrow. If you're looking for a job and would like free and confidential advice to help you, let our team of experts support you with guidance, information and access to local job opportunities. We can even help you create your CV, fill out application forms and prep you for interviews! Join us tomorrow at Corby Cube, drop in between 11am and 2pm. Find details plus future dates coming up at <http://ow.ly/XcMo50KRmVh>
(Reach 1,974, Post Clicks 22)
- New Primary School opening in Rushden - 1 September 2023: <http://ow.ly/crui50MZ34o>
(Reach 1,860, Post Clicks 343)

Top Tweets so far this week (20 to 22 February)

- Please remember to park your vehicle with consideration so our bin lorries can get through to empty your bins. If our bin lorry can't get through, an emergency vehicle like an ambulance or fire engine might also struggle.
(Impressions 1,364, Engagements 39)
- Residents in North Northants can now buy a 220L home composting bin for just £5 plus delivery. To order yours, visit: <https://t.co/TLmvLqPP7I>
(Impressions 648, Engagements 30)
- Are you having a cracking #ShroveTuesday breakfast or planning a stack of pancakes for supper? Don't forget to put the eggshells in your food waste bin (if you have that service) or they can go in your compost. We're not yoking! #pancakeday
(Impressions 570, Engagements 2)

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have any ideas for items to include in future updates, please let me know at: executive@northnorthants.gov.uk.

With Best Wishes,
Jason