

Leader's Update

1 November 2024

Issue: 86

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- Help make small businesses the 'Talk of the Town'.
- Support for residents from £284k unspent Household Support Fund money.
- £5,000 grants now available for community groups across North Northamptonshire.
- Ofsted praise substantial improvements for children in care in North Northamptonshire.
- Stay safe this fireworks season.
- Chester House Estate: Looking forward to a successful future.
- Consultation on a blueprint for protecting biodiversity in North Northamptonshire.
- Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy.

In addition, you will find below some useful information about forthcoming meetings, Your Voice Matters (our consultation and engagement hub), all the latest press releases and our top social media posts.

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

Help make small businesses the 'Talk of the Town'

Our [Hi Street! campaign](#) has teamed up with five more brilliant local businesses to share their stories and highlight the importance of supporting your local shops and services.

We have launched the new 'Hi 5 Talk of the Town' video series on our [Hi Street! Facebook](#) and [Hi Street! Instagram](#) channels, where you can hear from the people behind the businesses that bring life to our towns. They are sharing what inspired them to set their business up, what makes their business unique, and how your support makes a big difference to the local community.

Their stories are a testament to the hard work, creativity and dedication that make our local towns a great place to shop, eat out, treat yourself and connect with others.

Please look out for the videos and share with your friends and loved ones to help make North Northamptonshire's brilliant small business community the 'Talk of the Town' and to encourage their support.

Thank you to our film stars:

- Sugarbush Bakery, Kettering.
- Spinney's Sandwich Deli, Higham Ferrers.
- The Olde Victoria, Burton Latimer.
- Pearl Ci-tea, Corby.
- Bespoke Bridal Bliss, Kettering.

Support for residents from £284k unspent Household Support Fund money

Vulnerable households struggling with the cost of living will benefit from the redistribution of £284k of unspent money from the last round of Household Support Fund (HSF). The money was provided to the council by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

We are working with our partner the Daylight Centre Fellowship in Wellingborough to ensure that this money will be spent in ways that benefit the most vulnerable North Northamptonshire residents. The Daylight Centre Fellowship holds this funding and administers it for use by the network of food banks, charitable organisations and community organisations across North Northamptonshire.

Part of the underspend is being used to:

- Ensure that all eligible claims for ongoing applications for payments for Financial Aid Support can be made.
- Fund food banks and other charitable organisations who provide residents with store cupboard items.
- Fund the 'Warm Spaces' initiative and other community organisations offering food or meals during the winter period, including Christmas meals.

The current Household Support Funding (HSF5) is once again being used to provide crucial support for families this Autumn. We have been able to issue holiday support vouchers for the Autumn term break to families whose children receive free school meals.

£5,000 grants now available for community groups across North Northamptonshire

We have opened the latest round of community funding grants for 2024/25, with grants of up to £5,000 available. In total, £120,000 of grant funding is available for voluntary and community groups to help improve the quality of life for local residents and increase community involvement.

The scheme is open to community and voluntary sector organisations, registered charities, town and parish councils and not-for-profit organisations including clubs, school parent-teacher associations and 'Friends of' groups.

To be considered for a grant of up to £5,000, applicants need to demonstrate how they support one or more of the six key commitments outlined in our Corporate Plan. These include helping people live healthier, more active, independent and fulfilled lives, ensuring communities are connected to one another and providing sustainable, modern public services that make a difference to local communities.

Applicants will also need to demonstrate positive outcomes for one or more of the council's key priorities set out in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The application form, criteria and guidelines can be found on the [Community grant funding](#) section of our website.

As a council, we are always committed to helping communities in any way we can. These grants will benefit so many individuals across the whole of North Northamptonshire, ensuring that communities are connected, while helping people live healthier and fulfilled lives.

For more information, please email communityfunding@northnorthants.gov.uk.

The closing date for applications is 2 December 2024.

Ofsted praise substantial improvements for children in care in North Northamptonshire

In a findings letter published on Ofsted's website this week inspectors said: 'services for care experienced young people have substantially improved.'

At the beginning of October, Ofsted carried out a focused visit to North Northamptonshire children's services, specifically looking at the arrangements for care experienced young people.

Since the last focused visit in November 2023 inspectors have continued to see ongoing improvements that Northamptonshire Children's Trust are making with inspectors saying: 'The improvements are resulting in care experienced young people being fully supported to make the transition to adulthood safely, and at their own pace.'

'A commitment to improvement and innovation has allowed practice with care experienced young people to develop and flourish.'

Inspectors added that staff at all levels are ambitious for care experienced young people and advocate strongly for them. Young people told inspectors that 'they feel cared for and valued by leaders who listen to them and make meaningful change according to what they tell them.'

Leadership was also highlighted as a strength, with Ofsted saying Personal Advisors (PAs) within the leaving care service feel supported by their managers who they find 'accessible and approachable.'

They added: 'PAs know their young people well, they speak with passion and pride about their achievements and go above and beyond to ensure their support needs are met.'

Inspectors met with a number of care experienced young people throughout the course of the inspection, and they told them about their experience and the support that they receive from the leaving care service with young people describing their PA's as 'helpful, caring and responsive'. They also found that 'care experienced young people form meaningful relationships with their PA that lasts years.'

Since the establishment of Northamptonshire Children's Trust four years ago, a positive change in culture has been noted throughout Ofsted inspections. In this latest visit, inspectors found the workplace culture to be collaborative and supportive. This culture is also the experience that care leavers have, with them telling inspectors that the hub based in Northampton has provided them with a space to make friends and share experiences. They also said that it has helped them to manage feelings of loneliness and describe the hub as 'my family'.

Ofsted inspectors also noted there were still improvements to be made but that leaders in both North Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust were acutely aware of addressing these issues, such as securing and opening a 'hub' in North Northamptonshire so that young people have support and a safe space to go in their area. Securing permanent housing and prioritising housing for care experienced young people is a real challenge.

Read the [Ofsted focused visit letter](#).

Stay safe this fireworks season

With Bonfire night and Diwali just around the corner, here are some top tips to help everyone stay safe:

- Only buy fireworks from licensed retailers.
- Only buy fireworks that have a UKCA or CE mark.
- Don't drink alcohol if setting off fireworks.
- Keep fireworks in a closed box and use them one at a time.
- Read and follow the instructions on each firework, using a torch if necessary.
- Light the firework at arm's length with a taper and stand well back.
- Always supervise children around fireworks.
- Never return to a firework once it has been lit.
- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves. Keep a bucket of water close by.
- Never give sparklers to a child under five years old.
- Don't put fireworks in pockets and never throw them.
- Dispose of used fireworks safely.

Also, to be a considerate neighbour, don't let fireworks off after 11pm and let neighbours know in advance so they can keep pets indoors and away from the noise.

Alternatively, you could consider going to a public display like the spectacular annual bonfire and fireworks display that we are hosting in Corby on Tuesday 5 November. This free event will take place in the area around the Boating Lake, the bonfire will be lit at 7pm, followed by an impressive firework display from 7:30pm. I hope you can join us.

Chester House Estate: Looking forward to a successful future

North Northamptonshire Council awarded £210,000 grant to help identify future of the Chester House Estate

The council has been awarded a grant of over £200,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to commission a piece of work which will help shape the future governance and long-term options for the [Chester House Estate](#).

The grant, which was made possible thanks to National Lottery players, follows on from internal scoping work completed in 2023 which looked at how best to run the council's cultural, tourism and heritage assets.

The work identified that the Chester House Estate is now in a financial position to move forwards into a new governance model, and all options will be explored.

Other cultural, tourism and heritage assets under the council's control are not currently in a place to be considered.

The council owns several other excellent assets, such as Stanwick Lakes, which are leased to charitable trusts to operate, with the council providing funding and officer support as appropriate under relevant contractual or legal agreements.

At present, no decision has been made on how the Chester House Estate should operate in the longer term but council officers will start work on scoping out options in the coming weeks.

Chester House Estate shortlisted for three awards

The Chester House Estate has been shortlisted for three awards, celebrating their unique heritage programmes and progress since their opening in 2021.

- Archaeological Achievement Award by the Council for British Archaeology for the Irchester Field School.
- Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce Business Awards - 'Small Business of the Year'.
- Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce Business Awards - 'Business Person of the Year' for Head of Culture, Tourism and Heritage at North Northamptonshire Council, Jack Pishhorn.

We are extremely proud of the Chester House Estate and all that it has achieved over the past 3 years. I have my fingers crossed and hope that the team come away with the top prize - it really would be a testament to the hard work and commitment of all the staff, volunteers and partners.

Consultation on a blueprint for protecting biodiversity in North Northamptonshire

We have launched a consultation on a blueprint for how biodiversity can be restored and enhanced across North Northamptonshire.

Our draft [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS) focuses on protecting and restoring key habitats and priority native species. It links green spaces to improve wildlife movement and strengthen the area's resilience to climate change.

The delivery of the LNRS will rely on collaboration between local authorities, environmental organisations, landowners and the community.

The draft strategy provides a framework for guiding conservation efforts to create a thriving, sustainable landscape that would benefit everyone.

This is part of a broader national effort driven by the UK government's '25-Year Environment Plan' and the Environment Act 2021, which mandates the creation of LNRs across the country.

Under the local LNR, North Northamptonshire is divided into three landscape areas, which are based on the Natural England's defined 'National Character Areas'. They are Rockingham Forest, Nene Valley and Ise Valley.

This consultation will close at midnight on 9 December 2024.

Share your views

- Complete the online survey: [Local Nature Recovery Strategy for North Northamptonshire](#).
- Email naturerecovery@northnorthants.gov.uk.

Review of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy

We have launched a [Hackney Carriage and Private Licensing Policy review](#) to ensure that it reflects the transition to an area-wide hackney carriage zone from 1 April 2025.

The revised policy, currently out for consultation, also takes into consideration updates to the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, impacting legislation and operational learning including feedback from the trade.

From 1 April 2025, the current four hackney carriage zones will be replaced by one taxi zone for the whole of North Northamptonshire. It is important that we look at the related policy and how it should be updated to reflect the changes made, both at a local and national level.

We welcome comments from the trade and all stakeholders and residents, so please do get involved.

This consultation will be supported by a wider piece of work about the knowledge test that many drivers undertake.

This consultation will close at midnight on 9 December 2024.

Share your views

- Complete the online survey: [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy review](#).
- Email taxilicensing.kbc@northnorthants.gov.uk.

Your Voice Matters

Please find below details of our other current consultations and engagement activities. Please use the links below to provide your feedback and inform council decisions and share with family and friends who may be interested in shaping future plans.

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

- [Final consultation: Proposed changes to car parking charges at Corby Rail Station](#). Closes 3 November 2024.
- [Calling all Northamptonshire pharmacies - we need your views](#). Closes 3 November 2024.
- [Independent Living Schemes - new builds for 2026](#). Closes 10 November 2024.
- [Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy review](#). Closes 17 November 2024.

Get involved

Residents' Panel

If you would like the opportunity to share your views and have a greater say in influencing local decisions that matter to you, please join our [Residents' Panel](#).

We need your input to get a better understanding of residents' views on various local issues and public services. As a resident panel member, you'll have the opportunity to give your views to your council and our partners, receive invites to take part in surveys, focus groups and workshops.

You don't need any expert knowledge of the public sector to join the Residents' Panel, you only need to live in North Northamptonshire and be aged 16 or over.

Consultation Register

You can also join our [Consultation Register](#) to be emailed about new consultations and engagement activities run by North Northamptonshire Council.

Forthcoming meetings

Executive

- Thursday 14 November from 10am.
- Thursday 19 December from 10am.

Full Council

- Thursday 5 December from 6pm.
- Thursday 20 February from 6pm.

The agenda and papers will be published on the [Council meetings](#) section of our website in the week before the meeting.

These meetings will be live streamed on our [YouTube](#) channel.

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):

- [£5,000 grants now available for community groups across North Northants](#)
- [Your Voice Matters... consultation launched on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy](#)
- [Additional support for residents from £284K HSF money](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council awarded £210,000 grant to help identify future of the Chester House Estate](#)
- [Have your say on blueprint for protecting biodiversity in North Northamptonshire](#)
- [Stay safe this firework season](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council successfully obtains partial closure order on Kettering house](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Estate shortlisted for multiple awards after huge strides in last three years](#)
- [Lodge Park Celebrates 50th Anniversary with Open Weekend](#)

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 (28 to 30 October)

- North Northamptonshire Council awarded £210,000 grant to help identify future of The Chester House Estate: <https://ow.ly/BiYe50TUI6T> (Reach 4,082, Link Clicks 57, Engagements 2,658)
- Your Voice Matters... consultation launched on Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing policy: <https://ow.ly/seaz50TV8Ke> (Reach 2,152, Link Clicks 7, Engagements 75)
- We're looking for local employers with job vacancies to join us at our next Recruitment, Skills, & Careers event on 12 November at Tresham College, Kettering. If you're looking for candidates, please get in touch and we can help to showcase your vacancies at this popular, free event! Contact Sarah Passam to book your space at Sarah.Passam@dwp.gov.uk (Reach 1,391, Link Clicks 0, Engagements 24)

Top Tweets so far this week (28 to 30 October)

- We would like local people to get involved with our Residents' Panel - and have your input on various local issues and public services. Find out more and sign up: <https://ow.ly/ei3o50SfkpM> (Impressions 311)
- North Northamptonshire Council awarded £210,000 grant to help identify future of @ChesterHouse_UK <https://ow.ly/6kvr50TUI6S> @HeritageFundM_E (Impressions 291)
- Did you respond to your canvass form earlier this year? Anyone in your household added to the form, who is eligible to vote, must register themselves to vote individually. (Impressions 286)

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 email me at executive@northnorthants.gov.uk.

With Best Wishes,
Jason