



Town & Parish Briefing 44

Edition 44 - Friday 27 March 2026

Latest news



[Top tips for visiting our recycling centres this Easter](#)

Residents are being reminded to book their visits to local recycling centres as demand increases ahead of the Easter school break.

Visits to the sites have surged in recent weeks, helped along by the recent spell of good weather. Many residents are already tackling their first garden tidy-ups of the year, leading to a noticeable increase in green waste.

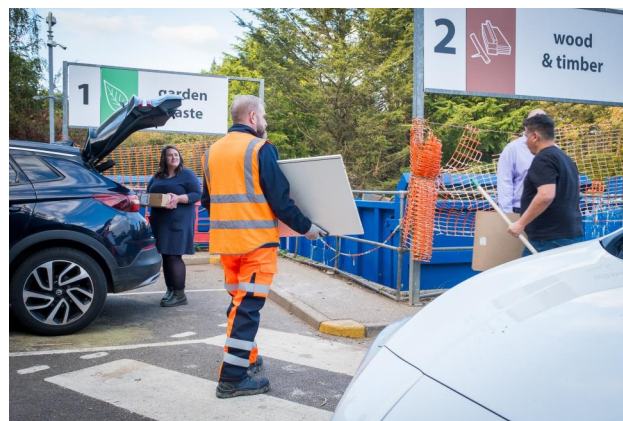
Easter consistently sees the highest demand for tip visits, driven by both the timing of the school holidays and household spring-cleaning. Demand increases not only over the Easter weekend but also on the weekends leading up to it.

Since its introduction the booking system has helped smooth the peaks in demand, and while we expect weekends to remain the busiest periods, there is normally availability to use the service during the week.

We're asking people to consider the following:

- Book early – particularly for the Easter bank holiday weekend, when demand is at its highest
- It takes only a couple of minutes to book, and plans can be changed – you can cancel or rearrange your appointment easily if your schedule or the weather changes
- Please do not arrive without a booking – during busy periods, visitors who haven't booked may be asked to return at another time
- Bring your booking confirmation with you
- Only bring what you can unload yourself, and pre-sort your items where possible

Residents can book their visit and find [further information on our website](#).



[New operator set to take on leisure centres](#)

A new operator [will take over all six West Northamptonshire leisure centres](#) at the beginning of next month.

Everyone Active, which already runs Moulton Leisure Centre, Daventry Leisure Centre and Daventry Sports Park, is due to take over the running of Mounts Baths, Danes Camp Leisure Centre and Lings Forum Leisure Centre on Wednesday, April 1 as part of a new leisure contract covering all six sites.

Activities will be temporarily paused at Mounts Baths, Danes Camp and Lings Forum on Wednesday and Thursday, April 1-2 as Everyone Active moves in new and replacement equipment and ensures the centres are clean, safe and welcoming.

However, reception areas at the three centres will be open to the local community between 10am and 4pm on both of those days, with customers encouraged to come in to ask any questions about their memberships, bookings and facilities.

Everyone Active is working hard to ensure a range of activities are on offer over the Easter weekend and is committed to getting full activity programmes up and running as soon as possible.



[Share your views on gravel pits](#)

Town and parish councils are among the groups being invited to share their views on new guidance designed to help protect one of Northamptonshire's most important wildlife habitats.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits is internationally recognised for its importance to wildlife and is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) because of the rare and migratory birds it supports.

West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council are jointly consulting on a draft Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA Guidance and Mitigation Strategy, which will replace earlier planning guidance used by both authorities.

The full [draft guidance and details of how to submit comments are available on our website](#) and can also be inspected during normal opening hours at council offices and libraries across Northamptonshire.

Responses must be submitted by 11.59pm on 21 April 2026.



[Garden waste subscriptions up for renewal](#)

Residents across West Northamptonshire can now sign up for the optional, paid-for garden waste collections that start from 1 April.

The annual subscription for the 2026/27 fortnightly service is £69 per bin, and people can sign up for garden waste collections through our [garden waste subscriptions page](#).

Payments can also be set up by yearly Direct Debit to automatically renew in future. [Answers to common questions about the service can also be found on the page](#).

Those who do not want to subscribe can take their garden waste to any of our Household Waste Recycling Centres by [booking an appointment here](#). These sites are open seven days a week, from 10am to 4pm.

Home composting is also an option. There is plenty of information available on the [Royal Horticultural Society website](#), and our dedicated [home composting webpage](#). We will be focusing on this more during Compost Awareness Week from Sunday 3 May to Saturday 9 May.



[Swift action being taken after community bus service closure](#)

Confidence is growing that a new provider can be found to cover rural areas of West Northamptonshire affected by the recent closure of a community bus company.

Having learned that Ability CIC had ceased trading and stopped its journeys, we [recently stepped in to take swift action for residents who may be affected.](#)

Since working to explore solutions to support residents affected by the company's closure, at least two other transport providers and a parish council have expressed interest in taking on the minibuses that Ability acquired through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

We're co-ordinating an Expression of Interest process on behalf of the community to secure new providers for the routes or local demand that Ability previously covered.

In addition to this we also announced a £172,000 funding pot for community transport grants across West Northamptonshire.

Parish councils, community groups, faith groups and social enterprises are encouraged to apply for the grants, with full details to be available on the Council's Community Funding Grants webpage shortly: [Community Funding Grants available | West Northamptonshire Council](#). The deadline for grant applications will be 10am on 24 April.



[Brackley town centre businesses to benefit from new grants](#)

Independent businesses in Brackley town centre are encouraged to bid for a new funding scheme to help them make improvements.

We've teamed up with Brackley Town Council to offer grants of up to £10,000 to help businesses refurbish their premises, expand their offer, or enhance the experience for their customers.

Funded through the Section 106 Brackley Town Fund, the scheme offers grants to eligible independent businesses with a shop front located within Brackley town centre and High Street and [more information can be found on our website.](#)



[By-election Hackleton and Roade Ward](#)

On Thursday 7 May voters living in West Northamptonshire Council's Hackleton and Roade electoral ward will go to the polls to elect a new councillor to represent their area.

A Notice of Election for West Northamptonshire Council's Hackleton and Roade electoral ward has been published today (Friday 27 March) and potential candidates will have until 4pm on Thursday, 9 April to submit their nomination papers.

The election was prompted by a vacancy following the resignation of former WNC councillor Adam Smith. The vacant seat is one of two West Northamptonshire council seats covering Hackleton and Roade ward, which also covers areas including Milton Malsor, Blisworth, Shutlanger, Stoke Bruerne, Ashton, Roade, Hartwell, Courteenhall, Quinton and Hackleton.

Residents living in these areas will be able to vote at the by-election.

[More information, including key deadlines for this by-election, can be found on our website](#)



[News round-up](#)

£2.2 million investment in electric buses: Passengers across West Northamptonshire are set for greener and quieter everyday journeys thanks to a further £2.2 million investment from the

Government. The funding will support the introduction of new electric buses, the first of which are [expected to hit the streets soon](#).

Interchange reopens following works: The Queen Eleanor Interchange in Northampton [has full reopened to motorists following the completion of major improvement works](#)

Major new sports hall development: Our Council has approved £700,000 in Section 106 funding to support the [new Sunley Centre indoor sports hall](#) in Northampton, expanding local sports capacity and opportunities for young people.

Community working together to make improvements: Local businesses and residents have [joined forces to refresh and revitalise Park Square in Kings Heath](#) Park Square in Kings Heath, marking the first phase of a wider project of improvements.

Executive Director announces retirement: Our Council's interim Deputy Chief Executive and Place Executive Director Stuart Timmiss has [announced he will be retiring in the autumn](#).

Meningitis update: We are reassuring residents there [are currently no cases of Meningitis B identified in Northamptonshire](#), and the overall risk to the local population remains low. Our Public Health team is closely monitoring the national picture following the recent outbreak in Kent and is working with partners to ensure communities have clear, accurate information.

Blue plaques unveiled: West Northamptonshire's rich history and heritage are being celebrated with the [unveiling of eight new Blue Plaques recognising people who made a lasting contribution](#) to the area's culture, community and innovation.

£7.6 million jobs and skills boost: A £7.6 million investment package will [support jobs and skills](#) in West Northamptonshire, including £6.1m for the Connect to Work programme and £1.5m for Skills Bootcamps starting in April 2026.

New home adaptations policy: A modernised [Housing Adaptations Policy](#) has been introduced to provide fairer, faster and more affordable home adaptations, including new grants for Armed Forces personnel and measures to reduce financial barriers.

Energy-saving home improvements grant: Eligible households across West Northamptonshire can now access the £2.6m [Warm Homes: Local Grant](#) to fund energy-saving home upgrades and reduce energy costs.

Food waste service extension: We are extending our long-running food waste recycling service [to residents living in flats](#) ahead of the Government's 2026 Simpler Recycling reforms.





Find out more

- Read all of our news releases at [westnorthants.gov.uk/news](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/news)
- [Sign-up to our newsletters here](#)

Town and Parish Council updates



Report It function improved

Customer feedback has been used to [improve the 'Report it' function on our website](#), making it quicker, clearer and easier for residents to report issues.

The wide range of improvements include friendlier and more concise text, a tool to autocomplete addresses, changing the map search to Google, enabling more than once photo to be added, and displaying existing open cases on a map to discourage duplicate reports.

The reporting function has also been widened to allow people to tell us about rats and mice in public places, pollution, and inform us where to collect sacks following community litter picking activities.

These changes and functions will be transferred into the WNC App in the next few weeks. Thank you to everyone who took the time to test the updated forms and provide thoughtful feedback.



Chance to discuss planning matters

Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks are invited to book dedicated sessions with Stephanie Gibrat, Assistant Director for Planning to discuss current planning matters, upcoming proposals, or any issues where guidance would be helpful.

These sessions are designed to provide the opportunity to ask any questions on the planning process and allow two-way conversation relating to planning matters.

They will take place on:

- Thursday 23 April 2pm to 4pm
- Wednesday 20 May 10am to midday
- Monday 22 June 2pm to 4pm

If you would like to raise a specific topic or explore planning considerations for your area, please book a slot at one of the times offered by contacting Leanne.Howells@westnorthants.gov.uk

Please note spaces are limited and are allocated on a first come basis.



Spotlight on...



Cabinet Member Councillor Michael Stratton

As the Lead Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education at West Northamptonshire Council, I am committed to ensuring that every child and young person receives the support they need to thrive.

My priorities include close joint working with Northampton Children's Trust to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people.

I chair the Corporate Parenting Board, which champions the needs of care-experienced young people, including looked after children and care leavers.

I am also focused on The Children's Wellbeing and Schools which has a focus on strengthening safeguarding in children's social care and also raising school standards.

We are also preparing for our forthcoming Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) by Ofsted and our SEND Local area monitoring inspection which will be undertaken by the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted.

Alongside my Cabinet responsibilities, I remain active in my role as a ward councillor for the Upton area of Northampton, working closely with local Parish Councils and supporting residents with a wide range of issues.

These include addressing fly tipping, improving pedestrian safety, managing match day parking challenges, and responding to concerns about unsafe driving around schools. There is always plenty to do, and I welcome each challenge as an opportunity to make a positive difference in our community.



Crisis and Resilience Fund - what parish councils need to know

From April 2026, the national Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments will end and be replaced by a new Crisis & Resilience Fund (CRF).

This marks a significant shift, moving from short-term emergency response to a stronger focus on long-term resilience building.

For West Northamptonshire, the preliminary allocation is approximately £4.65 million per year until March 2029.

What is the CRF designed to do?

The CRF will be the only dedicated funding stream for local crisis and resilience support over the next three years.

Its purpose is not just to respond to hardship, but to help prevent repeat crisis and reduce longer-term poverty-related health inequalities.

The Four Mandatory Strands

The Fund must deliver across four key areas:

1. Crisis Payments

- Cash-first approach (not cash-only)
- Designed for immediate hardship
- Target of support within 48 hours where possible

2. Housing Payments

- Replaces Discretionary Housing Payments
- Focus on preventing homelessness and housing instability

3. Resilience Services

- Tackling root causes of hardship
- Debt advice
- Income maximisation
- Employment and skills support

4. Community Co-ordination

- Strengthening local networks
- Improving referral pathways
- Ensuring residents access the right support at the right time

Why this matters for health and wellbeing

Financial hardship is a key driver of health inequalities and impacts, affecting mental wellbeing, housing stability, access to healthy food, education and long-term employment prospects.

The CRF builds on West Northamptonshire's Anti-Poverty Strategy and aims to embed anti-poverty principles across all service areas, recognising poverty as a cross-cutting determinant of health.

Food poverty

Food poverty is often the most visible sign of hardship. However, national evidence highlights that increasing foodbank provision alone does not address underlying drivers.

The CRF encourages a broader, preventative approach — addressing income gaps, housing costs, debt and employment insecurity.

The role of parish and town councils

Parish Councils can play an important part by:

- Promoting awareness of available support
- Identifying emerging local need
- Strengthening community connections
- Supporting preventative initiatives (e.g. warm spaces, outreach sessions, community food growing)
- Linking local insight into wider system planning



Events and activities



[Awards celebrate our inspirational women](#)

The incredible achievements of West Northamptonshire's inspirational women were celebrated at an event to mark International Women's Day.

This year's winners were Diane Johnson, who received our Community Award for her work supporting people with autism, and Lisa Jayne Read, who picked up the Business Award as the founder of HCC Solutions, a home care and cleaning business supporting elderly and vulnerable residents across Northampton.

Four outstanding women also received our Special Recognition Award: Jose North; Julia Harris; Ann Brebner; and Mandy Langden.

A huge congratulations as well to the 120 women who were nominated for an award, all of whom are doing inspiring work to support and uplift our community.



Discover more events

- [Visit the events page on our website](#)

Have your say



Details of some of our current consultations are listed below, but don't forget [you can visit our Consultation pages](#) throughout the month to discover and take part in all of the consultations and engagement activities run by the Council

[Current consultations](#)

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA

West and North Northants Councils are jointly consulting on the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area (SPA) Guidance and Mitigation Strategy.

- [The consultation closes on Tuesday 21 April](#)

Town and Parish Council Help Centre - meet the team



Our Connected Communities Coordinator Alan Burns and Community Cohesion Officer Sophie Ellidge have a remit to maintain and enhance good working relationships between our Council and Town and Parish colleagues.

They've been in the role for a little while now, and will hopefully be known to many of you, but we thought it would be nice to introduce them to you more formally!

Alan - Connected Communities Coordinator

I have been asked to do a little introduction to myself, which feels a little odd after having been the liaison point for local councils for several years. But circumstances have changed since I began this role: we now have Sophie also working as part of our liaison team, and our new administration has articulated a strong desire to improve the relationship between WNC and the parish councils in our area.

I have over 20 years' experience working in partnership roles in the public sector in Northamptonshire, either for the county council, a district council, now a unitary authority and also Northamptonshire Police. Those roles all had a focus on making sure different organisations could work better together, and a focus on working with people from assorted backgrounds and perspectives, something I enjoy.

I see my role as working for the relationship between the two layers of local government, to make sure that improves, whatever changes need to be made. Hopefully, over the time I have been doing this you will have seen some improvements, but there are always improvements to be made.

Sophie - Community Cohesion Officer

I joined the Council in September 2024, bringing with me several years of experience in health and community-focused roles.

Before joining WNC, I had previously only worked in the NHS including roles with NHFT as a lived experience and co-production worker before moving into GP surgeries as a Social Prescriber, supporting individuals to access community-based services and improve their wellbeing.

Over the last 18 months I have been working closely under Alan supporting with town and parish council's liaison. I am fortunate to have had the chance to meet some of you at some of our visits or in our Larger Parish Councils Forum. You may have seen me at the Parish Conference – Parishes in Partnership back in October, which I supported the organisation of, or have seen my name pop up in email correspondence. I'm keen to build strong relationships, support effective communication, and help ensure that local insights and priorities are shared and reflected at a wider level.

I'm particularly passionate about supporting wellbeing, amplifying community voices, and making it easier for people and organisations to connect and work together. Whether it's linking you into services, sharing information, or helping to address local challenges, I'm here to support you and I hope to meet many more of you in the months to come.

Help and support for your council

Find out more on the [Town and Parish Council help centre on our website](#), or email alan.burns@westnorthants.gov.uk or sophie.ellidge@westnorthants.gov.uk for more information.

Clerks are also encouraged to [use the self-service options on our website](#) to ask questions and access Council services.



1 - Alan and Sophie