**West Northants Unitary Report for Long Buckby Ward**

It has been a pleasure for the three of us to continue working as Ward Councillors for the Long Buckby Ward in the new West Northamptonshire Council. During this civic year we have had numerous successes in solving issues from our residents. Planning which seems to generate most problems but inevitably potholes, which is a national problem, has overtaken all others.

**Budget**

This year we worked hard to set a balanced budget for 2024/25, despite facing financial pressures like other councils due in the current economic climate, with high inflation rates driving up running costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults. In fact, 62p in every Pound of Council Tax is spent on Adult and Child care, something we have no control over since it is a statuary duty. The increase of 4.99% for 24/25 remains below current inflation, with 2% going towards Adult care and represents an increase of £1.63 a week on a Band D property. remains well below current inflation levels but crucially generating an extra £12m to protect essential frontline services – with 2% of the increase going towards adult social care. This represents an average increase of £1.63 a week on a Band D property.

**Long Buckby Ward**

This year the Boundary Commission decided that the revision of Wards in SNC was for 76 new Wards made up of one, two and three Member Wards. As far as the Long Buckby Ward is concerned the Ward would lose essentially West Haddon and Flore but gain some to the East and become a two-member ward from May 2025 when elections take place.

**Highways**

Potholes have been a burning issue over the last few months with a wetter than average winter playing havoc with our Roads. We are not alone as the issue is Nationwide with pressure being placed on funding locally. At WNC we have acquired new machinery to address the problem including the JCB Pothole Pro which has completed over 12,500 m2 worth of road since its roll out in August 2023. It carries out an improved repair service allowing them to cut the defect, crop the edges and clean the area with one machine before it is filled and is four times faster than conventional repair. We realise the significance of road conditions and Kier have put forward a plan for coming year and extra funding is available from HS2 fund.

**Local Plan**

The spatial strategy Plan which was consulted on and received over 11,000 responses and was not well received with the large number of houses proposed, particularly in our Ward. The three of us fought hard to thwart such development in which we were successful and the new Local Plan has been written in which us Members had a significant input. This plan is now out for consultation and we would encourage you all to comment on it online. There will also be Public exhibitions which you will be able to visit and have your say. The finalised Plan will be sent to the Inspectors in Dec 2024 having taken onboard public comments.

**Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)**

This order is now in force and notices have been placed in all our villages advising residents of its powers. It gives Council the ability to ensure that the public can use and enjoy our public spaces and aims to help to make West Northamptonshire a better and safer place to live and work. It covers dog control, ban on smoking in certain areas and can result in a fine of up to £150 for non-compliance and breaches can be reported on the WNC website.

**Green and Clean Places**

Over the past 12 months we have prioritised the environment and considered the carbon cost of our decision-making, working hard towards our sustainability goals – from improving energy efficiency, reducing waste and achieving net zero emissions by 2030, to making our streets, parks and open spaces cleaner and greener. As an example, we retained international Green Flag Award status for the high quality of Daventry Country Park.

We coordinated and supported a range of Community Spring

Clean activities, as part of the Great British Spring Clean campaign organised by Keep Britain Tidy. We had litter picking equipment available to borrow, and supported groups and individuals with guidance on how to safely organise a community litter pick. We also supplied sacks and collected any rubbish that had been litter-picked afterwards.

Finally, we would all like to thank all Parish Council members and other community volunteers for their ongoing commitment to our wonderful villages. Without this support our job would be immeasurably more difficult. As already said we are open to any input and as elected representatives we will strive to deliver solutions when possible.

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