

Leader's Update

29 November 2024

Issue: 88

Introduction and welcome

Welcome to my latest Update.

This issue includes:

- Flooding in Northamptonshire - Multi-agency response continues at pace.
- External review highlights significant progress at North Northamptonshire Council.
- More than 20 million spend on children's homes and offices approved by North Northamptonshire's Executive Members.
- Rural Business Grant Scheme: Apply for up to £50,000 by Monday 16 December.
- First of its kind housing development officially opened.
- Free parking for Christmas shoppers.
- Follow your heart to your high street this Small Business Saturday.
- Give the gift of local this Christmas.
- Join the Festive Gift Hunt.
- Corby - 5 stops to love local.
- Study shows North Northamptonshire Council leisure facilities provide significant social value.
- A year of increasing activity and improving resident health.
- Winners of North Northamptonshire Active Communities Awards 2024 announced.
- Holiday Activities and Food Programme Northants wins 'Community Project of the Year'.
- Chester House Estate and Irchester Field School win top awards.
- Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner launches consultation on public safety plan and precept funding.

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!

Flooding in Northamptonshire - Multi-agency response continues at pace

A [major incident](#) was declared on Monday 25 November following significant rainfall throughout the weekend as a result of Storm Bert.

Northamptonshire's Local Resilience Forum (LRF) - involving Northamptonshire Police, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and the Environment Agency - continue to work together to support those who have been displaced as a result of the flooding as well as working to keep our communities across the county safe.

People are still being asked to follow safety advice including checking travel information before setting off, driving appropriately for the road conditions, and being prepared to meet standing water, with motorists warned against entering it or trying to drive through it.

Do not attempt to drive through road closures or wade through deep flood water. This not only puts your safety at risk but could also put the people rescuing you at risk, as well as resulting in some very costly repairs to your vehicle.

Our communities are asked to remain alert, be prepared and sign up to receive free flood warnings by calling 0345 988 1188 or visiting the government's [Flooding](#) web pages.

External review highlights significant progress at North Northamptonshire Council

A comprehensive external review of the performance of North Northamptonshire Council has highlighted the significant progress that has been made by the authority since it came into being more than three years ago.

The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) noted that “so much has been achieved by North Northamptonshire Council since vesting day and this needs to be celebrated.”

The report, which was published on Wednesday 27 November, will be discussed at the authority's Full Council meeting next week. It praised the workforce and remarked that “North Northamptonshire Council is blessed with amazing staff who are extremely committed to each other, the place and the Council.”

Partnership working, particularly through the BIG50 initiative was also commended, stating: “North Northamptonshire Council is considered by partners to be open minded and positive about transformation opportunities, and the workforce is hungry to be a part of this.”

Strategic direction through the Corporate Plan was praised and it was acknowledged that the authority had strong leadership in place.

The peer challenge involved a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending four days at North Northamptonshire Council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

During the review the team gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading and spoke to more than 115 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.

The LGA encourages all councils to have a peer challenge every five years and to publish their reports online.

The report also published seven recommendations for continued development including further work to strengthen the council's prioritisation and planning and further enhance financial planning and ownership.

Recommendations also included implementing measures to embed a council-wide culture of being outward looking, while sharpening the council's focus on workforce and organisational development.

Work has already begun to produce an action plan to address the recommendations and the Corporate Peer Challenge Team will revisit the council to discuss progress in Summer 2025.

More than £20 million spend on children's homes and offices approved by North Northamptonshire's Executive Members

Funding to improve services to children and families in North Northamptonshire at a cost of £20,373,780 was given the go ahead at the council's Executive Meeting on Thursday 14 November.

The funding, through the council's capital programme, will mean more council provided children's homes and care leaver accommodation and will also increase housing opportunities for care leavers in their own tenancies, enabling them to move out of more costly provision.

£5,242,361 million will be allocated to spending on Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) office accommodation. This will include leasing offices in Sheep Street, Wellingborough, for a local NCT hub, fitting out the William Knibb Centre in Kettering to relocate staff there from other sites and redeveloping the Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service offices in London Road, Kettering.

The remaining £15,131,419 million will go towards a programme of children's homes, supported accommodation and general units.

The exact programme and individual sites will be subject to the approval of robust business cases, but high-level modelling has been undertaken with NCT and the following programme is being recommended:

- Children's homes: Buy and refurbish four new children's homes across North Northamptonshire.
- Supported accommodation: Buy and refurbish five 5-bed supported accommodation properties for 16+ and 18+ care leavers across North Northamptonshire.
- General housing units for care leavers: Buy and refurbish 16 general housing units to provide tenancies for 16+ and 18+ care leavers across North Northamptonshire.

The scheme could create an estimated £2.25m in savings each year. The next steps will be to acquire/build properties, procure and deliver the works in the programmes for office accommodation and care and support settings.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust will submit individual business cases for each care and support project.

Rural Business Grant Scheme: Apply for up to £50,000 by Monday 16 December

Using monies received from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, we have re-launched the [Rural Business Grant Scheme](#).

Capital grants up to £50,000 are available to help rural businesses become more resilient and support growth.

These grants can be used to help businesses invest in equipment or build extensions and alterations.

The fifth and final round of applications will be open until Monday 16 December.

A particular target is rural diversification, including business diversification and projects which support the visitor economy.

Applications can be made for projects that can start quickly and be delivered with all spend claimed by Friday 28 February 2025.

Examples of projects supported in earlier rounds include:

- New Lodge Farm in Bulwick who extended their café and farm shop.
- Austin Davis Biologics who have been able to move into a larger, refurbished facility in Islip.
- Measures Farm in Hemington who developed a new dog field.
- We Don't Do Ordinary who invested in tourist accommodation at Wallis Mill in Brigstock.

To request an application form to apply for a grant, please email ukspf@northnorthants.gov.uk with your business name and address.

These grants are funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

First of its kind housing development officially opened

Council representatives joined members of the Armed Forces community, ward members, Deputy Lieutenant Air Vice Marshal Andrew White CB and representatives of the Armed Covenant Board to officially open a new housing development in Corby last week.

As a council we have a strong commitment to the Armed Forces community.

Cheltenham Road comprises 18 purpose-built properties to house eligible ex-Armed Forces personnel.

The development is the first of its kind in the area and has been designed to seamlessly integrate with the existing community. There is a range of properties: eight 2-bed houses, two 3-bed houses, four 1-bed flats, two 1-bed bungalows and two 2-bed bungalows.

It was an honour to officially open the Cheltenham Road site and meet the residents who now call the development home and hear their stories.

This site has been designated to help with the housing needs of people from the Armed Forces community in perpetuity. To ensure this, we have a Local Lettings Plan that will give priority to this community. Only where there is no identified need, will the properties be offered to the general housing register that is managed through the Keyways Housing Allocations Scheme.

Thank you to all the officers and partners who have helped make Cheltenham Road a reality.

Free parking for Christmas shoppers

North Northamptonshire Council will once again provide free parking in council-owned pay and display car parks this festive season.

As part of the Christmas festivities, and to support local businesses, we will be offering free parking in Kettering and Corby town centres on the following Saturdays:

- 7 December
- 14 December
- 21 December.

Our Kettering and Corby pay and display car parks are also free of charge on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Parking charges still apply in the Corby Train Station car park throughout December (even on Bank Holidays).

Parking arrangements remain in place in all other car parks across North Northamptonshire.

For more details about changes to council services over the festive period, please visit our [Christmas](#) web pages.

Follow your heart to your high street this Small Business Saturday

Launched in the UK in 2012, this year marks the 12-year anniversary of the [Small Business Saturday](#) campaign where thousands of wonderful independent businesses across the country are celebrated.

This year, Small Business Saturday takes place on 7 December and as part of our festive Hi Street campaign, there is a lot to celebrate.

The aim is to raise awareness of how incredible small businesses are, and to encourage people to shop and support local, on the day itself and beyond. Local businesses are built with love and care and are run by passionate, talented, and dedicated people, and we are showcasing this with a social media campaign in the lead up to, and on the day.

Look out for our special Small Business Saturday giveaway too.

Follow our campaign on our [Hi Street Facebook](#) and [Hi Street Instagram](#) pages. Please share the messages with your followers to help raise awareness of the huge range of amazing small businesses that North Northamptonshire is home to, and to encourage local support for them.

Give the gift of local this Christmas

This festive season, the [Hi Street](#) campaign is packed with activities designed to celebrate our local businesses, and to encourage us all to 'stroll not scroll' to experience the magic of the high street at Christmas time.

We are highlighting the joy that comes from shopping with local businesses, rather than relying on online shopping, and we are excited to unveil our new Christmas advert which has been created in partnership with small businesses.

Follow Yasmina as she swaps endless online searches for a festive adventure on the High Street, where she finds the perfect gift - no waiting at home for delivery required! Along the way, she experiences the warmth, community spirit, and unique offerings of local shops with some surprises along her way.

Click on the image on your right to play the video.

Filmed in collaboration with fantastic small businesses across North Northamptonshire, our [advert](#) features:

- Chester House Estate, Wellingborough.
- Jollys Toys, Thrapston.
- The Songbirds Choir, Kettering.
- Bosworths Garden Centre, Burton Latimer.
- Beans Coffee Stop, Oundle.
- Eden Wild at Chester House Estate.
- Oundle Bookshop, Oundle.
- Forget-me-Not, Thrapston.

With a magical soundtrack of Carol of the Bells performed by Kettering choir The Songbirds, our advert is a heartfelt reminder to give the gift of local this Christmas.

Watch, share, and join us in supporting the amazing high streets in North Northamptonshire this festive season.

Join the Festive Gift Hunt

Our Hi Street [Festive Gift Hunt](#) is underway. This family-friendly activity is running across towns in North Northamptonshire until Christmas Eve. In partnership with small businesses, the hunt invites people to search for hidden festive gift baubles. If you find one, you could win a £20 gift voucher to spend in the hosting business (terms and conditions apply).

With five chances to win in each location, this activity is set to create excitement while boosting footfall to our high streets.

Clues are being shared on our [Hi Street Facebook](#) and [Hi Street Instagram](#) pages and [website](#).

There is a lot more happening to help make this Christmas a local one including:

- Advertising: Catch Hi Street on the move with our bus advertising campaign.
- Window display competition: Hi Street has partnered with Thrapston Christmas Festival to bring beautiful window displays to the High Street.
- Small Business Saturday: We are proud to support this year's event.
- Sharing festive events: 'Tis the season for Christmas lights switch on events and more.
- Christmas blog: A festive collaboration with BIPC Northamptonshire.

Corby - 5 stops to love local

[Hi Street](#) and [BIPC Northamptonshire](#) (Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire) have teamed up to spotlight five high street heroes that we think you will love.

Corby is bursting with unique finds, delicious treats and creative places, and we're here to share five must-visit independent businesses that make this town one-of-a-kind. From the Indoor Market to the friendly shops at Willow Place and Corby Old Village, there's so much to explore.

This month's blog features:

- The Present Shop: Gift giving made easy.
- Bella Knit: Wool, warmth and community.
- Unified Cards and Sugar Crush Confectionery: A one stop shop for collectables and sweet treats.
- Weldon Tabletop Wargaming Store: A world of war games and model making.
- Pearl Ci-tea: Sip, snack and enjoy in Corby's Old Village.

By spending money where you live, you'll be giving your town a 'Hi 5'. Every small spend makes a big difference because you are supporting the small businesses that make your town special, the local economy and local communities too.

Join us as we explore Corby in our latest blog post: [A day of discoveries in Corby - 5 stops to love local.](#)

Study shows North Northamptonshire Council leisure facilities provide significant social value

A study of North Northamptonshire's leisure facilities found that they provide significant social value to residents and local communities.

North Northamptonshire Council provides and commissions a range of leisure facilities such as swimming pools, gyms and sports halls.

The value generated is broken down to the per-person level and divided into four key areas:

- Physical and mental health
- Subjective wellbeing
- Individual development
- Social and community development.

The study carried out showed that leisure services provided and commissioned by North Northamptonshire during 2023 yielded a social value benefit of £16.6 million.

This equates to an average social value of £126 per service user, placing North Northamptonshire's leisure facilities in the top 25% of leisure facilities in the country in terms of social value benefit provided.

A year of increasing activity and improving resident health

North Northamptonshire Leisure and Public Health at North Northamptonshire Council are working together to increase activity and improve health outcomes for residents.

Active for Health, a Public Health funded project, has now been running for a year. It's developing and strengthening partnerships, with the key aims of improving the access to, and quality of services, in North Northamptonshire's leisure facilities.

Active for Health Funding supports public health priorities including reducing the risk of chronic diseases, deaths from COPD and preventable cancers, as well as reducing emergency hospital admission rates for hip fractures.

Other priorities include increasing the percentage of adults who are physically active and reducing the amount of adults with excess weight.

Plans are progressing well since Active for Health started in October 2023. An increase has been seen in adults attending Action on Referral consultations through Leisure providers across North Northamptonshire.

Funding has also supported North Northamptonshire Leisure to purchase 'Good Boost' at Corby East Midlands International Pool which has provided additional services such as aqua natal and therapeutic exercise and rehabilitation activities in the water. Places Leisure, Wellingborough has restarted delivery of the Activity on Referral scheme.

Winners of North Northamptonshire Active Communities Awards 2024 announced

The North Northamptonshire Active Communities Awards is our annual celebration event for physical activity, health and wellbeing, and sport. This year's event was held at Sywell Aerodrome last week.

It is an opportunity to recognise and commemorate the past year's sporting success at a local, national and international level. It is also a celebration of the individuals, groups, clubs, organisations and projects that have supported residents to get active or improved the lives of our communities in North Northamptonshire.

Congratulations to all our incredible winners. Your dedication and achievements are truly inspiring.

- Community Club: FTT Performance Centre.
- Community Group/Organisation: Shudan CIC.
- Community Team: TCA Diamond Elite.
- Community Activator: Robert Churcher-Upton.
- Young Community Champion: Mathew Edward.
- Community Champion: Robert Lovegrove.
- Sport School of the Year (Primary): Our Lady of Walsingham Catholic Primary School.
- Sport School of the Year (Secondary): Lodge Park Academy.
- Get Active: Jennifer Cartwright.
- Health and Wellbeing Initiative: Active in Motion.
- Disability Sports Performer: Bruce Dee.
- Young Sports Performer: Tys Lacatusu.
- Sports Performer: Kieran Reilly.
- Outstanding Recognition Award: Stephen Legg.

Thank you to the residents of North Northamptonshire who took the time to nominate these outstanding individuals. Your participation is what makes these awards possible.

Thank you also to the amazing staff in our Leisure Team for your hard work and commitment which make this event a truly special celebration.

Holiday Activities and Food Programme Northants wins 'Community Project of the Year'

A local initiative providing free school holiday clubs and healthy meals to disadvantaged families across Northamptonshire has been recognised as the 'Community Project of the Year' at the prestigious Northamptonshire Business Excellence Awards.

The 'Community Project of the Year' category was decided by public vote, with the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) Northants winning 46% of the votes.

Delivered by the charity Northamptonshire Sport, the programme is procured by North and West Northamptonshire Councils to provide free access to holiday clubs for children aged five to 16.

This year, HAF Northants has reached approximately 8,000 young people, offering a range of enriching activities designed to keep children active, engaged, and well-nourished during school holidays.

The programme includes over 100 clubs, covering everything from ballet, rugby, and climbing to computer coding and yoga, as well as family outings - with Christmas pantomime trips proving particularly popular in 2023.

The HAF Northants initiative continues to grow, with a mission to ensure child in the county have access to happier, healthier school holidays.

I am delighted that HAF Northants has been recognised for their exceptional work and that this programme is firmly embedded in our communities, offering eligible children enriching opportunities that influence their future life outcomes.

We are committed to caring for our young people, providing them with a high-quality education and opportunities to help them flourish. The HAF programme is both ambitious and life-changing in its aims and delivery.

Chester House Estate and Irchester Field School win top awards

Congratulations to the Chester House Estate for winning the 'Small Business of the Year' award at the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce Business Awards 2024.

Jack Pishhorn, Head of Culture, Tourism and Heritage at Chester House Estate scooped 'Business Person of the Year'.

Chester House Estate would like to thank all their amazing visitors, dedicated team and volunteers, and everyone involved who made this possible.

Congratulations also to Irchester Field School, the collaboration of University of Leicester and the Chester House Estate, for winning the 'Learning, Training and Skills' award at the Archaeological Achievement Awards.

Irchester Field School would like to thank their team, partners and everyone involved.

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner launches consultation on public safety plan and precept funding

Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Danielle Stone has launched an online consultation on her draft police, fire and crime plan, which sets the blueprint for police and fire services in Northamptonshire. The survey also asks people for their views on the police and fire precept - the amount paid towards local police and fire services through the council tax - which will go towards delivering the plan and priorities next year.

Danielle's first public safety plan for the county puts communities at the heart of each of three strategic priorities for police and fire services over the next five years:

- Visible and accessible community services
- Professionalism and standards
- Stronger public safety partnerships.

These priorities are based on an extensive public consultation, called the Big Conversation, which took place across the county earlier this year. The draft plan is also informed by workshops with stakeholders and professionals providing services to young people in the criminal justice system, or tackling violence against women, and through feedback other local engagements and meetings.

Now the draft plan - called Safe and Sound - is out for consultation, to ensure that it reflects the priorities and concerns of local communities.

The survey is open until 11:59pm on Sunday 5 January 2025.

Please visit the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner website for more information and to complete the survey: [Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner 2025/6 Consultation](#).

Your Voice Matters

Please find below details of our 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](#).

- [Harmonising payment options and the proposed removal of paying by cash at the Corby Cube](#). Closes 3 December 2024.
- [Local Nature Recovery Strategy for North Northamptonshire](#). Closes 9 December 2024.
- [Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy review](#). Closes 9 December 2024.
- [Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2029](#). Closes 16 December 2024.
- [Term Dates for North Northamptonshire schools for the 2026-27 academic year](#). Closes 29 December 2024.
- [Consultation on school admission arrangements for September 2026 intakes](#). Closes 29 December 2024.

Forthcoming meetings

Full Council

- Thursday 5 December 2024 from 6pm.
- Thursday 20 February 2025 from 6pm.

Executive

- Thursday 19 December 2024 from 10am.
- Thursday 16 January 2025 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):

- [Flooding in Northamptonshire - multi-agency response continues at pace](#)
- [A year of increasing activity and improving resident health](#)
- [External review highlights significant progress at North Northamptonshire Council](#)
- [Study shows North Northamptonshire Council leisure facilities provide significant social value](#)
- [Emergency flood assistance centre](#)
- [First of its kind housing development officially opened](#)
- [Winners of North Northamptonshire Active Communities Awards 2024 announced](#)
- [Council seeks views on North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2029](#)
- [Free parking for Christmas shoppers](#)
- [More than 20 million spend on children's homes and offices approved by North Northamptonshire's Executive Members](#)
- [Final chance - Apply for rural business grants up to £50,000 by 16 December](#)
- [Holiday Activities and Food Programme Northants Wins 'Community Project of the Year'](#)

Social media: Top stories

Follow our social media accounts and share our [Facebook](#) and/or [Twitter](#) posts when you can.

Top Facebook posts so far this week (25 to 27 November)

- A study of North Northamptonshire's leisure facilities found that they provide significant social value to residents and local communities. The value generated is broken down to the per-person level and divided into four key indicators: physical and mental health; subjective wellbeing; individual development; and social and community development. The study carried out showed that leisure services provided and commissioned by North Northamptonshire during 2023 yielded a social value benefit of £16.6m. This equates to an average social value of £126 per service user, placing North Northamptonshire's leisure facilities in the top 25% of leisure facilities in the country in terms of social value benefit provided. Read the full story at <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/.../study-shows-north...> (Reach 19,227, Link Clicks 28, Engagements 1,583)
- Following a weekend of heavy rain, some roads across the region will be flooded. Please avoid driving through and find an alternative route. Check for flood warnings in your area...
<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/flooding/flood-warnings>
<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/flooding/report-flood> (Reach 3,829, Link Clicks 175, Engagements 326)
- Our Values and Behaviours are the foundation of our workforce. So, if you are customer-focused, respectful, efficient, supportive and trustworthy, you could be the person we are looking for. Apply today and #MakeADifference <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers> (Reach 2,968, Link Clicks 22, Engagements 85)

Top Tweets so far this week (25 to 27 November)

- Following a weekend of heavy rain, some roads across the region will be flooded. Please avoid driving through. Check for flood warnings in your area <https://northnorthants.gov.uk/flooding/flood-warnings> Report flooding <https://northnorthants.gov.uk/flooding/report-flood> Flooding advice (Impressions 432)
- Our website will be updated with the latest road closures due to the heavy wind and rain this weekend. <https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/news/multi-agency-response-northamptonshire-flooding-continues> (Impressions 308)
- Our Values and Behaviours are the foundation of our workforce. So, if you are customer-focused, respectful, efficient, supportive and trustworthy, you could be the person we are looking for. Apply today and #MakeADifference <https://northnorthants.gov.uk/jobs-and-careers> (Impressions 287)

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