

Leader's Update

7 February 2025

Issue: 93

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- Work to continue to deliver fresh bid for South Midlands devolution.
- North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care Strategy to be considered for approval at next week's Executive meeting.
- North Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy to be discussed by Executive.
- New powers to combat vacant commercial properties on Executive agenda.
- Get ready for May elections - less than 100 days to go.
- Hi Street campaign: Rushden - Five stops to love local.
- 21 new Community Orchards for North Northamptonshire.
- Half-term activities for children.
- Voi e-scooters to be available 24/7 in North Northamptonshire.
- Record number of enquiries received for Northamptonshire archaeological summer programme after TV appearance.

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!

Work to continue to deliver fresh bid for South Midlands devolution

The government announced yesterday that an expression of interest to join the Devolution Priority Programme for the South Midlands Region will not proceed. Joining the Programme would have put the region on track to receive new powers and opportunities from government through the creation of a new Strategic Authority by May 2026.

Whilst the South Midlands Region has not been successful in the first tranche, the government is still keen to explore a future bid from the South Midlands Region and has committed to working with all South Midlands Authorities on developing this.

North Northamptonshire Council will now work with partners in the region to explore a future bid, which would deliver huge benefits for the council area and beyond.

The full article is available on our website at: [Work to continue to deliver fresh bid for South Midlands devolution](#).

North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care Strategy to be considered for approval at next week's Executive meeting

North Northamptonshire Council's [Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-29 - 'The Lives We Live'](#) will be considered for final approval next week.

The council's Executive endorsed the five-year draft strategy on 14 March 2024. It has since been formally consulted on and the next phase of activity, if approved by the Executive at their meeting on Thursday 13 February, a delivery plan will be implemented.

An ageing population and more people living longer with more complex needs means the demand on the council's Adult Social Care services is growing. The strategy sets out how people with care and support needs can expect to be supported as they transition to adulthood, or at times in their lives when they may need additional support.

The strategy aims to address the challenges of more demand on services while always striving for the best for the adults in its population. Its focus is on wellbeing, enablement, partnership working and outcomes.

It has been co-produced with people who use our services, staff and local partners working in social care, and included our 'Expert by Experience' panel members. Drawing on their knowledge and experience the draft strategy aims to improve the way we deliver and commission support.

North Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy to be discussed by Executive

A Climate Change Strategy outlining the key climate related risks for the North Northamptonshire area will be discussed next week.

The council's Executive will consider the strategy which aims to build a more resilient, sustainable and equitable future by bringing together sectors and organisations to work collaboratively.

The strategy outlines a vision, approach and key areas of focus to address the effects of climate change over the next five years and has been shaped by consultation and feedback.

Once in place, the next step will be to develop a roadmap to Net Zero action plan to set out practical steps that can be taken to realise ambitions for the area. The action plan will be developed over the next year with input from residents, community groups, businesses, councillors and officers.

The council declared a climate and environment emergency in July 2021, recognising the need for action to enhance, protect and prevent further decline of the local environment. Alongside this declaration a set of recommendations were adopted to include developing a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

The draft [Climate Change Strategy 2025-2030](#) ensures that North Northamptonshire Council has a strategy in place for its climate ambitions.

It focuses on six key areas of strategic importance: Transport, Homes and the Built Environment, Nature, Food and Farming, Energy, Green Economy and Waste.

Plans for each sector focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building resilience to climate change, and ensuring an equitable transition to a low-carbon future.

New powers to combat vacant commercial properties on Executive agenda

The council's Executive will discuss a new initiative next week that has been designed to reduce the number of vacant properties on high streets.

The council, as an Early Adopter, has been invited to apply to be part of a pilot scheme which would require landlords to rent out long-term vacant, commercial properties to new tenants.

The Executive will be asked to sign up to the government's [High Street Rental Auction Early Adopters](#) programme - a scheme that was introduced as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs) are intended to help local authorities bring long-term vacant properties back into meaningful use and permit local authorities to undertake an auction offering a lease of up to five years upon a privately-owned property.

It is anticipated that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will confirm the final list of councils that will be part of the programme during the week commencing Monday 17 February.

If the report is approved, council officers will work closely with the MHCLG throughout the process, and work through the next phases to identify high streets in North Northamptonshire to designate for HSRA. An update will be provided to the Executive later this year.

Get ready for May elections - less than 100 days to go

With under 100 days to go and the new electoral register published on 1 February, residents across North Northamptonshire are being asked to think ahead and get ready for elections taking place locally this May.

On 1 May 2025, eligible registered electors will be able to vote in two elections:

- North Northamptonshire Council elections.
- Town and Parish elections.

These elections will also see changes to local government boundaries and wards, meaning residents may be voting in a new or different ward. The [new arrangements](#) can be found on our website.

Partly due to these changes, your polling station might differ from the last time you voted, so please double check your poll card when it arrives closer to election day.

Anyone wishing to vote in person now needs to bring acceptable photographic ID, an Anonymous Electors Document or a Voter Authority Certificate.

If you don't have any form of photo ID from the [accepted list](#), or your ID no longer looks like you, you can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate. Applicants must be registered to vote beforehand. You can apply online for a [Voter Authority Certificate](#) on the government website.

Voters wishing to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate should first make sure they are [registered to vote](#).

More information about the elections, including deadlines for applying for postal and proxy votes, is available on the [Upcoming elections](#) section of our website.

Hi Street campaign: Rushden - Five stops to love local

[Hi Street](#) and [BIPC Northamptonshire](#) (Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire) have teamed up to spotlight five high street heroes that we think you'll love.

Rushden High Street is a wonderful mix of old and new. From traditional shops like the local butcher, greengrocer, and a jewellery shop that's been serving the town for over 80 years, to new and even award-winning independent businesses, there's something for everyone.

Our five unique stops include a traditional toy shop, a fascinating reptile centre, a touch of witchcraft, delicious food and drink, and beautiful jewellery.

This month's blog features:

- PW House Jewellers - a timeless gem.
- House of Venom Reptiles UK - an exotic experience on your doorstep.
- 5th Times a Charm - a magical escape.
- Elevens Bakery - sweet, savoury, and freshly baked with love.

- Osborne's Toys - generations of smiles.

Find out more in our latest blog post: [Re-discovering Rushden: Five stops to love local](#).

Parking in Rushden is free, making it even easier to support local and explore this great little town.

Every small spend makes a big difference because you are supporting the small businesses that make your town special, the local economy and local communities too.

Twenty-one new Community Orchards for North Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire Council has received funding to help 21 community groups, schools and parish councils to plant their own community orchards this Winter, all of which will be planted on publicly accessible land across North Northamptonshire.

Ranging in size from small sites of five trees to larger ones with up to 100 trees, these new community orchards will provide opportunities for local people to enjoy nature, as well as offering multiple benefits to wildlife.

Funding for the scheme was made available through the Coronation Living Heritage Fund, part of a government initiative which celebrates the King's Coronation and supports tree planting projects across England.

The full list of new orchards being planted is available on our website at: [21 new Community Orchards for North Northamptonshire](#).

Half-term activities for children

The half-term holiday is fast-approaching. Join us for a fun-filled half-term with exciting activities for children of all ages.

- Dive into fun this half term with swimming sessions for all ages and abilities.
- Explore a range of exciting sports available during the half-term break.
- Discover a variety of engaging activities, clubs and camps available.
- Explore our range of schemes and passes offering great value for access to leisure facilities and activities.

For more information, please visit our [Half term activities for children](#) web pages.

Voi e-scooters to be available 24/7 in North Northamptonshire

North Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Police have agreed to a six-month trial which will see the popular Voi e-scooters available 24/7.

The changes will come into effect from Monday 10 February.

It is hoped that the extension in operating hours will enable more residents to use the scheme, providing a green, affordable and reliable transport option for those who work shifts or, for example, in hospitality.

All e-scooters will have additional reflective strips installed to the front of vehicles and, as is currently the case, riders are being encouraged to wear reflective clothing and helmets.

Over the next six months, the council, the Police and Voi will meet regularly to assess the success of the trial.

Voi e-scooters currently operate in Corby, Burton Latimer, Kettering, Wellingborough, Rushden and Higham Ferrers.

Record number of enquiries received for Northamptonshire archaeological summer programme after TV appearance

Chester House Estate has been featured on BBC Two's Digging for Britain TV show.

Last month, the presenter Professor Alice Roberts, explored the Irchester-based Roman town site, speaking to archaeologists and volunteers and uncovering rare finds from excavation last summer.

The Digging for Britain episode is available to watch on [BBC iPlayer](#).

The Chester House Estate runs the Irchester Field School learning programme in partnership with Northamptonshire's Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) and University of Leicester.

It was great to see North Northamptonshire on the national stage and the Chester House Estate receiving the attention it rightly deserves. The Irchester Field School recently won the Learning, Training and Skills award at the Archaeological Achievement Awards. It really has been a great few months for the team and all the attention is well-deserved.

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](#).

- [Prescribed Alteration Statutory Proposal - Alfred Lord Tennyson School](#). Closes 17 February 2025.
- [Improvement Works Satisfaction Survey](#). Closes 30 April 2026.

Forthcoming meetings

Executive

- Thursday 13 February from 10am.
- Thursday 13 March from 10am.

Full Council

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

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):

- [21 new Community Orchards for North Northamptonshire](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Climate Change Strategy to be discussed by Executive](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2029 considered for approval at next week's Executive meeting](#)

- [New powers to combat vacant commercial properties on Executive agenda](#)
- [Work to continue to deliver fresh bid for South Midlands devolution](#)
- [Voi e-scooters to be available 24/7 in North Northants](#)
- [Residents urged to get ready for May elections - less than 100 days to go](#)
- [Households and individuals struggling with rising costs urged to apply for Household Support Fund in North Northamptonshire before deadline](#)
- [North Northants bird keepers advised to follow national guidelines](#)
- [Discover the Northamptonshire Archives Service](#)
- [Nene Valley Crematorium donates £11,600 to Kettering General Hospital ICU](#)
- [Record number of enquiries received for Northamptonshire archaeological summer programme after TV appearance](#)

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 (3 to 5 February)

- Residents urged to get ready for May elections - less than 100 days to go: <https://ow.ly/gxfz50USgWh>. (Views 7,549, Reach 4,357, Interactions 9)
- Voi e-scooters to be available 24/7 in North Northants: <https://ow.ly/3lz950UTVsk>. (Views 1,955, Reach 1,359, Interactions 26)
- We're supporting Children's Mental Health Week to share support and guidance for parents and carers worried about their child's mental health <https://www.childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk/>. (Views 1,759, Reach 1,230, Interactions 11)

Top Tweets so far this week (3 to 5 February)

- We're supporting Children's Mental Health Week to share support and guidance for parents and carers worried about their child's mental health <https://childrensmentalhealthweek.org.uk>. (Impressions 296)
- Residents urged to get ready for May elections - less than 100 days to go: <https://ow.ly/nilm50USgWg>. (Impressions 274)
- Voi e-scooters to be available 24/7 in North Northants: <https://ow.ly/tjqn50UTVs> @NorthantsPolice @voitechnology. (Impressions 222)

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