Leader's Update

Cllr Jason Smithers
Leader of the Council

4 February 2022

Introduction and Welcome!

Welcome to my latest Leader's Update. The budget consultation closed last Friday. Thank you to those who were able to complete the consultation survey. The budget has received a fair amount of internal challenge and scrutiny from fellow Members as you would rightly expect. The Executive will meet to consider the draft budget on 10 February, at 10:00am at the Corby Cube. You can access the **agenda/reports for the meeting on the website**. The budget will be decided at Council on 24 February.

On a completely different subject, I know the Deputy Leader, Helen Howell, has the honour of sitting on the Northamptonshire Platinum Jubilee Committee (NPJC). Helen tells me that Northamptonshire is one of the last counties to have not received any funding. There is some more information. It would be good to provide a link to the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Council's (NCALC) first update which provides a focus on the Platinum Jubilee in the County, which Helen has kindly agreed to share excerpts. For those of you who may not have seen it, you can access it on the **NCALC website**. And please remember, if you are planting a tree for the Jubilee, or have already planted one or more, don't forget to register the location of the trees on the **Queens Green Canopy online map**.

National Apprenticeship Week

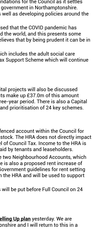
The 15th annual week-long celebration of apprenticeships takes place from 7 to 13 February and North Northamptonshire is joining in the celebrations by hosting a campaign. You can find lots of information regarding apprenticeships on our website.

Final budget proposals for 2022-2023 to be discussed at Council's Executive

The next Executive meeting will take place at 10:0am on Thursday 10 February at the Corby Cube, where final budget proposals for North Northamptonshire Council for the financial year will be presented.

Draft proposals were approved by the Executive on 23 December and these have now been subject to a 6 week consultation period. The draft budget proposals consider pressures such as inflation and a net revenue budget of £295 5million for 2022-2023.

This funding 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, household waste recycling, economic development, housing and support to the voluntary sector.



North Northamptonshire Council's budget sets out a detailed spending strategy for the authority for the financial year 2022-2023 as well as looking the medium-term financial plan for the next two years. The budget further develops firm financial foundations for the Council as it settles into its second year following the reorganisation of local government in Northamptonshire. Proposals focus on further transformation of services as well as developing policies around the authority's corporate plan.

While the Council is in a stable position now, it is recognised that the COVID pandemic has had a profound effect on societies and economies around the world, and this presents some uncertainty in the medium-term. However, the Council believes that by being prudent it can be in the best position possible as it moves into its second year.

It is proposed that Council Tax is increased by 2.99%, which includes the adult social care precept of 1%. There is no change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme which will continue at 25%.

Capital account

Final proposals for North Northamptonshire Council capital projects will also be discussed by the Executive, totalling £75.1m. General capital projects make up £37.6m of this amount while the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £38.1m, over a three-year period. There is also a Capital Development Pool, totalling £81.8m, for the progression and prioritisation of 24 key schemes.

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a separate ring-fenced account within the Council for the income and expenditure associated with its housing stock. The HRA does not directly impact on the Council's other spending and income. The HRA is set to have a balance of £0.0m at the end of the financial year, which is in line with the minimum balance required by the HRA.

This year's HRA proposal is for a balanced budget for the two Neighbourhood Accounts, which means there is no need to use reserves to fund spending. There is also a proposed rent increase of 4.1% for the rent financial year, which is in line with the Government guidelines for rent setting levels. Any funding received by the HRA is retained within the HRA and will be used to support housing improvements and maintenance.

Subject to Executive approval, the final budget proposals will be put before Full Council on 24 February.

Levelling Up

You may have seen that the Government launched a **Levelling Up plan** yesterday. We are carefully studying what this means for North Northamptonshire and I will return to this in a future edition of the Update.

International Waendel Walk to return from 13 to 15 May

The International Waendel Walk will be hosted by Corby Walkers Association (CWA) in partnership with Northamptonshire Ramblers on 13 - 15 May 2022, following a two-year break due to the pandemic and restrictions on gatherings.

The three-day walking event will begin with a 10km and 15km Friendship Walk on the Friday evening, starting from the Castle Theatre, before participants can enjoy a full weekend of walking. Skirts through to 42km on the Saturday and Sunday will include journeys through Rockingham and surrounding North Northants countryside.

Rockingham, which is a picturesque village/borough, is the only place in England to host the Waendel Walk, which is a unique Friendship Walk with its origins in Belgium, which in previous years has attracted people from across the country and also, reaching as far as Australia and America. The last event in 2019 saw 5,000 people take part in walks, with the event being the largest walking match (or exceed) this figure in 2022.

North Northamptonshire Council who is running the event, is encouraging as many people as possible to get involved and sign up to take part. Whether it's a family walk, a personal challenge, or to raise money for a charity close to your heart, the International Waendel Walk will have something for you. We are extremely proud to host this event. The International Waendel Walk really puts North Northants and Rockingham on the world stage. But we couldn't do it without the help of our partner organisations and volunteers who help each year to deliver a fantastic event.

The weekend begins with live music and activities on the Friday evening in the grounds of the Castle Theatre, with the 10km and 15km Friendship Walk starting at 7pm. On Saturday, the 42km route continues along the Jubilee Walk, with activities for all the family and entertainment at the Castle Theatre – the start and finish point of all walks. To find out more and register to take part, please **visit the Waendel Walk web pages** and follow the links.

How do we keep our children safe online? Your questions answered on Safer Internet Day 2022

With the likes of TikTok and Fortnite more popular than ever, keeping children protected while online is seen as increasingly important. Supporting children and young people around healthy relationships, mental health and wellbeing is the focus of Safer Internet Day 2022, with experts on hand to answer queries on how to maximise internet safeguarding.

North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust will be joining the nationwide celebration of discussing related issues and know questions. Parents, professionals and teachers are invited to ask anything about how to keep children and young people online on an Instagram Q&A session. Simon Acton, the country's online safety and wellbeing officer, will be answering queries from 4pm on Monday 7 February by sending his answers on Instagram stories.

And on Safer Internet Day itself – Tuesday 8 February – anyone who works with young people and children can take part in a dedicated webinar.

Expert speakers will be delivering presentations via Zoom on gangs, child sexual exploitation, peer on peer abuse and digital resilience.

Anyone who would like to find out more information about booking on to the event can visit **Eventbrite website**. People can also show their support for Safer Internet Day and obtain resources for schools or organisations by visiting the **UK Safer Internet Centre website**.

Supporting your community – a message from Northamptonshire Emergency Response Corps

As the country recovers from the impact of COVID-19, we want to kick-start a year, it would be easy to think that it's all over. Many people certainly take pride in the way that we all came together in a spirit of unity, we know that there is more to do to support people in our communities, as we deal with the impacts of the pandemic now and for the foreseeable future.

NCC Resources are called upon in times of need to assist with keeping their communities informed, distributing food and supplies and checking on the vulnerable. This happens to support situations such as the Kettering Bus Station CTC, a severe weather event, a disruption in energy supply or any other man-made or natural emergency.

You don't need any specialist skills to become a volunteer to any set hours to be a NERC Reservist – just a desire to help your community when the need is there. Please resolve to support your community and **sign up today to be a NERC volunteer!**

Students are on board to create gateway to the Greenway

Students from Moulton College are joining forces with North Northamptonshire Council as the Out to Work Inclusive Growth (OTWIG) project and Jobs Hub embark on a major milestone.

Funded by the Heritage Lottery, through the Nenescape Partnership, the OTWIG project provides a close link and rare ground between the Greenway and old Rushden. Using part of the old railway line as a footpath, the Greenway is a fantastic example of a welcoming gateway. Some 18 students from Moulton College are jumping on board the project to help design and create the entrance to the Greenway. Situated at the entrance to the pathway, near Dove Motors at Crown Park, Rushden, the gateway is a collaborative piece of art inspired by the Greenway users and Rushden communities.

The project team hope it will be ready for the Greenway users in September 2021 to help influence how the gateway should look. This invaluable feedback is the foundation for what the students will design and create. The students will be working with Jobs Hub, Out to Work and the Greenway to backpack, planning, research and design. Ready for the Year One and Two students, are excited to be part of a project that will celebrate the rich heritage of the town and how it has evolved into one of North Northamptonshire's most vibrant communities.

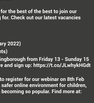
We are extremely proud of the Greenway, it is a brilliant community asset that we continue to work on and build, but we cannot do so without the help of our dedicated team of volunteers and our partners. For the latest updates on the project, make sure you are following the **OTWIG Facebook page**. The OTWIG team would like to thank the Moulton College teaching staff for embracing the project, along with Dove Motors, Rushden Town Council and Nenescape for their continued support

Commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day

North Northamptonshire Council, Wellingborough Museum and a committee of volunteers joined to hold a service of remembrance on Holocaust Day – January to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.

Guests gathered by the Anne Frank tree in Wellingborough Park to pay their respects during the service to begin a moment of reflection and to honour the survivors of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, and remember those who sadly lost their lives.

We are proud to work with local organisations to deliver a special remembrance service which provided residents and the local community with the opportunity to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz- Birkenau, the largest Nazi camp.



Thank you to all of those that attended, were part of the service and helped organise the event.

Press releases

To help you stay abreast of the key things the Council has been doing, I have included some links to the Council's press releases below (starting with the most recent).

How do we keep our children safe online? Your questions answered on Safer Internet Day 2022

International Waendel Walk to return from 13 - 15 May

Important reminder for close contacts of COVID-19 cases

Holocaust Memorial Day event to be held in Wellingborough

Students are on board to create gateway to the Greenway

Would you like to be part of the volunteer army?

Final chance to have your say on North Northamptonshire Council's planning plans for 2022-2023

Care vacancies to be promoted during social media takeover

Statement of persons nominated and notice of election agents

Continue with protective measures as Plan B rules are lifted

If you would like stay up to date with the Council's media releases, you can visit the news section of the Council's website: **www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/news**

Or follow Twitter **@NNorthants**, and/or Facebook **@NorthNorthants**

Social media: Top stories

To follow our social media accounts you can find us on **Facebook North Northamptonshire Council**, **Instagram** and on Twitter by following **@NorthNorthants**.

Top Facebook posts so far this week (31 January - 2 February 2022)

Facebook: (ranked by reach and post clicks)

- **The International Waendel Walk returns to Wellingborough from Friday 13 - Sunday 15 May and registration is now open. Find out more and sign up: https://ow.ly/ZTUS50IuAdg (Reach 24,263, Post Clicks 1,197)**
- **Planning to have work done in your home or garden? Trading Standards recommend that you use the Buy With Confidence trader approval scheme to find local traders who have been vetted and approved to ensure they operate in a legal, honest and fair way. https://ow.ly/YzdB50IuwC6 (Reach 2,883, Post Clicks 154)**
- **Looking for a change in career? We are looking for the best of the best to join our teams, and you could be the one we are looking for. Check out our latest vacancies http://ow.ly/1qBm50IuwCq (Reach 1,613, Post Clicks 276)**

Top Tweets so far this week (31 January - 2 February 2022)

Twitter: (ranked by impressions and engagements)

- **The International Waendel Walk returns to Wellingborough from Friday 13 - Sunday 15 May and registration is now open. Find out more and sign up: https://ow.ly/ZTUS50IuAdg (Impressions 754, Engagements 16)**
- **#Adultseducation tutors in Corby are still time to register for our webinar on 8th Feb where you'll hear from experts about creating a safe online environment for children, keeping children safe online and online gaming becoming so popular. Find out at https://ow.ly/ZTUS50IuAdg (Impressions 538, Engagements 9)**
- **Planning to have work done in your home or garden? Trading Standards recommend the Buy With Confidence trader approval scheme to find local traders who have been vetted and approved to ensure they operate in a legal, honest and fair way. https://ow.ly/YzdB50IuwC6 (Impressions 471, Engagements 11)**

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**

With Best Wishes,
Jason

North Northamptonshire Council

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