

Leader's Update

21 February 2025

Issue: 94

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

Earlier this week, I announced that I will not be seeking re-election at the local elections in North Northamptonshire on 1 May 2025. I will continue as Leader of the Council in the meantime.

It has been a privilege and honour to be the council's first Leader and to serve everyone in North Northamptonshire.

The council has made excellent progress in the achievement of its ambitions, and it has been great to be part of this team effort. It has been a pleasure and an honour working with elected members, staff, partners and of course our local communities who are at the centre of everything we do.

I feel that I have helped get the authority off to a solid start. Now feels like the right time for me to transition into semi-retirement, focus more on my family and on new opportunities ahead.

My intention from the outset was to do one full term at the council but this was always subject to making the right progress which I feel has been achieved.

I would like to thank all those in North Northamptonshire who put their faith in me and who gave me this opportunity.

Today's update also includes:

- Final budget for 2025-2026 approved by North Northamptonshire Council.
- North Northamptonshire Council teams reach finals of LGC Awards 2025.
- East Carlton Countryside Park awarded country park status.
- 2025 election campaign for the UK Youth Parliament.
- Discover Northamptonshire gains Local Visitor Economy Partnership accreditation.
- Work starts on the first Local Transport Plan (LTP) for North Northamptonshire.
- Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's five-year housing strategy.
- Rural communities - How accessible are your local health and wellbeing services?

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!

Final budget for 2025-2026 approved by North Northamptonshire Council

Final budget proposals for North Northamptonshire Council for the next financial year were approved at a [meeting of the council](#) earlier today.

Draft proposals were initially agreed by the Executive on 19 December, and these were subject to a detailed consultation process and scrutiny before final proposals went before Executive earlier this month.

Overall, the net revenue budget for 2025/2026 is £400.8 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 £51.8 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.

The council also has a programme of capital investment totalling £208.5m over the four-year period 2025-2029 across a number of schemes including investing over £59.3m into highways, £36.6m for continued investment into housing stock, £29.4m for investment into schools, £8.1m to support facilities for those with disabilities, £6.3m in improving digital infrastructure and £2.6m for electrical vehicle infrastructure.

Please read the press release for full details: [Final budget for 2025-2026 approved by North Northamptonshire Council](#).

North Northamptonshire Council teams reach finals of LGC Awards 2025

North Northamptonshire Council has reached the final of the prestigious Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2025 in three categories.

Our Family Hubs initiative was shortlisted in the Digital Impact Award, while the Chester House Estate has made it through in the Innovation Award category.

Our Public Health service has also made the final of the flagship sector awards in the Large Team of the Year, recognising the hard work and commitment to improve people's health and wellbeing.

The winners of the categories will be announced at a ceremony which will be held at Grosvenor House, London on 11 June.

Please read the press release for further details: [North Northamptonshire Council teams reach finals of LGC Awards 2025](#).

This is wonderful news. These awards recognise and celebrate the finest examples of innovation delivered by local government across the UK and to be shortlisted is testament to the hard work and dedication of our teams here in North Northamptonshire.

I never cease to be astounded by the inspiring work of our officers, and our invaluable partnership working with individuals, families and organisations. I very much look forward to the announcement of the winners in the Summer and wish our finalists every success.

East Carlton Countryside Park awarded country park status

East Carlton Countryside Park has been awarded accredited country park status by Natural England.

The park, run by North Northamptonshire Council, has shown that it offers high quality visitor facilities and services to over 400,000 visitors annually. With its well maintained, accessible and welcoming green spaces, the park has successfully met Natural England's [accreditation criteria](#).

Located near Corby and spanning 102 acres of park and woodland, East Carlton Countryside Park has become a key destination for families, walking groups and nature lovers.

The park is free to enter and offers a wide range of attractions, including a café, woodland shop, large adventure play area, scenic trails and the popular Love Exploring Dinosaur Safari Trail.

Proceeds from the woodland shop support the park's conservation efforts, including a vibrant volunteer programme.

The park has received the coveted Green Flag Award for four consecutive years since 2021. This recognises the hard work and dedication of our Country Parks and Woodlands Team and The Friends of East Carlton Country Park who maintain the park to such a high standard.

More information about our beautiful [country parks and woodlands](#) can be found on our website.

2025 election campaign for the UK Youth Parliament

The council, in collaboration with [Clubs for Young People Northamptonshire](#), has launched a campaign to elect two Members of [UK Youth Parliament](#) (MYPs).

The election is now open for young people aged 11 to 18 and resident in North Northamptonshire.

The elected individuals will represent the views and opinions of young people from North Northamptonshire on the things which really matter to them and make a difference to the lives of young people.

Initially, MYPs elected in 2025 will be in post for just over one year (until 31 March 2026). MYPs will then be elected for a two-year period in line with the national election process. They will be expected to attend Westminster twice yearly when Youth Parliament is sitting.

Young people interested in standing as a candidate are required to submit a manifesto for other young people to vote on. The closing date for manifestos is 24 February 2025.

The two individuals with the most votes will be elected as the North Northamptonshire Members of Youth Parliament.

Further information is available on our website at: [Standing for election and voting for the UK Youth Parliament](#).

Discover Northamptonshire gains Local Visitor Economy Partnership accreditation

A joint bid for a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for Northamptonshire has been approved by VisitEngland, paving the way for a far more co-ordinated and strategic approach to promoting the tourism sector.

Local Visitor Economy Partnerships have been introduced as part of the government's response to an independent review of how the nation's visitor economy is co-ordinated and promoted and will have the potential to draw in additional support and funding from Westminster. This new national portfolio of LVEPs will work in collaboration locally, regionally and nationally on shared priorities and targets to support and grow the visitor economy.

As well as achieving a nationally recognised official status, LVEPs will provide strong leadership and management of their destinations. Working collaboratively with the public and private sector, they will help to shape and deliver national strategy and activities to promote sustainable growth.

The new partnership for Northamptonshire, which has been approved by a panel involving VisitEngland and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, will ensure that the greatest benefits are achieved for Northamptonshire's visitor economy.

As an LVEP, the Discover Northamptonshire partnership will have access to resources and guidance from VisitEngland on product distribution, business support and the opportunity to bid for funding and marketing. As part of the LVEP's marketing, local activity is already being aligned with Visit Britain's national 'Starring GREAT Britain' campaign alongside the opportunity to tap into wider campaigns across the country in the future.

An important strand of support will be highlighting available government funding streams as well as developing and providing a 'toolkit' to help the LVEP with bids to those streams.

Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's five-year housing strategy

North Northamptonshire Council's five-year housing strategy 2025-2030 sets out exactly what the council needs to deliver to meet the current and future housing needs.

While working to support residents to have access to safe, decent and affordable homes, it is also designed to make sure the council meets its statutory obligations in the prevention of homelessness and supporting the changing housing needs of older residents.

The document sets out the council's ambition to meet demand, offer choice, match aspirations and provide a range of housing and tenures that are affordable for those who wish to live, work and visit North Northamptonshire.

Find out more and share your views at: [Draft Housing Strategy 2025-2030 - Have your say](#).

This consultation will close on 11 April 2025.

Work starts on the first Local Transport Plan (LTP) for North Northamptonshire

Initial work has started on producing the first Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the North Northamptonshire area. It will identify our transport policies and objectives, and link in with our Big50 Future Vision, Corporate Plan and wider council policies for the area.

The production of Local Transport Plan is a statutory requirement of the Transport Act 2000 and Local Transport Act 2008 which require us to set out our plans and policies for transport as well as how we intend to implement them.

The current plan for North Northamptonshire is the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan produced by the former Northamptonshire County Council in 2012. As a unitary council, we want to develop a new plan for North Northamptonshire that reflects local needs.

A draft Baseline Report has been produced which identifies changes that have occurred since 2012 as well as the policies and guidance that will be considered in the development of the Local Transport Plan.

We are therefore seeking your feedback and comments on this draft Baseline Report so that we can progress with developing the plan.

You can share your views by completing the online survey: [Local Transport Plan - Baseline Report](#) before 23 March 2025.

There will be future public consultation and engagement as work progresses over the next 18 months, with the Local Transport Plan programmed for completion and adoption in 2026.

Rural communities - How accessible are your local health and wellbeing services?

Residents living in rural communities across North Northamptonshire are invited to take part in a Rural Health Needs Assessment survey to share their experiences of accessing local health and wellbeing services.

The online survey aims to gather feedback from residents in villages, hamlets, market towns, or less built-up areas, as well as those who feel their community faces challenges often associated with rural living, such as limited transport or fewer local services.

The council is particularly keen to hear from residents who may face additional challenges in accessing services, including older adults, people with disabilities, carers, and those without access to reliable transport or digital services.

Find out more and share your views at: [Rural health and wellbeing needs assessment](#).

This consultation will close on 25 March 2025.

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](#).

- [Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-29 Feedback - Have your say](#). Closes 13 March 2025.
- [Active Communities in the Corby area](#). Closes 30 March 2025.

Forthcoming meetings

Full Council

- Thursday 6 March from 6pm.

Executive

- Thursday 13 March 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):

- [Final budget for 2025-2026 approved by North Northamptonshire Council](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council teams reach finals of LGC Awards 2025](#)
- [Discover Northamptonshire gains Local Visitor Economy Partnership accreditation](#)
- [Rural communities - How accessible are your local health and wellbeing services?](#)
- [Have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's five-year housing strategy](#)
- [Council Leader announces he is not seeking re-election in May](#)
- [This spring, grow your potential in one of Northamptonshire's libraries](#)
- [Planning to say 'I do' in 2025?](#)
- [East Carlton Country Park awarded country park status](#)
- [Executive Members at North Northamptonshire Council will consider the authority's first dedicated housing strategy at this week's meeting](#)
- [North Northamptonshire Council seeks candidates for Members of Youth Parliament](#)
- [On a journey... work starts to shape Local Transport Plan for North Northants](#)

- [The Chester House Estate learning department awarded educational quality badge for heritage engagement programmes](#)
- [Further support for economic growth to be discussed](#)

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 (17 to 19 February)


- It is an offence not to pick up and dispose of YOUR dog's waste appropriately and can lead to a £1000 fine. If you see an overflowing bin, please report it online <https://ow.ly/Q9jJ50UycKC> (Views 15,293, Reach 8,757, Interactions 32)
- Council Leader Jason Smithers has announced that he will not be seeking re-election at the local elections on May 1, 2025 <https://ow.ly/JCG250V2I7Q> (Views 5,864, Reach 3,113, Interactions 40)
- This Spring – Northamptonshire residents are being invited to grow their potential at one of the many Libraries across the county. <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/.../spring-grow-your...> (Views 2,342, Reach 1,608, Interactions 10)

Top Tweets so far this week (17 to 19 February)

- This Spring – Northamptonshire residents are being invited to grow their potential at one of the many libraries across the county. <https://northnorthants.gov.uk/news/spring-grow-your-potential-one-northamptonshireslibraries> (Impressions 340)
- It is an offence not to pick up and dispose of YOUR dog's waste appropriately and can lead to a £1000 fine. If you see an overflowing bin, please report it online <https://ow.ly/C1BW50UycKB> (Impressions 289)
- Still stuck for ideas to keep the kids busy this #halfterm? Don't worry, we've got it covered. Find an adventure on our website <https://ow.ly/OIHh50V1fFf> (Impressions 262)

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