

Leader's Update

20 December 2024

Issue: 90

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's spending plans.
- Services over Christmas.
- This year's official Christmas card.
- 'Warm Spaces' in North Northamptonshire.
- Aspire NN: Launch of new collaboration with the voluntary sector.
- Corby East Midlands International Pool achieves Swim England's Water Wellbeing accreditation.
- Awards success for Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service.

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.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all!

Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's spending plans

The draft revenue budget for North Northamptonshire Council was approved for consultation by the Executive yesterday (Thursday 19 December) and the council is now seeking views on its proposals for the next financial year.

People can take part in the consultation in a number of ways including:

- Completing the online survey: [North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2025/26 Consultation](#).
- Writing to: Budget Consultation Response, North Northamptonshire Council, Sheerness House, Meadow Road, Kettering NN16 8TL.

Please see our [Your Voice Matters](#) web page for more ways on how to have your say on this consultation.

The council's draft budget proposals set out a detailed spending strategy for the authority for the financial year 2025/2026 as well as outlining the medium-term financial forecast for the following three years.

Protecting and investing in local frontline services against a backdrop of continued national financial uncertainty is the focus of the council's budget proposals.

The proposed draft net revenue budget for 2025/2026 is £400.93 million, excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant. This money provides a range of services to residents and businesses across the area including care to vulnerable adults and children, education, the disposal and collection of waste, highways maintenance, economic development, housing and support for those who are homeless.

A commitment to maintain vital service provision has seen the council invest an additional £51.9 million into services, including £23.7 million into adult social care and £6.2 million into children's services to protect the most vulnerable in our communities and address growing demand for these vital services.

These pressures are, in part, offset by savings, efficiencies and further income of £26.3 million. Taken together with an improvement in funding expected from business rates, Council Tax and government grants the council has been able to set a balanced budget for 2025/2026.

We have focused on is balancing the budget while working hard to protect services and I'm proud that we have a draft budget that proposes just that. The budget is not just about how to manage within available resources but also where funding should be invested. There is a balance to be maintained between encouraging growth, providing high quality universal services and protecting those that are the most vulnerable.

Government has permitted local authorities to increase the Council Tax rate by 4.99% in recognition of the increasing demand and cost pressures faced by councils. As such, the council is proposing an increase in council tax of 4.99%, which includes the 2% adult social care precept. There is no change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme which will continue at 25%.

Next steps

The consultation on the proposals will run until midnight on Friday 24 January. The Executive will then meet on February 6, 2025, to consider final budget proposals for recommendation to Full Council on 20 February 2025.

Services over Christmas

Please visit the [Christmas](#) section of our website to stay up to date with any changes to our services over the festive period.

- [Bin service](#): Collection date changes and what to do with Christmas trees and excess waste.
- [Bus services](#): Normal, revised or cancelled services.
- [Country parks](#): Closing times for country parks and cafés.
- [Crematoriums and cemeteries](#): Grounds will be open from 8am until 4:30pm.
- [Customer Services](#): All our offices will be closed from 5pm on 24 December until 9am on 2 January. You can access a range of services including [making a payment, reporting an issue and applying online](#), 24 hours a day. We are offering a limited telephone service (9am to 5pm) on 27 December, 30 December and 31 December.
- [Housing/Housing Options](#): If you are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within the next 56 days, contact our Housing Options team on 0300 126 3000 or email housingoptions@northnorthants.gov.uk and we'll give you advice based on your circumstances.
- [Housing/Keyways housing register](#): Instead of a weekly advertising cycle, our Keyways team will advertise properties over a two-week period over Christmas from 19 December to 31 December.
- [Household waste recycling centres](#): Corby and Wellingborough centres will close at 2pm on 24 December. All household waste recycling centres will be closed on 25 December, 26 December and 1 January.
- [Leisure facilities](#): Please visit the website for opening times.
- [Parking](#): Our Parkland Gateway (Corby), Victoria Place (Corby) and Kettering pay and display car parks will be free on 21 December. They are also free on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Parking charges still apply in the Corby Train Station car park throughout December (even on Bank Holidays). Our Commercial Way Multi Storey (Wellingborough) will stay open until 10:45pm until 31 January.

This year's official Christmas card

Last month, the Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) ran a competition for children to draw a picture to be used as my official Christmas card.

The winning design is on the right, and it was designed by Imogen, one of NCT's Looked After Children.

Thank you to the Northamptonshire Children's Trust for organising the competition.

Thank you to all the children who took the time to draw a picture.

Thank you, Imogen, for your delightful drawing - and many congratulations for winning this year's competition.

'Warm Spaces' in North Northamptonshire

Winter can be a challenging time for many individuals and families struggling to make ends meet. We realise that it will be unaffordable for many residents to heat their homes for as long as they would normally do this Winter. That is why we are running and supporting the 'Warm Spaces' initiative again this year.

Warm Spaces provide a safe, warm and friendly place where people can go to free of charge to warm up and have a hot drink (and socialise if they choose to).

This year, 45 community organisations, volunteer groups and public bodies, supported by the council, are opening their doors to offer their time and resources to local residents in need. The venues include libraries, village halls, churches and community hubs.

A [map of Warm Spaces](#), opening times and dates can be found on our website. It covers Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough, Thrapston, Rushden, Oundle and surrounding areas.

Some buildings offer free facilities such as Wi-Fi, showers, baby changing areas, quiet study areas, period products and children's play areas. Health and wellbeing advisors will be on hand at many of the library sessions.

If you know someone who might benefit but they don't access to the internet, please tell them about their nearby Warm Spaces.

When people enter a warm space, they do so with a guarantee they will be treated with respect and dignity, without judgement and in confidence.

Aspire NN: Launch of new collaboration with the voluntary sector

The council and the voluntary sector have joined forces to launch Aspire NN, a new collaboration to provide infrastructure support to the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector across North Northamptonshire. Groundwork Northamptonshire has been appointed as the lead provider.

In February this year, Executive approved the [North Northamptonshire Council Communities Strategy 2024-2027](#) and announced a £600,000 investment into VCSE infrastructure across North Northamptonshire.

The contract will run for three years with the option for a further one-year extension, subject to funding being available.

Groundwork Northamptonshire will now work alongside five other organisations who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience. These key partners are: Support Northamptonshire, Volunteer Action, North Northants Social Enterprise Network, Serve and Northamptonshire Acre.

For more information, please visit the [Aspire NN](#) website or contact Groundwork Northamptonshire on 01536 526453.

Corby East Midlands International Pool achieves Water Wellbeing accreditation

[Corby East Midlands International Pool](#) has gained Swim England's Water Wellbeing accreditation for demonstrating that the pool is accessible, inclusive and inviting to all.

The Corby pool has shown that it offers the highest standards in quality of aquatic provision for people with long-term medical conditions, making it suitable to be used for placements by healthcare partners.

The North Northamptonshire Council-run facility underwent a thorough Swim England Environmental Assessment with 78 different elements assessed to show that people with long-term health conditions and impairments could be facilitated.

These included having sufficient lighting, clearly visible signs, appropriate changing cubicles, and providing ramps or alternative ways to enable someone with mobility or pain issues to access the pool.

Assessors also looked for evidence of processes to help people in and out of the pool if they are showing signs of physical or mental distress and unable to pull themselves up the steps and out of the water.

Additionally, the implementation of the NHS-approved programme, Good Boost, is one of the essential activities that Swim England look for prior to the Water Wellbeing accreditation being awarded.

Awards success for our Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service

Our Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service teams are celebrating after several recent awards successes.

The service covers a wide range of areas including the Chester House Estate, Corby Heritage Centre, Cornerstone, Discover Northamptonshire, the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) and the North Northamptonshire Greenway project.

Following a successful year, our teams have recently scooped several locally and nationally recognised awards:

- The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) was awarded a national 'Archaeological Achievement Award' by the Council for British Archaeology for the Irchester Field School.
- The Chester House Estate won the 'Small Business of the Year' category at the Northamptonshire Business Awards.
- The Discover Northamptonshire hub won the 'Innovation in Business Award' at the Wellingborough and East Northants Chamber Awards.
- Head of Service for Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Jack Pishhorn, was awarded the 'Business Person of the Year' at the Northamptonshire Business Awards.

Your Voice Matters

Please find below details of our 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](#).

- [Term Dates for North Northamptonshire schools for the 2026-27 academic year](#). Closes 29 December 2024.
- [Consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2026 intakes](#). Closes 29 December 2024.
- [Have your say on the SEND Local Offer logo](#). Closes 31 December 2024.
- [North Northamptonshire Council Draft Budget 2025/26 Consultation](#). Closes 24 January 2025.
- [Great Addington Parish Neighbourhood Plan Proposal](#). Closes 4 February 2025.

Forthcoming meetings

Full Council

- **Budget Council** - Thursday 20 February from 10am.
- Thursday 6 March from 6pm.

Executive

- Thursday 16 January from 10am.
- **Budget Executive** - Thursday 6 February from 10am.

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

The 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):

- [Executive approve funds for new access ramp along the Greenway](#)
- [Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's spending plans](#)
- [Kettering's archaeological collection moves into state-of-the-art storage](#)
- [Water Wellbeing accreditation for North Northamptonshire's flagship Corby swimming pool](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council celebrating after awards success for Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service](#)
- [Where to find 'Warm Spaces' in communities across North Northamptonshire](#)
- [New collaboration launches between council and voluntary sector](#)

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 (16 to 18 December)

- Water Wellbeing accreditation for North Northamptonshire's flagship Corby swimming pool
<https://ow.ly/wjnZ50UrMcL> (Reach 5,092, Link Clicks 7, Engagements 647)
- Where to find 'Warm Spaces' in communities across North Northamptonshire
<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/.../where-find-warm...> (Reach 4,716, Link Clicks 39, Engagements 140)
- North Northamptonshire Council celebrating after awards success for Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service: <https://ow.ly/vAt650UrBrI> The Chester House Estate - Discover Northamptonshire – Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (Reach 1,493, Link Clicks 4, Engagements 167)

Top Tweets so far this week (16 to 18 December)

- Planning a night out soon? Do you or a mate walk past open water on your way home? #BeAMate this Christmas, look after each other and get home safe. (Impressions 534)
- Great advice is you live near one of our beautiful rivers or lakes, and will walk past it after a night (or day) on the town. (Impressions 327)
- Council-owned car parks in Kettering and Corby will be free this Saturday. Whether you're looking for unique gifts, have a family festive meal or catch-up with friends over a coffee, take advantage and visit your High St. Find out which car parks online <https://ow.ly/vJ3F50Uj5zf> (Impressions 320)

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