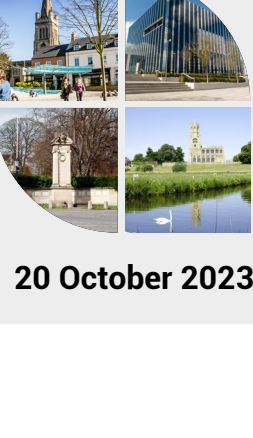


# Leader's Update

Cllr Jason Smithers  
Leader of the Council



20 October 2023

## Introduction and Welcome!

Welcome to my latest Update.

It has been another busy couple of weeks with the Executive meeting taking place last Thursday (12 October) and a Full Council meeting in the diary for next Thursday (26 October). These meetings are live streamed on our YouTube channel so you can either watch them live or on catch-up. The agendas and meeting notes are displayed on the council meetings section of our website in the week before the meeting.

Households who are finding it difficult to manage food and utility costs can apply for financial support from the Household Support Fund. You can find out if your financial situation means that you are eligible on our website. This is national funding and is specifically designed to help people with the rising costs of essential items, especially with the Winter months around the corner.

Organisations in the more rural areas of North Northamptonshire have until Friday 24 November to apply for capital grants of up to £15,000. This rural community capital funding is financed by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The council is getting ready for harsher weather conditions as Kier Transportation, our highways provider, has its fleet of gritters ready to take on precautionary routes. Keeping North Northamptonshire moving when severe weather strikes is essential and I am pleased that we have prepared robustly for the coming Winter.

The first of four North Northamptonshire Family Hub networks was officially launched on Saturday 30 September at Penrith Drive Children's Centre in Wellingborough. The fun day was attended by around two hundred local families. Family Hubs provide a broad range of services to support families with children up to the age of 19, and up to the age of 25 for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Illegal tobacco products and non-compliant vapes valued at more than £24,000 were seized in North Northamptonshire Trading Standards clamp down. Officers from Trading Standards worked with partners at North Northamptonshire Council Licensing and Northamptonshire Police to inspect four premises in Rushden.

The Youth Offending Service (YOS) has been rated as 'good' following a recent inspection. It recognises the staff who work hard to achieve the best outcomes for the children they serve. This is the first inspection of the YOS since the inception of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and the establishment of the two unitary councils, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council.

North Northamptonshire's annual bonfire and fireworks display returns to Corby on Friday 4 November. I hope that you and your family and friends will be able to join us for this spectacular evening of entertainment.

North Northamptonshire Council is hosting three workshops next month to gather views from carers that will help to shape future services. The face-to-face events will take place in the council chambers in Kettering (Wednesday 1 November) and Thrapston (Tuesday 14 November). An online workshop via Microsoft Teams has been arranged for Tuesday 7 November.

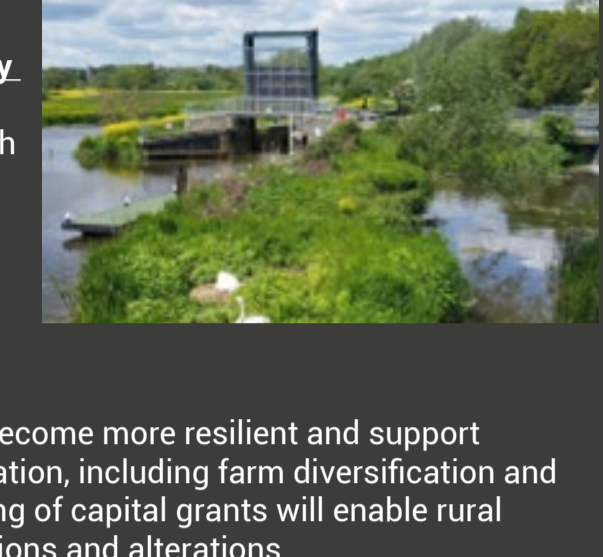
Residents are being asked to have their say on a new way of delivering activities and respite for children with disabilities (short breaks). You can also give your views on Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) which are legal documents developed by the Traffic Authority which are required to support a range of different measures, which govern or restrict the use of public roads. Please visit our newly rebranded Your Voice Matters website, the hub for our consultation and engagement activities, for full details.

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

## Forthcoming meetings

- **Full Council:** Thursday 26 October from 6pm. [View agenda and papers.](#)
- **Executive:** Thursday 16 November from 10am. 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](#).



## Household Support Fund Awareness Week (16-22 October)

North Northamptonshire Council is encouraging residents who may be facing financial challenges due to the rising cost of living to access the support available.

The reminder comes during national Household Support Fund Awareness Week which marks its fourth phase - with an extra £842 million made available by the government to help the most vulnerable across England.

The Household Support Fund is there to help households most in need with the rising cost of living, including families, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and people with disabilities. The money was allocated by the Department for Work and Pensions to councils in England, who chose how to support those in need in their local area.

The easiest way to make an application in North Northamptonshire is online. Computers are available for free public use in all of our libraries.

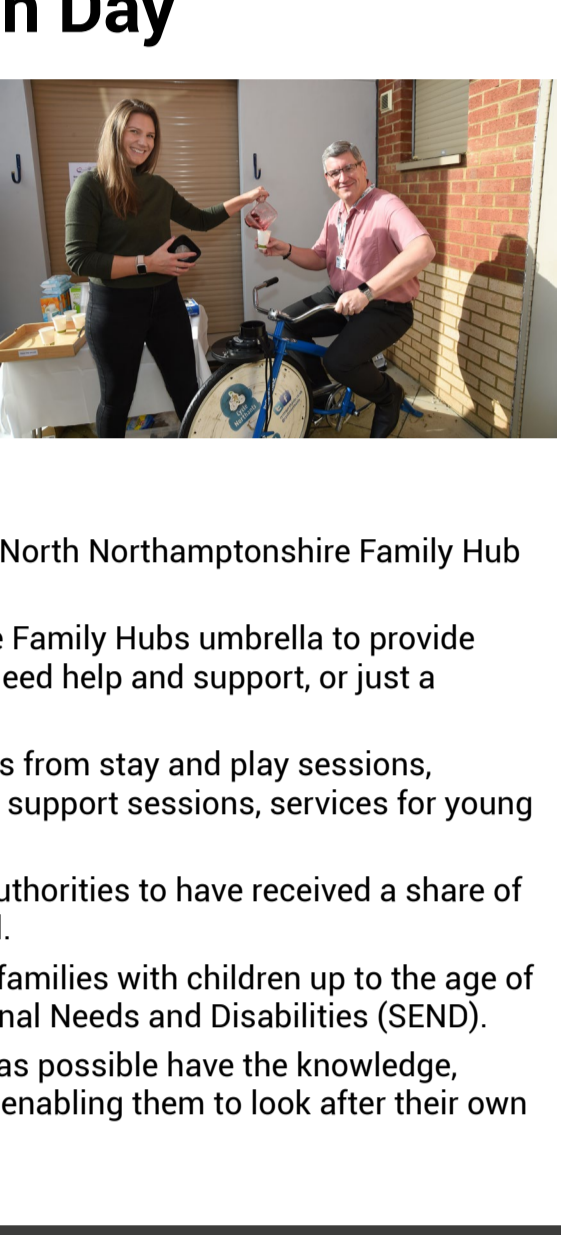
Funding is ongoing until March 2024, (or until funds run out) which allows for applications by those whose financial situation may change.

### Household Support Fund

- The one-off payment of up to £320 (depending on household size) is paid directly into bank accounts.
- The Household Support Fund is also helping families with children on free school meals. They are provided with £15 per week per child supermarket vouchers, sent out by schools for all holiday periods until Easter 2024. The same voucher support has been given to families who choose to home educate but meet free school meal eligibility criteria.
- All those meeting free school meals threshold have also been given the opportunity to participate in sessions through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) run for North Northamptonshire Council by Northamptonshire Sport.

You can find out if you are eligible on the [Household Support Fund](#) pages on our website. You will need to fill in a simple online form and upload payslips and proof of identity.

For any queries related to the Household Support Fund please contact the team at [HSF4North@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:HSF4North@northnorthants.gov.uk).



## Grants of up to £15,000 for rural businesses available

Grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 are now available for rural businesses across North Northamptonshire.

Using monies received from the [Rural England Prosperity Fund](#), North Northamptonshire Council has re-launched a grant scheme to support existing rural businesses, with applications now open.

Following on from Round 1 earlier in 2023, Round 2 applications are invited from projects that can start quickly and be delivered with all spend claimed by 28 February 2024. Capital grants of between £5,000 and £15,000 are available in Round 2.

The grant scheme is intended to help rural businesses become more resilient and support growth. A particular target for Round 2 is rural diversification, including farm diversification and projects which support the visitor economy. The awarding of capital grants will enable rural businesses to invest in equipment or for building extensions and alterations.

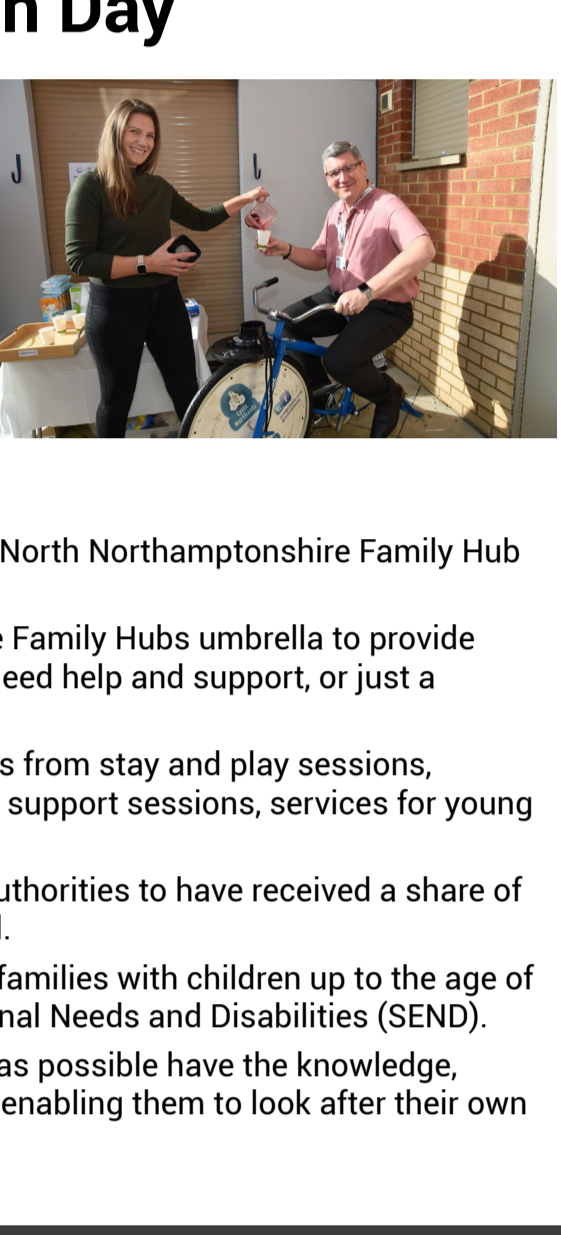
Applications for this funding (Round 2) must be received by 5pm on Friday 24 November.

Interested rural businesses who wish to apply for funding in Round 2 are invited to send a request for an application form, eligibility criteria and guidance notes to [ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk).

Please visit the [Rural Business Grant Scheme](#) section of our website for further information.

Rural businesses should also be aware that there will be an additional opportunity to apply for funding in Round 3. This will be for projects that will start in or after April 2024 and can be delivered with all spend claimed by 28 February 2025. Businesses are able to apply to more than one round for different projects.

This project is funded by the UK government through the [UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#).



## Wellingborough residents enjoy Family Hubs Fun Day

A new 'one stop shop' for parents and their children to give young people the very best start in life has been officially launched in Wellingborough.

The first North Northamptonshire Family Hub opened its doors with a launch event on Saturday 30 September at Penrith Drive Children's Centre, which was attended by around two hundred local families.

The free event offered lots to do and see, including reading sessions, a smoothie bike, biscuit decorating, cross head making, balloon animals, face painting, an outdoor play area and a visiting farmedic vehicle.

The fun day marked the first of what will eventually be four North Northamptonshire Family Hub networks, all of which will be open by Summer 2025.

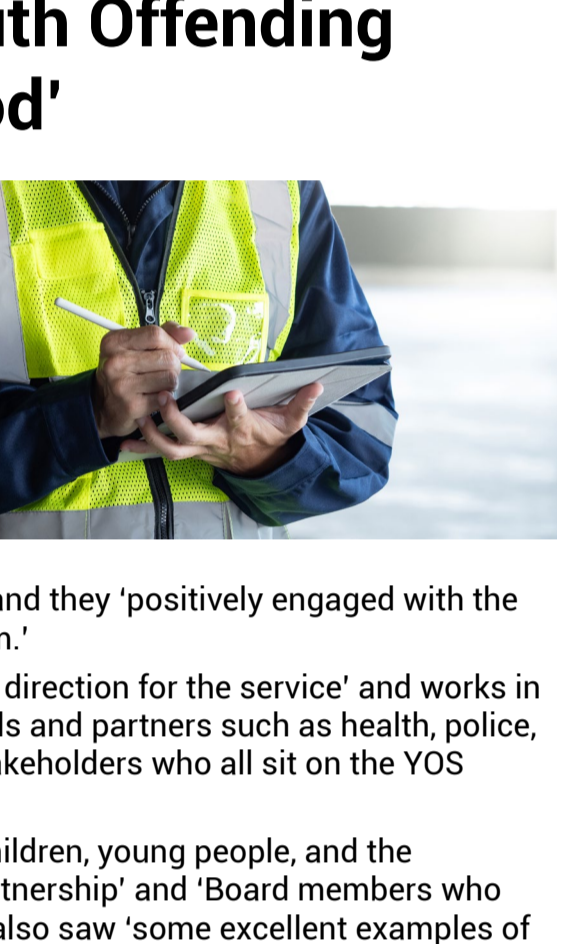
There are wide range of organisations supporting under the Family Hubs umbrella to provide services young people and families can turn to when they need help and support, or just a listening ear.

Family Hubs will provide a wide range of in-person activities from stay and play sessions, breastfeeding support, child development clinics, parenting support sessions, services for young people, as well as online support.

North Northamptonshire Council was one of just 75 local authorities to have received a share of the government's £302m Family Hub and Start for Life fund.

The Family Hubs will provide services designed to support families with children up to the age of 19 years old, up to 25 years for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

This broad range of provision will ensure as many families as possible have the knowledge, skills, and support to best care for their children, as well as enabling them to look after their own health and wellbeing.



## Illegal tobacco and non-compliant vapes valued at more than £24,000 seized in North Northamptonshire Trading Standards clamp down

An ongoing operation tackling the illegal importation and sale of goods across North Northamptonshire saw the seizure of 111 packets of hand rolling tobacco, 866 packets of cigarettes and 1,042 non-compliant vapes last month.

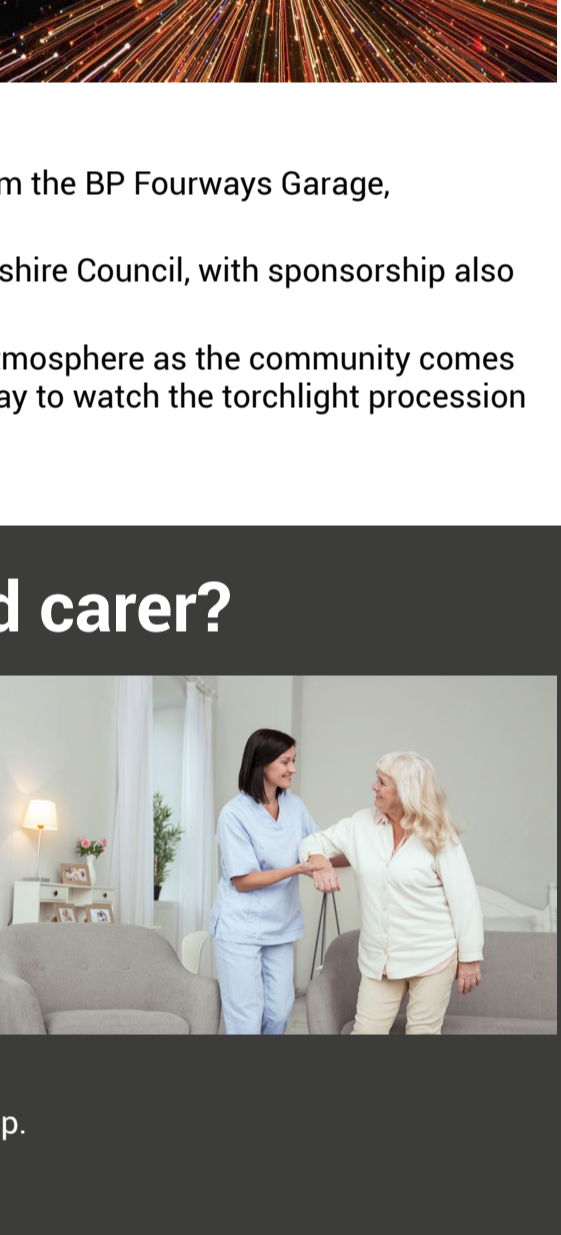
In response to an increase in complaints and intelligence, officers from Trading Standards worked with partners at North Northamptonshire Council Licensing and Northamptonshire Police to inspect four premises in Rushden.

A monetary value totalling approximately £24,541.60 was seized. This figure was reached by taking the average of the resale price for each product; £10,420 in vapes, £3,729.60 in hand rolling tobacco and £10,392 in illegal cigarettes.

I would like to thank the officers and teams involved with this latest enforcement action and ongoing investigation.

Here in North Northamptonshire, there is zero tolerance for flouting the law in relation to tobacco products and the links this often has to wider criminality. There is no place for this in our communities.

I would urge anyone who has concerns about the sale of illegal tobacco products and vapes to report it online at [Trading Standards advice and help for consumers](#) or call Citizens Advice on 0800 223 1133.



## His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation rate Northamptonshire Youth Offending service 'good'

The first inspection of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) since the inception of Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and the establishment of the two unitary councils, North Northamptonshire (NNC) and West Northamptonshire (WNC) has found that the service is 'good.'

The quality of resettlement policy and provision is also inspected, which was separately rated as 'outstanding.'

Inspectors found that 'delivery of work with children was of a consistently high standard' which in turn meant that there are 'positive working relationships with the children' and they 'positively engaged with the YOS and could access appropriate services to support them.'

Northamptonshire YOS sits within NCT who 'provides clear direction for the service' and works in partnership with North and West Northamptonshire Councils and partners such as health, police, education, community safety partnership, and other key stakeholders who all sit on the YOS Board.

The Board is committed to deliver the best outcomes for children, young people, and the community. In the report, inspectors 'found an effective partnership' and 'Board members who take an active role in developing the work of the YOS' they also saw 'some excellent examples of board members advocating the work of the YOS in their own organisations, with a clear focus upon improving outcomes for YOS children.'

The full inspection report is available online.



## Gritting crews ready to respond

The council is getting ready for harsher weather conditions as Kier Transportation, the council's highways provider, has its fleet of gritters ready to take on precautionary routes.

The gritting season runs from mid-October to mid-April next year with gritters covering 821 miles (1,341km) of the council's road network on precautionary routes - this is the equivalent of driving from Northamptonshire to Dundee and back.

In adverse weather conditions, an additional 234 miles would receive a gritting treatment.

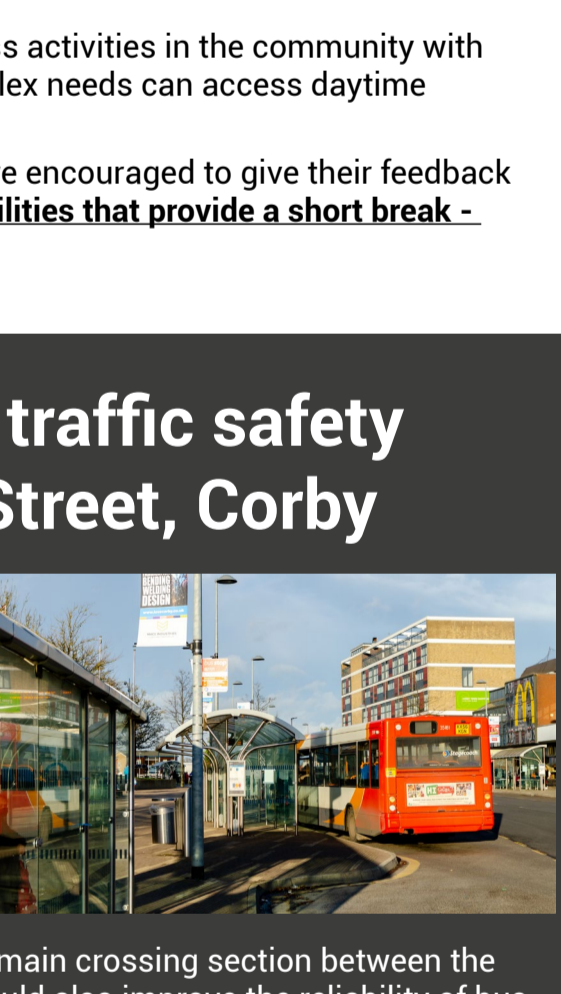
The council has reserves of 4,000 tonnes of salt, with 651 grit bins across the region filled for use on public roads and footpaths.

Enhanced weather forecasting and temperature readings will be taken via weather stations and sensors set out along North Northamptonshire's roads, with updates sent every 15 minutes.

The gritters are fitted with advanced GPS technology which requires only one person to operate the vehicle in clear conditions, by accumulating route data and reporting back to the office to ensure that works are safely delivered.

If grit bin salt stocks run low, please report that they need refilling via the [Street Doctor](#) service. More information and advice on how to stay safe on our roads can be found on the [Gritting](#) pages of our website.

Keep up to date with highways and travel news for North Northamptonshire Council highways on Twitter and Facebook via [@NNCHighways](#).



## North Northamptonshire bonfire and fireworks display back with a bang

The skies above North Northamptonshire will be lit up with fireworks once again as the annual bonfire and fireworks display returns to the Boating Lake in Corby on Friday 3 November.

**Timings**

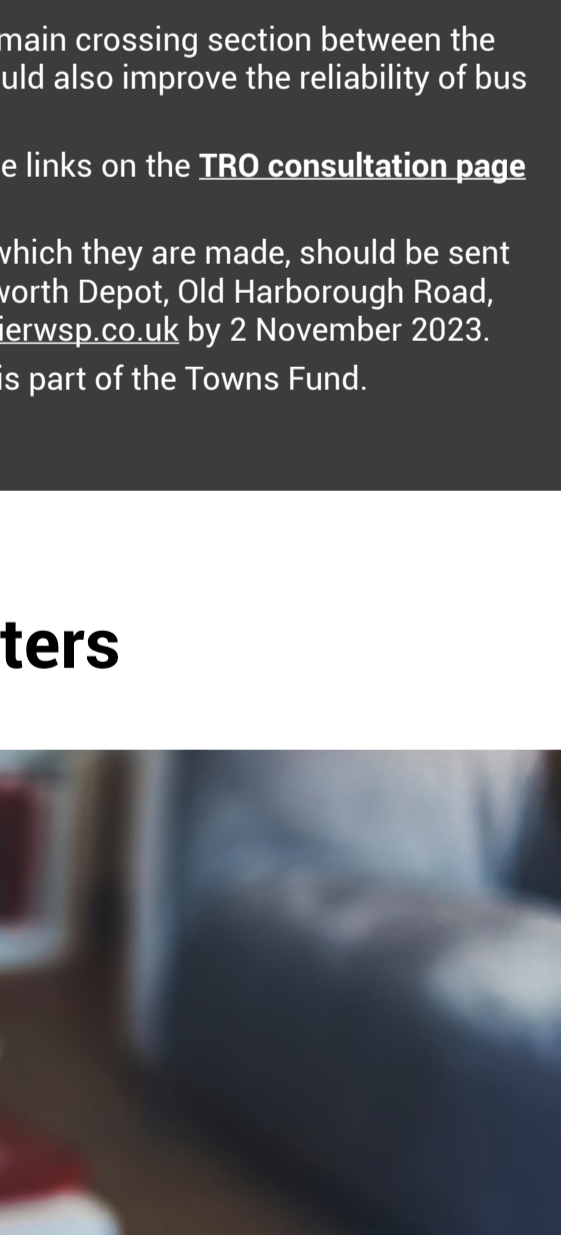
- **6:45pm:** Torchlight procession leaves from outside Corby International Pool.
- **7pm:** Lighting of bonfire.
- **7:30pm:** Fireworks display.

There will be food stalls on site.

Road closures will be in place from 6pm with no access from the BP Fourways Garage, Cottingham Road along Westcott Way.

This year's event is being organised by North Northamptonshire Council, with sponsorship also from Premier Roofing Systems Ltd.

I am sure, like with previous years, there will be a brilliant atmosphere as the community comes together. It is always great to see everyone line Westcott Way to watch the torchlight procession before the spectacular fireworks display.



## Are you an unpaid carer?

A carer is a person of any age who provides unpaid help and support to a relative, partner, friend or neighbour, of any age, who has an illness or long-term condition and cannot manage without the carer's help.

We would like to invite carers to join us at one of our workshops. As a carer, your experiences are vital in helping to shape future services for carers in North Northamptonshire, and we want to hear your views.

### What to expect on the day.

- A warm friendly welcome.
- An outline of what we wish to achieve from the workshop.
- Interactive feedback from carers via group work.
- Summary and next steps.

Details of the workshops are below. Places are limited. Please book in advance by emailing [CommissioningTeams@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:CommissioningTeams@northnorthants.gov.uk).

We kindly request that you do not turn up on the day without booking your place in advance.

### Wednesday 1 November (Face-to-face)

- **Venue:** Rivington Council Chambers, Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, NN15 7QX.
- **Time:** 9:30am for a 10am start, finish at 12:30pm.
- **Additional information:** A free parking permit will be provided; details will be supplied when booking a place.

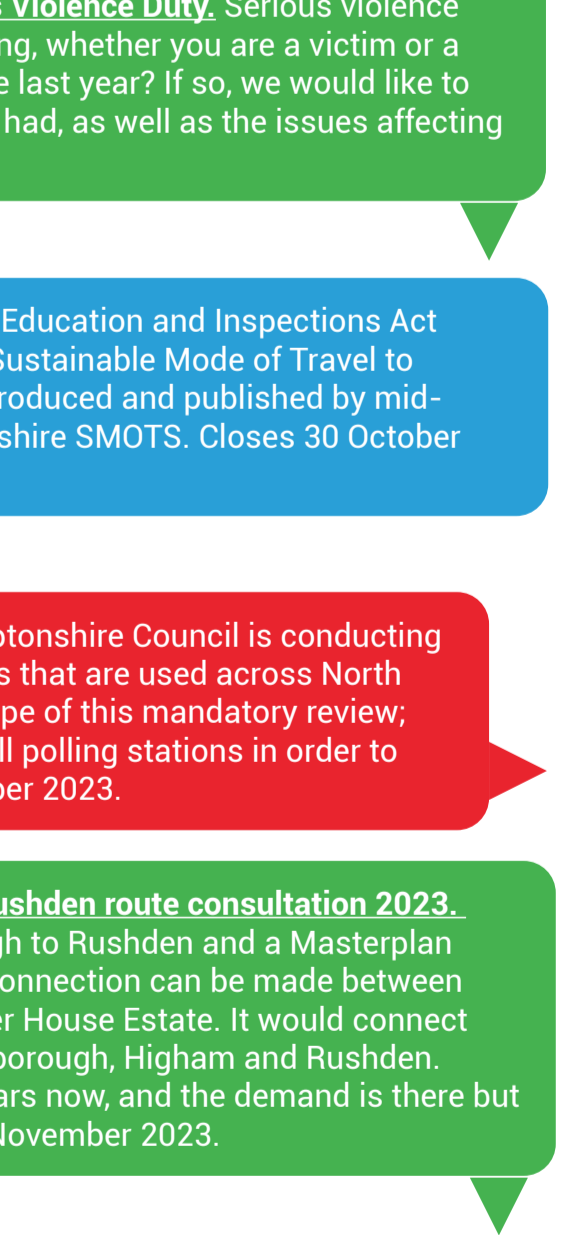
### Tuesday 7 November (Microsoft Teams)

- **Time:** 6pm to 8pm.
- **Additional information:** We appreciate this can be a busy time for carers and understand if attendees wish to have their cameras off and may not be able to attend the full session.

### Tuesday 14 November (Face-to-face)

- **Venue:** Thrapston Council Chamber, Cedar Drive, Thrapston, Northamptonshire NN14 4LZ.
- **Time:** 9:30am for a 10am start, finish at 12:30pm.
- **Additional information:** Parking at this venue is free. No permit required.

Carers only need to attend one session; a variety of sessions have been offered to try and capture availability.



## We want your views on activities and respite for children with disabilities (short breaks)

Residents are being asked to have their say on a new way of delivering activities and respite for children with disabilities (short breaks).

Throughout October and November, a final consultation will take place on the proposed new way of delivering short breaks in Northamptonshire.

Short breaks are breaks for children and young people who have a disability giving them rich opportunities while also allowing carers to have a break from caring to carry out other vital activities. They include daytime activities, overnight residential breaks, personal care and support, holiday clubs, sensory impairment services and sleep support.

The short breaks service is jointly funded by North and West Northamptonshire Councils and the NHS Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board. Northamptonshire Children's Trust oversees the 'Short Breaks Service' which is provided on a county wide basis to children with disabilities as part of our shared responsibility to support children with SEND under the Children and Families Act 2014.

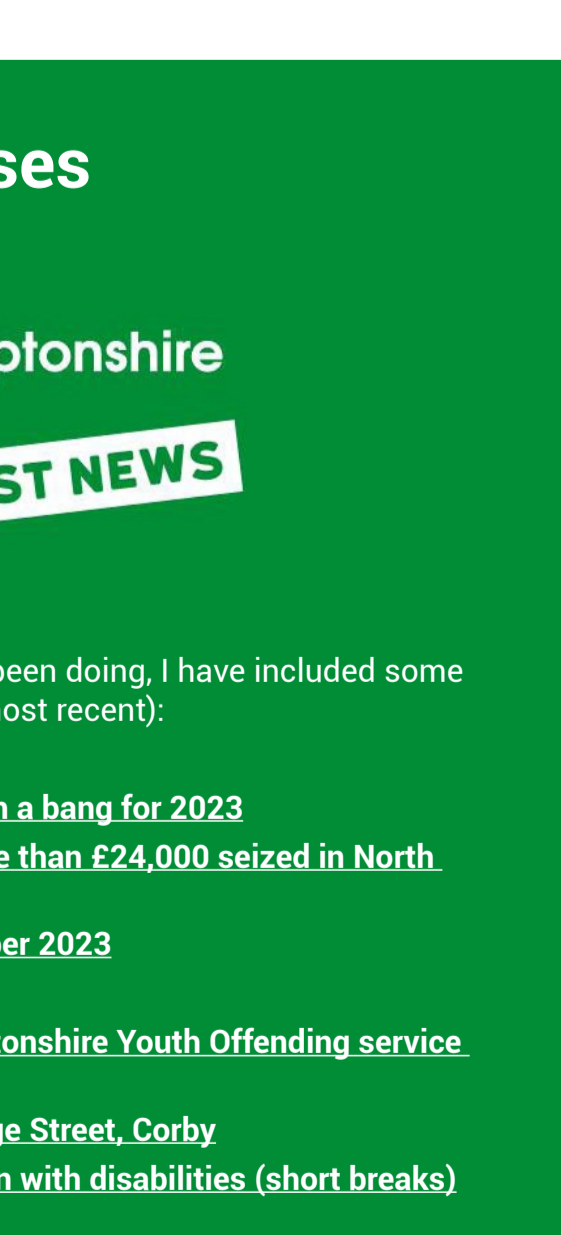
The first phase of a three-stage consultation began in 2021 to understand what was working well and what improvements needed to be made to the service as identified by parents, practitioners, and organisations. This feedback informed and helped to develop a potential new model for the service in future.

The second phase in April to May 2023 was about engagement, to gain feedback from parents, carers, practitioners, and other members of the public on how they felt about the potential model and the service offering in the future.

The third and final part of the consultation process has now commenced, and this involves a wider public dialogue on the proposed new model. Consultation will take place via an electronic survey, provider events, parent and practitioner workshops and attendance at community events to ensure a diverse range of feedback on the proposed model is received before writing the consultation and tendering the new contract in November. The proposed model aims to:

- Bring together residential and non-residential short breaks, for better co-ordination and flexibility.
- Have a single referral and assessment pathway to make it easier to access services and better oversight.
- Build community links and support for children to access activities in the community with buddy support and support so children with more complex needs can access daytime activities.

The final phase of consultation is now live, and residents are encouraged to give their feedback via the survey. [Activities and respite for children with disabilities that provide a short break - consultation 2023.](#)



## Public consultation on traffic safety measures on George Street, Corby

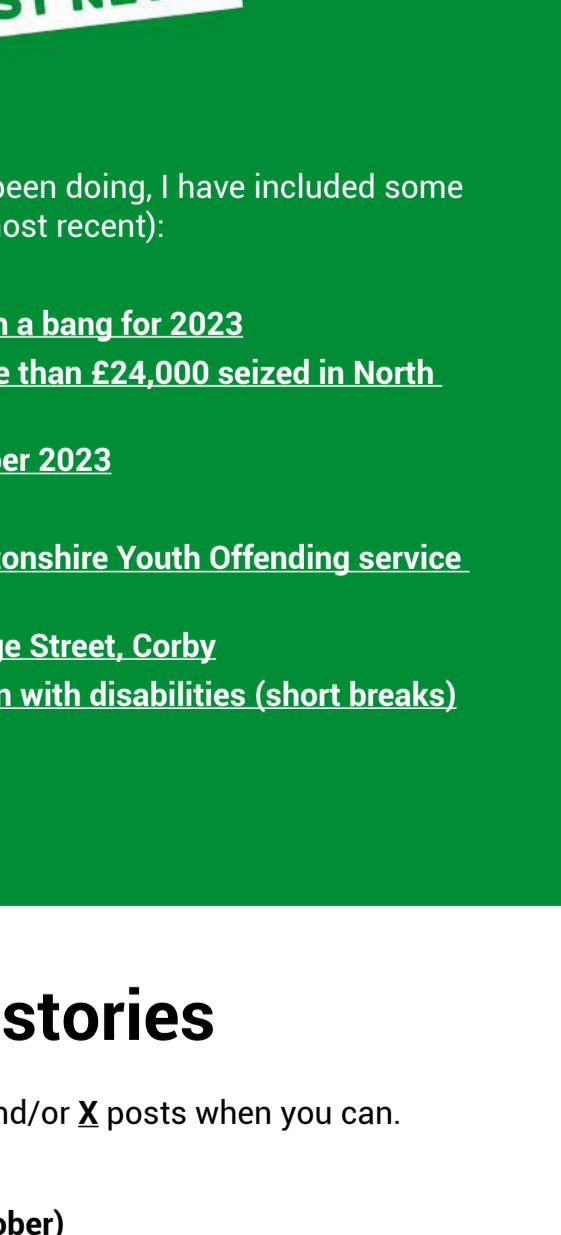
Residents are being asked for their views on a change to the current traffic regulation order (TRO) which, if progressed, would see enforcement measures introduced along a section of George Street in Corby.

It was agreed by Executive in April that the current TRO would be replaced with one that would allow North Northamptonshire Council to enforce vehicle access restrictions, using CCTV.

This would improve safety for pedestrians crossing the road by allowing only taxis, buses and cyclists to enter the main crossing section between the hours of 8am to 6pm on Monday to Saturday. The move would also improve the reliability of bus times.

Anyone wishing to make a comment or object can follow the links on the [TRO consultation page](#) on our website.

Objections to the proposed orders, stating the grounds on which they are made, should be sent in writing to the Traffic Orders Section, Kier Highways, Brixworth Depot, Old Harborough Road, Brixworth, NN16 9BX or by email to [NNCAparkingquies@kierwps.co.uk](mailto:NNCAparkingquies@kierwps.co.uk) by 2 November 2023. The project is funded through the Accelerated Funding, which is part of the Towns Fund.



## Your Voice Matters

Please find below details of our other current open activities. Please visit our newly rebranded [Your Voice Matters](#) website and have your say to shape our future.

**Tackling violence and improving lives through the Serious Violence Duty.** Serious violence affects many communities. The impact can be life changing, whether you are a victim or a witness. Have you been affected by serious violence in the last year? If so, we would like to know about the experience you and your family may have had, as well as the issues affecting your community. [Closes 27 October 2023.](#)

**Draft Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy 2023.** The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires all Local Authorities to produce an annual Sustainable Mode of Travel to School Strategy (SMOTS) and for these strategies to be produced and published by mid-September. The legacy strategy is the 2015 Northamptonshire SMOTS. [Closes 30 October 2023.](#)

**Polling District and Polling Place Review.** North Northamptonshire Council is conducting a statutory review of all polling districts and polling places that are used across North Northamptonshire. Polling Stations fall outside of the scope of this mandatory review; however, the council is taking this opportunity to review all polling stations in order to ensure good accessibility for all electors. [Closes 30 October 2023.](#)

**North Northamptonshire Greenway.** Wellingborough to Rushden route consultation 2023. One of the most asked for routes is linking Wellingborough to Rushden and a Masterplan has been developed in order to look at how a Greenway connection can be made between Rushden Lakes and Wellingborough to connect to Chester House Estate. It would connect the Greenway from Woodford to Stanwick Lakes, Irthingborough, Higham and Rushden. Residents have been asking for such a route for a few years now, and the demand is there but developing it has some significant challenges. [Closes 1 November 2023.](#)

**North Northamptonshire Greenway Strategy consultation 2023.** North Northamptonshire Council is developing a Greenway Strategy, which is a rural equivalent of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans in places in our towns. The strategy identifies safer routes across our geography which connects places of work, education, tourism, recreation and leisure - nearly 300 kilometres in all. We want to hear the views of the wider community as to how we can achieve this vision and there's also an opportunity to be involved with a network of Greenway Champions. As a Greenway Champion you will help raise the profile of this strategy. [Closes 1 November 2023.](#)

**Duddington with Fineshade Parish Neighbourhood Plan Proposal.** North Northamptonshire Council has formally received the Duddington with Fineshade Parish Neighbourhood Plan, which has been submitted in accordance with Regulation 15 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. [Closes 3 November 2023.](#)

## 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):

- [Grants of up to £15,000 for rural businesses available](#)
- [North Northants bonfire and fireworks display back with a bang for 2023](#)
- [Illegal tobacco and non-compliant vapes valued at more than £24,000 seized in North Northants Trading Standards clamp down](#)
- [Household Support Fund Awareness Week 16-22 October 2023](#)
- [Gritting crews ready to respond](#)
- [His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation rate Northamptonshire Youth Offending service 'good'](#)
- [Public consultation on traffic safety measures on George Street, Corby](#)
- [We want your views on activities and respite for children with disabilities \(short breaks\)](#)
- [Wellingborough residents enjoy Family Hubs Fun Day](#)
- [Are you an unpaid carer?](#)

## Social media: Top stories

Follow our social media accounts and share our Facebook and/or X posts when you can.

### Top Facebook posts so far this week (16 to 18 October)

1. North Northants bonfire and fireworks display back with a bang for 2023: <https://www.facebook.com/nnchighways/> (Reach 2,264, Link Clicks 9, Engagement 229)
2. Foil is an item that often gets forgotten but when recycling... Aluminium is easy to recycle & welcome in your recycling bin. If your weekly takeaway comes in a foil tray, give it a wash and put it in the recycling. Scrunch up your tin foil (after removing food). #RecycleWeek (Reach 1,721, Link Clicks 0, Engagement 8)
3. Kettering Library will remain closed today (17/10/23). We will provide further updates as soon as possible and apologise for any inconvenience. (Reach 1,519, Link Clicks 0, Engagement 33)

### Top Tweets so far this week (16 to 18 October)

1. This week is Community Transport Week. Community Transport helps people to be independent, participate in their community, and access services by providing local transport solutions. Find out more about Community Transport in North Northamptonshire at <https://t.co/ObFYGkVlq6> (Impressions 681, URL Clicks 1, Engagements 3)
2. It's #RecycleWeek and we'll be shining a light on those items that can be recycled but are often forgotten about. Metal lids from bottles and jars are made of high-quality steel or aluminium and can be put in your recycling bin. (Impressions 503, URL Clicks 0, Engagements 12)
3. Join us at our job fair in Wellingborough tomorrow! Get advice on various employment-related topics and find local jobs and training courses to boost your career. Drop into Tresham College in Wellingborough from 4pm to 6pm. More details at: <https://t.co/GsEsZAI DR> (Impressions 445, URL Clicks 2, Engagements 3)

## Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have ideas of items to include in future updates please let me know at: [executive@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:executive@northnorthants.gov.uk)

With Best Wishes,  
Jason



Follow me on X [@SmithersJason](#) Contacting North Northamptonshire Council [0300 126 3000](tel:03001263000) [www.northnorthants.gov.uk](http://www.northnorthants.gov.uk)