

SNC Report

Local Government Reform (LGR)

The past year has been dominated by the events at NCC. As we began the new municipal year in 2018 NCC issued a further Section 114 Notice. Max Caller reported that in his opinion Best Value was not being satisfied and the difficulties at NCC were such that it was not possible to recover this in a sensible time period and concluded that the best thing to do was to have two new unitary councils.

The unitary councils replace NCC and all 7 districts and boroughs. He proposed that there should be one in the North encompassing Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northants and one in the West taking in Daventry, South Northants and Northampton Borough.

At the same time as appointing commissioners the Sec of State issued an invitation to all the districts and boroughs and the county council to submit a proposal for the future governance of the county. That invitation set out some strict rules that needed to be followed for a proposal to be considered valid.

- Whole councils to be used as building blocks
- A single county proposal was not allowed
- A population had to be substantially in excess of 300,000
- The proposal had to have a credible geography
- Whilst it was also possible to overstep the county boundary it was also necessary to respect the police boundaries.

In effect this meant that there was only one proposal that would fulfil all the criteria, namely the one set out by Max Caller for a West and North unitary council.

On 31 August all the councils, except for Corby, submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State however to date, the Sec of State has not given any indication as to whether or not he is minded to implement those, although a decision is due imminently,

The councils are working on the assumption that the Sec of State will approve these proposals and so are beginning to make some of the preparations for unitary councils.

As a result, Cherwell and South Northants decided that their partnership would need to be dissolved and everything that we had achieved with Cherwell unwound. This process began last autumn with a management restructure, Yvonne Rees took up a new post as joint chief executive of Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council and Richard Ellis took up the post of Chief Executive of SNC. The other members of the senior management also split between Cherwell and South Northants.

In December a negative order was passed in parliament to delay the elections that were due in 2019 until 2020. That should dovetail with the new elections for the new councils.

The current timetable is not fixed, but is something along the lines of: -

- Secretary of State consultation ended 25 January 2019
- Secretary of State to indicate his decision on the proposal - spring 2019

Assuming he is minded to proceed based without modifying the proposals -

- Orders laid in Parliament in late April /May and then make their way through the two houses of parliament. This normally takes a few weeks
- Shadow council will come into being 14 days after the order is made
- Shadow council will comprise of all the members of all the councils and those from NCC who represent this area
- Shadow council will elect a shadow executive to prepare for day 1
- The new council will come into being 1 April 2020
- SNC will cease to be a council on 1 April 2020
- Elections to the new unitary authority will be 7 May 2020

There is a lot of work between now and then to get a council set up and running and to be safe and legal on day 1, and then to continue the work of transformation.

As we move forward with LGR we are holding regular **Parish & Town Clerks Forums**, with alternate Forums including PC Chairmen.

SNC Financial Highlights

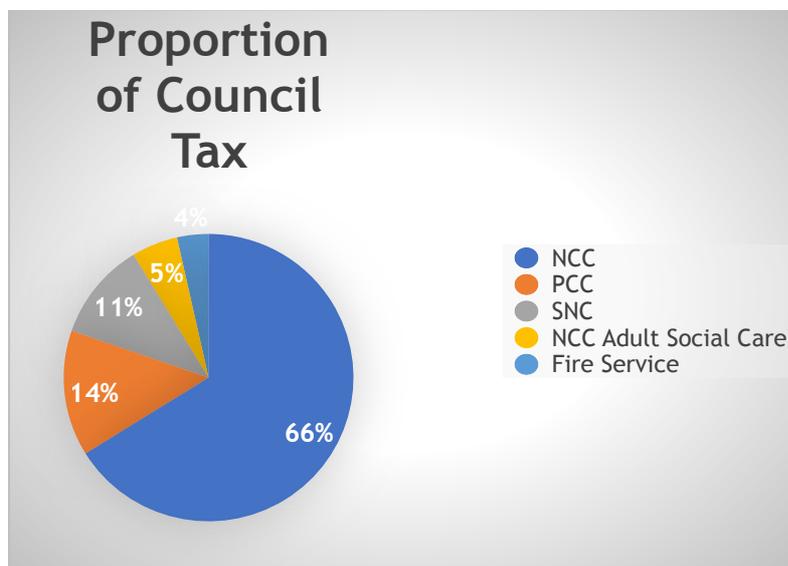
Funding from Central Government is now limited to the Rural Services Delivery Grant. However, our growth in terms of homes and businesses allows us to continue to balance the books. Growth in homes generates New Homes Bonus and this is now a substantial part of the district council income stream.

Unlike most councils SNC uses some of the New Homes Bonus it receives from new developments to invest in the local community. Local organisations can bid for grants to help them achieve their objectives.

In 2018-19, £1.5m of grant funding was made to communities in South Northamptonshire across 167 projects to improve the environment and lifestyle. Over the lifetime of the New Homes Bonus Scheme some £3.3m has been re-invested in the Community.

Council Tax

The SNC part of the council tax bill was raised by 2.99%, (£5.55 a year for a band D property), to £191.33 per year. The increase is in line with inflation. SNC only get to keep 11% of the total bill. Northants County take the biggest share at 71%, the Police and Crime Commissioner 14% and the Fire Service 4%.



The breakdown of the council tax bill for a Band D Property:

Body	2018/19	Increase	Increase Amount	2018/19
NCC ¹	£1,146.63	4.99%	-£0.25	£1,146.38
NCC Adult Social Care ²	£89.72	0.00%	£0.00	£89.72
PCC ³	£221.04	11.00%	£24.00	£245.04
Fire Service ⁴			£60.76	£60.76
SNC	£185.78	2.99%	£5.55	£191.33
Total	£1,643.17	5.48%	£90.06	£1,733.23

This year there are a number of differences:

Note 1 From 2019/20 the Fire Service comes under the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Therefore, the cost for the Fire Service has been removed from the County element of the bill, hence the seeming decrease. In fact, the County's part has increased by the 2.99%, the maximum allowed by the Government without a referendum. The Government has permitted the County to surcharge the residents by an additional 2% to assist the County's finances.

Note 2 The Government allows the charging of an Adult Social Care premium. Councils were allowed to raise it by 2% per annum over 3 years, or 3% over two years. NCC have already increased it by the 3% in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and therefore there is no further increase allowed for 2019/20.

Note 3 The Government this year has allowed Police and Crime Commissioners to raise their portion of council tax by a maximum of £24. The Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commissioner has decided to apply this increase in full.

Note 4 This year the Fire Service portion of the council tax is shown separately, previously it had been included in the overall figure for the County.

In addition, individual Parish Precepts are applied.

Planning

Local Plan part 2

After five years, South Northants completed the LPP2 and submitted it to the Inspectorate on the 22nd January 2019. We have been allocated an Inspector who will begin his examination in June 2019. He will take representations from residents and agents who wish to raise concerns or objections to any elements of the plan.

Any proposed amendments by the inspector will go for public consultation and possible revision and assuming this to be the case the plan should be adopted at the end of this year, early next. It will then replace the 1997 South Northamptonshire Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plan

Two Neighbourhood Plans have been 'made' - Harpole and Kislingbury. Middleton Cheney is one of a number of other villages that are preparing plans which when completed will be presented for consultation and scrutiny. Once adopted and 'made' they will sit alongside the Local Plan Part 2.

Although some expense is incurred when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, it is a useful means of protecting our rural villages. Whilst promoting acceptable development it reduces the likelihood speculative development.

South Northamptonshire Land Supply

SNC has built up a good reserve of land with planning permission. We have planned for growth in both housing and employment land in Brackley, Silverstone, Deanshanger and Towcester and this has enabled us to build 11 years of land supply against a government target of 5 years.

It is not clear yet what the government approach will be with the land supply figures across the new unitary. SNC has 11, Daventry 6 however Northampton only has 2.3 years. We are lobbying the government to allow each areas land supply to apply for a further, say, 5 years as a buffer before they are combined.

A422 Farthinghoe Bypass

There does appear to be at last some signs of traction between SNC and NCC regarding preparation work for a bypass for Farthinghoe. SNC is exploring whether it can assist with initial works so that should funding be made available by central government an 'oven ready' scheme can be presented. Time and again when funding initiatives have been announced by Westminster the A442 bypass has not qualified as it has not been worked up enough as a proposal.

Brackley Town Hall Restoration

On the 11th September the newly restored Town Hall was opened. This was the culmination of a project that was funded jointly by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£2.3m), South Northamptonshire Council (£500k) and Brackley Town Council (£500k) that has totally refurbished this iconic Georgian building so that it may continue to serve the community for many, years to come.



The entire building has been restored, with new stonework replacing those blocks that had suffered from decay, some 60% of the roof tiles replaced, the clock cleaned and serviced, and a new bell installed (from Taylors Bell Foundry in Loughborough).

A completely new staircase has been installed which winds round a central lift, providing easier access to the civic chamber on the first floor.

Note that the design below the hand rail in the picture is representative of traditional Northamptonshire lace.

All windows on the first floor now have stained glass panels that illustrate life in Brackley, ancient and modern.

Here are the two windows that commemorate SNC's and the HLF's involvement. Originally these windows had the Brackley Council crest but had been replaced with plain glass.

Health & Wellbeing in the District

January this year saw the official opening of Brackley Leisure Centre by Olympic swimmer Mark Foster. The pool represents an investment of £4.5m by SNC and is the culmination of a long held ambition by the Council. In addition £1m has been committed to improvements at Towcester Centre for Leisure.

Summer activities for children. 1207 children from across our District enjoyed the summer activities we provided, making 2018 a record year. Much work went into ensuring we were able to provide great opportunities through the summer holidays to children from all walks of life, including those with disabilities and children from low income families.

Towcester & Brackley Community Fun Days took place at the Islington Road Recreation Ground in Towcester in May and at Brackley's Leisure Centre in Springfield Way in June. Hundreds of families attended these free events which showcased the clubs and activities available to young people in South Northamptonshire.

Disability Sport. We started the South Northants Disability Sports Forum just over a year ago and the Forum consists of local sports clubs, third sector organisations, Legacy Leisure, Northamptonshire Sport and of course South Northants Council. One of the aims of the Forum is to break down the barriers faced by disabled people making it possible for all our sections of our communities to access facilities.

Art & Culture

Centre Screen. The rural cinema scheme continues to be popular in communities where the village hall or library (Brackley) is a convenient place for residents to get together for social activities. Some village groups have invested in their own film equipment, but many rely on Centre Screen to provide it, show the film and deal with licensing. There are more regular screenings in South Northants than other parts of the county. Locally Brackley, Culworth, Evenley, King's Sutton, and Marston St. Lawrence have utilised Centre Screen.

Private Sector Housing Initiatives

Home Safe Project. This year sees the launch of the second year of the Home Safe Project to improve the wellbeing of low-income households by assisting with essential works to

their homes. In 2018 the project helped 29 households by assisting with general repair works and improving security, lighting, warmth as well as adaptations to support access and mobility issues reducing the risk of falls.

Financial Assistance for Adaptations and Repairs. Private Sector Housing provides Disabled Facility Grants to help people with a disability undertake major adaptations to facilitate access in and around their home. Last year, 49 people and their families were assisted in the provision of level access showers, stair and through floor lifts, ceiling track hoists, ramps and door widening.

New affordable housing. We work hard with housing associations to provide additional affordable homes to meet the housing needs of local residents. Since April 2018 there have been 145 new affordable homes built across the district. We have a strong delivery programme for the remainder of this financial year and into 2019/20.

Communities

Good Neighbour schemes are established by communities and run by local people to provide day to day support for other residents in their village and community, particularly those more isolated or older residents, who may need help on an occasional or regular basis.

South Northants Council Wellbeing Activity Map, developed by SNCs CommunityServices Team is now live on our website. You can search for activities near where you live by entering your postcode on the website. Lots of the activities are free of charge and none cost more than £5 per session. They include opportunities for sports, arts, learning and socialising.

Environmental Services

Waste & Recycling

We have the 7th highest recycling collection rate out of 345 areas in the UK at 65%. This has an environmental impact as well as financial - we get financial rewards for recycling as this saves on black bin disposal costs. I can assure residents that SNC ensure that all waste designated for recycling is not diverted to landfill.

SNC are planning to offer recycling bins alongside general litter bins at sites around Brackley and Towcester in the near future.

Our booking system for collecting bulky waste - such as kitchen appliances and furniture - is now on line. This has seen an increase in the number of collections made and has proved a great success with 97% of those who have used us happy with the service. For £34 we will collect up to six items.

Licensing

Safeguarding of young and vulnerable people is increasingly important and SNC trains staff in licensed premises, hotels, taxi drivers and others who meet the public what to look out for and what to do if they have concerns about children or vulnerable adults.

Environmental Health & Protection

Working with Community Protection and Environmental Protection to address nuisance issues has had some success in the courts. There have been successful enforcement action taken in Roade and Helmdon in relation to land contamination and smoke nuisance as well as responding to c1,200 complaints about noise, air quality and nuisance.

SNC is active in the Local Authorities Noise Group in matters relating HS2 in order to secure the best mitigation possible. Another major consultation is the impact on air quality and potential nuisance that could be a consequence of one or other or indeed both of the large rail hubs proposed between Blisworth and the M1.

Supporting Local Business



83% of the working age population is employed, and the District's workforce also has an above average level of education.

The Council's Business Support Adviser continues to help businesses in the District. The Council assists new and small business start-ups, and supports the wider work of the Economic Growth Team in working closely with our business community to support investment and growth. In 2018/19, over 100 businesses received such support helping them to expand and create new employment.

Despite low levels of unemployment, demand is still high for the Job Club and Job Match Service, which has been running since 2009 and supported 477 people into work.