

Town & Parish Briefing

Edition 37 - Friday 22 August 2025

Latest news



World Cup excitement at fever pitch










Ireland
Women's Rugby World Cup
Team Welcome Ceremony
Northampton
16th August 2025
WOMEN'S
ENG25







With West Northamptonshire ready to host six matches for the Women's Rugby World Cup – we're promoting all the ways people can get involved in the excitement.

RugbyFest

Ahead of England's opening match against USA tonight, people are invited to get in the mood at today's RugbyFest event - a free family-friendly festival in Abington Park in Northampton from 2pm to 7pm.

Hosted by Northampton Saints, Loughborough Lightning and our Council, it will feature a range of fun activities to take part in.

Take in a match

Six World Cup matches are being played at Franklin's Gardens, on the following days:

- Sunday 24 August: Ireland v Japan (midday) and South Africa v Brazil (2:45pm)
- Saturday 30 August: England v Samoa (5pm)
- Sunday 31 August: Ireland v Spain (midday)
- Sunday 7 September: Italy v Brazil (2pm) and France v South Africa (4:45pm).

Some tickets are still available on the official Women's Rugby World Cup ticketing site

Official Fan Zone

Celebrate in Northampton Market Square with themed Fan Zone events taking place on each of the four match days listed above. Each event will offer free family-friendly activities, food stalls, entertainment, live match screenings, festival vibes, and more!

Those heading to a match afterwards might want to take advantage of the special matchday shuttlebus. Hop on at Mercer's Row near the Market Square for the short journey to Franklin's Gardens, at a cost of £2 per person, or £6 for a group of up to five people.

Find out more on our Rugby World Cup events and activities page

Find out more

Information about matches, travel, events and activities, local rugby clubs and more can be found on the Women's Rugby World Cup pages of our website

Chief exec announces plans to leave



Our Chief Executive Anna Earnshaw has announced she will be leaving the authority later this year.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Mark Arnull, paid tribute to Anna, describing her, as a "one of a kind" in local government who has achieved so much for public services and communities.

Anna, whose career in local government spans 37 years across a broad range of services in both the public and private sector roles, is intending to pursue new opportunities within the sector and spend more time with her family, having successfully established and led us through our formative years as the country's fifth largest unitary council.

Anna was appointed as WNC's first chief executive in 2021 amid major local government reorganisation (LGR) in Northamptonshire, playing an integral role in bringing together the services of the county's eight previous local authorities into the successful creation of the two new unitary councils alongside the countywide Covid-19 response.

Her time in the role has seen the council deliver over £115 million of savings alongside many service improvements, with a recent independent peer review highlighting the 'strong positive start' of the young unitary authority with 'much achieved at pace', its positive culture and 'tangible upbeat energy'.

Council to take action following Epping Forest ruling



Action is under way at WNC to take similar legal and planning steps to Epping Forest District Council over asylum hotels in our area.

The Council is actively reviewing the evidence and information we hold as part of preparing a robust case against the use of the three hotels in West Northamptonshire that are being used by the Home Office for asylum accommodation. It is important wwe have strong evidence similar to that presented in the Epping Forest case to ensure the chances of success in future legal action, and given the significant future cost of this to local taxpayers.

We have started collating the evidence we need to prepare a robust case against the use of the hotels for asylum accommodation. As part of this we are looking at the feedback received about the issues relating to the hotels from town and parish councils, residents, WNC members, partners and other community representatives.

Councillor Mark Arnull, Leader of WNC said: "We have started collating the evidence we need to prepare a robust case against the use of these hotels for asylum accommodation. We know residents are concerned by the use of these hotels as asylum accommodation and we will do everything we can within our powers to keep our communities safe.

"The Epping Forest case opens a new legal pathway for us to explore. But it would be irresponsible of us to start a legal action, such as seeking an injunction, without knowing we have the evidence we need for a successful outcome to the case. This type of action is costly and we must be absolutely clear on the consequences for our taxpayers on any potential decision we make."

Why not give the bus a try?



A new campaign is encouraging people to 'Give it a Try' when it comes to bus travel.

Fund by the UK Government and delivered with partners including Stagecoach, Arriva and Go Travel Solutions, the campaign offers new days out by bus ideas, interactive journey planners, group travel offers and more to encourage bus use across West Northamptonshire.

Passengers are also urged to look out for mystery prizes which can be found on the seats of some buses, including tickets to watch the Northampton Saints, days out and more.

New bus services and extra journeys have also been introduced across West Northamptonshire as part of ongoing improvement plans.

They include a new Sunday service from Northampton to West Hunsbury, and improved services between the town and Brixworth, Welford, Market Harborough and Rugby.

The improvements have been made under our partnership with Stagecoach Midlands and the Department for Transport.

New home for customer services



Our Northampton One Stop Shop for customer services is set to move from the Guildhall to our offices at One Angel Square from the end of September.

The new services will be accessed from our St John's Street entrance (pictured), in a move which will bring together a wide range of council services and local support partners all under one roof, making it quicker and easier for residents to get the help they need.

Alongside Council services, the new One Stop Shop will provide access, advice and signposting to a range of key local partners including Citizens Advice, Community Law Service, DWP (Jobcentre Plus), Migrant Help, NDAS, and Northampton Town FC Community Trust.

Together, they'll provide help on a range of subjects, such as benefits support, legal support, domestic abuse help, health checks, EU Settlement Scheme support and employability skills,

Sandy Lane relief road opens



A much-anticipated relief road to ease congestion and improve connectivity across Northampton has opened to motorists.

The southern section of the Sandy Lane Relief Road opened on 12 August, following the conclusion of essential technical works, quality and safety inspections during June and July to ensure it was ready for vehicles.

Built by our Highways partner Kier, the road aims to provide relief to local communities to the north and west of Northampton, including Duston and Harpole.

Welcoming spaces grants on offer



Grants of up to £1,500 are available to charities, community and voluntary organisations to help them set up new Welcoming Spaces across West Northants.

As many Town and Parish Councils will be aware, the spaces aim to offer safe, warm, and welcoming environments where residents can come together for some refreshments and a bit of company, while providing access to wider support services.

Grants of £500 to £1,500 are available to community and voluntary organisations, registered charities, and other qualifying bodies, with funding intended to provide support until the end of March 2026.

The closing date for all applications is 10 am on Monday 6 October 2025.

- Apply for a Welcoming Spaces grant

Million Hours Fund to support youth work



We're encouraging youth organisations to apply for money from a new national funding pot.

The Million Hours Fund is designed to support additional hours of youth work in areas with higher rates of anti-social behaviour, helping to improve the range of opportunities available to young people, offering them more places to go and positive things to do.

Grants of between £30,000 and £100,000 are available to eligible organisations operating or supporting designated areas across West Northamptonshire and applications can be submitted before midday on Wednesday 22 October.

Crackdown on unsafe cosmetics





More than three quarters of the cosmetic products tested by Trading Standards officers during a recent operation were found to be non-compliant with UK safety regulations.

The East Midlands-wide initiative saw 198 cosmetic products from a range of retailers tested by officers from across the region. 78% were found to be non-compliant, with issues ranging from incorrect labelling, to the use of restricted or banned ingredients.

In West Northamptonshire our Trading Standards officers sampled three UV gel nail polishes and one tooth whitening product, with two of the nail gel polishes failing on labelling. The businesses selling these products were provided with advice to ensure compliance in the future.

Rogue car dealer faces justice



A rogue car dealer who used fake identities and forged documents to deceive customers has been brought to justice.

Ionut Olaru, formerly of Daventry but now living in Milton Keynes, was sentenced to 12 months in prison, suspended for two years, and ordered to pay a total of £18,000 in victim compensation and costs.

The prosecution followed an investigation by West Northamptonshire Council's Trading Standards, after three complaints from people who had bought vehicles from him on Auto Trader.

VR tech boosting children's confidence



Pupils with special educational needs are gaining confidence and independence through a pioneering immersive technology travel training project.

Virtual reality headsets allow pupils from Billing Brook School to practice taking bus journeys from the safety of their classroom, taking them through each step in order to build their confidence for doing it in the real world.

The training blends these virtual sessions with real-world experiences, including supported journeys to Café Track, a social enterprise that helps provide autistic people with employment skills and opportunities.

We've been working with Billing Brook School, Café Track, Stagecoach, and BT's Immersive Hub on the pilot project, which has seen 90 students successfully complete their Independent Travel Training.

A total of 19 of these students are currently applying their training by using the dedicated closed bus service introduced through the pilot, all 90 have demonstrated measurable progress. Many have moved away from relying solely on door-to-door transport and are now better equipped to explore more independent travel arrangements.

Early feedback from parents has been overwhelmingly positive, with many noting a newfound sense of independence and confidence in their children as a direct result of the scheme. The pilot will be reviewed over the summer to assess lessons learned and explore opportunities to expand the programme in the next academic term.

Events and activities



Day of Action to tackle issues




NEIGHBOURHOOD
WARDEN


WOMBLES
WOMBLES


Fibre broadband is here!





Partners, community groups and residents joined forces for a community-led Day of Action in The Mounts area of Northampton, working together to tackle environmental issues and anti-social behaviour and promote pride in the area.

Organised by our Council in collaboration with a range of partners including Northamptonshire Police, the county's Fire and Rescue Service, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Office, our waster contractor for Northampton Veolia, and our highways partner Kier.

Throughout the day, partners engaged with residents and volunteers such as the Northants Litter Wombles to clear litter, fly-tipping and graffiti, as well as help promote the ways in which communities can support us to keep areas clean and tidy, such as making full use of our waste and recycling collection services, and reporting any issues via our app or website.

Also supported by housing providers, local charities and volunteer groups, the event was the first in a series of activities held as part of a new 'Thriving Communities' initiative to help neighbourhoods feel cleaner and safer.

Healthy accolade for primary school



Kingsthorpe Grove Primary School has proudly become the first school in West Northamptonshire to receive the prestigious Food for Life Bronze Award.

This national recognition celebrates schools championing healthier food culture, education, and lunchtime experiences, with the school recognised as part of its work under our Healthy Schools initiative.

Well done to all of the children and staff involved.

Have your say



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

Cycling and walking infrastructure plan

Residents, businesses, and stakeholders are being encouraged to share their views on the draft Northampton Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

This long-term strategy aims to improve walking, wheeling, cycling, and scooting across the town, outlining how we will make active travel safer and more accessible over the next decade and beyond. The deadline for comments is 5 October

Shape our housing delivery model

We're inviting people to take part in a public consultation to help shape the future delivery model for housing services in West Northamptonshire. Tenants and leaseholders have also been invited to take part in a tenant consultation during the same period.

The consultations will run through to midnight on Sunday 7 September and offer people the opportunity to share their views on how housing services are provided in West Northants.

Town and Parish Council Help Centre



Town and Parish Councils have a dedicated officer at our Council who they can contact for help and support with all things WNC.

Our Connected Communities Coordinator Alan Burns has a remit to maintain and enhance good working relationships between West Northamptonshire Council and our Town and Parish colleagues.

Find out more on the Town and Parish Council help centre on our website, or email alan.burns@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.

Our news releases



We have issued the following press releases over the last month:

- New Microsoft licensing agreement saves taxpayers almost £1m | West Northamptonshire Council - 22 July
- Grant scheme applications now open for community organisations to provide crisis support for residents | West Northamptonshire Council - 23 July
- Local bus service improvements coming across West Northants | West Northamptonshire Council - 23 July
- Rogue car dealer prosecuted following a series of offences | West Northamptonshire Council - 23 July
- Meet the team behind the demolition of BHS and M&S Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 23 July
- Free activities for children and teenagers this summer | West Northamptonshire Council - 23 July

- Summer arts & crafts fair comes to Northampton Museum & Art Gallery | West Northamptonshire Council - 24 July
- Views sought on future plans for Houses in Multiple Occupation in Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 24 July
- Councillors inspired by visit to WEST Youth Zone | West Northamptonshire Council - 25 July
- President of Moldova visits Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 25 July
- Innovative pilot transforms home-to-school transport for students with special educational needs | West Northamptonshire Council - 29 July
- Grant scheme applications now open for community organisations to provide Welcoming Spaces for residents | West Northamptonshire Council - 29 July
- Upcoming closures for Queen Eleanor Interchange improvement works | West Northamptonshire Council - 29 July
- Town comes together to mark 350-year anniversary of the Great Fire of Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 29 July
- Revenue and Benefits System upgrade taking place this weekend | West Northamptonshire Council - 31 July
- Northampton Market Square to host official Women's Rugby World Cup Fan Zone this summer | West Northamptonshire Council - 1 Aug
- Kingsthorpe Grove primary becomes first school in West Northants to earn Food for Life Bronze Award | West Northamptonshire Council - 1 Aug
- Demolition progresses at St James Bus Depot as regeneration plans advance | West Northamptonshire Council - 5 Aug
- Final stage of Sandy Lane Relief Road set to open | West Northamptonshire Council - 6 Aug
- Local youth groups encouraged to apply for new funding to support young people in West Northamptonshire | West Northamptonshire Council - 6 Aug
- New IT suite opens at Russell House to empower care leavers in West Northamptonshire | West Northamptonshire Council - 7 Aug
- Statement from Council Leader, Cllr Mark Arnull | West Northamptonshire Council - 7 Aug

- Rugby fever to sweep West Northants with free family festival in Abington Park | West Northamptonshire Council - 8 Aug
- More time to have your say on the future vision for Northampton Town Centre | West Northamptonshire Council - 8 Aug
- Views sought on a plan to improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes in Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 11 Aug
- Sandy Lane Relief Road opens to motorists | West Northamptonshire Council - 12 Aug
- Trading Standards joins forces with East Midlands colleagues to crackdown on unsafe cosmetic products | West Northamptonshire Council - 12 Aug
- West Northamptonshire to commemorate 80th Anniversary of VJ Day | West Northamptonshire Council - 12 Aug
- Local venues invited to free 'Ask for Angela' training | West Northamptonshire Council - 13 Aug
- West Northamptonshire to mark Ukrainian Independence Day | West Northamptonshire Council - 13 Aug
- A congratulations messages to students who have received their A-Level results today! | West Northamptonshire Council - 14 Aug
- West Northamptonshire Council Chief Executive announces plans to leave authority later this year | West Northamptonshire Council - 14 Aug
- Help us shape the future of our Northampton Town Centre | West Northamptonshire Council - 14 Aug
- Community comes together for Day of Action in The Mounts, Northampton | West Northamptonshire Council - 15 Aug
- West Northamptonshire welcomes international teams ahead of Rugby World Cup | West Northamptonshire Council - 18 Aug
- Council working to support residents affected by NAASH situation | West Northamptonshire Council - 19 Aug
- A new home for local support: Council's One Stop Shop is moving to One Angel Square this September | West Northamptonshire Council - 19 Aug
- Statement regarding Epping asylum hotel High Court ruling | West Northamptonshire Council - 20 Aug

- Sustainability refocus set to progress after scrutiny meeting | West Northamptonshire Council - 20 Aug