

## Summer Report

### Rural South Ward Annual Report Summer Report West Northamptonshire Council

**Cllr Alison Eastwood Cllr Charles Manners Cllr David Smith**

#### **Leadership Appointments**

Following a rigorous recruitment process this summer, **Martin Henry** has been selected to replace **Anna Earnshaw** as Chief Executive of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). Martin joined WNC in 2021 as Executive Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer. He has played an integral role in shaping the young unitary authority, driving forward service improvements, efficiencies, and navigating significant financial challenges.

With over 30 years of experience in local government across Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, and Bedfordshire, Martin brings deep knowledge and stability to the organisation. His appointment will be formally confirmed on **13 August**.

We also welcome **David Harris**, who joins WNC from Birmingham, where he served as Director of Property and Regeneration. David will take up the role of **Executive Director for Place, Economy and Environment**. A chartered surveyor and registered valuer, he brings senior leadership experience from Stoke-on-Trent, Sandwell, and Solihull. David will relocate to Northamptonshire with his family and three children. His appointment will also be confirmed on 13 August

#### **Full Council – 16 July**

Full Council met on 16 July in an exceptionally hot and airless chamber, the Edwardian hall offering little relief with its non-opening windows and vaulted ceiling

Democracy depends on **transparency, accountability, integrity, and respectful debate**. These principles matter far more than party politics.

However, several procedural changes were approved:

- **Questions to Cabinet portfolio holders** will no longer take place in Full Council under the Chairman's oversight. Instead, they will be held at Cabinet meetings chaired by the Leader, and only at his discretion.

- **Planning call-ins** will no longer be available. Decisions will rest solely with the appointed officer. Opposition groups expressed concern about the loss of planning scrutiny and proposed amendments to ensure applications are more acceptable and appropriate.
- **Council support for Northampton Pride** has been withdrawn.

These three items were passed without debate, approved through a whipped majority vote.

The discussion on **pavement parking** was withdrawn and is expected to return at a later date. Following consultation, **Reform** confirmed that parking fees in Brackley, Towcester, and Daventry will remain unchanged from last year. Northampton's parking arrangements remain under review.

The administration was quick to praise investments secured by the previous Conservative leadership in Northampton, yet continues to avoid responsibility for a potential **£7 million budget overspend**.

### **Ongoing Work and Local Issues**

We continue to work closely with:

- **Sam Simons** on pothole repairs
- The **HS2 team** regarding the high-speed rail project - **Chris James, David Butcher, and Haidee Williams**
- **Fiona Unett** and her team are in charge of Waste and bin clearance

We monitor Adult and Children's Social Care matters closely

These issues remain part of our daily workload.

**Fiona Baker** and her team have been commended by Ofsted for improvements in the school education programme.

### **Local Plan**

The Local Plan at Regulation 18 stage is now being finalised and the Regulation 19 Plan will be published in September and will then go out to consultation before going to Full Council for approval later this year. This plan will shape housebuilding and industrial development for the next 15 years.

Worryingly we only have 4.3 years land supply, below the Government target of 5 years which will mean we are vulnerable to speculative housing developments.

### **Water Outage – 26–28 May**

Following the water outage 26–28 May, our MP **Sarah Bool** has called a meeting to discuss the ongoing issues. This will take place at **Greatworth Primary School at 6:00pm in August 6th.**

Treatment within our local area—particularly across the eight villages of the Rural South ward—has been unacceptable for years, and residents deserve far better.

Charles Manners, David Smith and Alison Eastwood

**Cllr Alison Eastwood Cllr Charles Manners Cllr David Smith**

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