

## South Northamptonshire Council Annual Parish Meetings 2018

I am pleased to update residents on the activities of South Northamptonshire Council over the last year.

### SNC Funding

Funding continues to be reduced from central government grants, but with growing housing numbers and therefore New Homes Bonus, and retaining more business rates growth we continue to balance the books.

SNC continue to be successful at collecting council tax with 99% of all tax collected. The national average is 98% and SNC is ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the whole of the Country on collection rates. This is important as there is a worthwhile bonus for maintaining collection rates.

### Council Tax

SNC raised its share of council tax by 3% (£5.41 a year for a Band D property or 10p per week), making a total of £185.78 pa. The increase is in line with inflation. SNC keep 11% of the total bill, Northants County take the biggest share at 73%, the PCC 13% and the parishes about 3%.

A band D Council Tax bill can be broken down as follows:

Body	2017/18	Increase	Amount	2018/19
NCC	£1,111.87	2.98%	£34.76	£1,146.63
NCC Adult Social Care	£54.72	3.00%	£35.00	£89.72
PCC	£209.04	6.00%	£12.00	£221.04
SNC	£180.37	3.00%	£5.41	£185.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,556.00</b>	<b>5.60%</b>	<b>£87.17</b>	<b>£1,643.17</b>

In addition, individual Parish Precepts will be levied and charged for.

### New Homes Bonus

Unlike many Councils SNC still uses some of the New Homes Bonus it receives from new developments to invest in the local community.

Grants are awarded by the Community Funding Panel and application forms and details of the criteria can be found on the SNC web site.

In 2017-18, almost £1.152m of grant funding was awarded to communities within South Northamptonshire across 120 projects. Over the lifetime of the New Homes Bonus Scheme over £2.6m has been re-invested in the Community.

Examples of grants made include:

- Syresham Village Hall £130k
- SNVB £75k
- Citizen's Advice Bureau £60k
- Kings Sutton Pre School £27k
- Towcestrians Floodlights £28k

• Old Stratford Street Lighting	£19k
• Bugbrooke Sports Centre	£18k
• Grange Park Community Centre	£17k
• Northampton Historical Trust	£15k
• Abthorpe Old School	£15k
• Harpole Youth Club	£15k
• Middleton Cheney Football Club	£13k
• Middleton Cheney Skatepark	£12k
• Yardley Hastings Street Lighting	£11k
• Brackley Youth Players	£10k

The map below shows the geographical spread of grants made at the January meeting of the Community Funding Panel.



## South Northamptonshire Council



January 2018  
Local Community Grants

### Waste Recycling

Our waste and recycling service has had a very good year - SNC achieved 8<sup>th</sup> in the annual UK recycling tables thanks to our residents putting 61% of everything they dispose of out for recycling. A high level of recycling means that the total cost for waste collection is reduced as the greatest expense is disposing of the contents of the black bins.

The Council has just signed a contract with a new company for the processing of recycling. The new company is much closer than our previous one which means reduced transfer journeys by road. This saves fuel and reduces emissions.

## Chief Executive

A new Joint Chief Executive, Yvonne Rees, joined the Council in July 2017. She previously worked as a Director at Surrey County Council and Chief Exec. at Mole Valley District Council.

SNC have finally completed the joint working agenda with Cherwell with joint services in Housing and Development Management beginning in 2017. This now means that all our services are shared with Cherwell. We are using the strap line 'one on the inside, two on the outside' to describe our joint working.

The new Chief Executive commenced a restructuring of the senior management team. This will create additional senior level capacity to deliver on the many programs that are running across the two councils. This has put a significant focus on developing income streams to the council and identifying commercial opportunities as this will be important as central grant funding dries up.

## Planning

### **Local Plan part 2**

The preparation of the Local Plan Part 2 continues. During the summer of 2017 SNC had a 10 week public consultation during which 1200 issues were raised from 400 submissions. These are being considered and in some cases changes have been made. The revised document will be subject to a 6 week consultation period in late spring 2018.

In the meantime every item raised from individuals and developers has been placed on the website together with an accompanying explanation.

Once the 6 week consultation period is concluded, the final review will be submitted to HM Planning Inspectorate. Following a public examination, as long as there are no significant issues, the plan will become law at the end of this year.

### **Neighbourhood Plans**

This year saw the first two Neighbourhood Plans (NP) (Kislingbury and Harpole) go to local referendum and become adopted as a planning policy document that SNC must take account of when making a planning decision in that parish. Both of these had substantial majorities and were supported by a large turn out.

Officers have prepared a Guidance document for Parishes/Villages to follow should they decide to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.

NP's are prepared by the community and at present at SNC there are two 'made' NP's and a further 12 areas designated as proposing a NP; at least five of these hope to have plans in an advanced stage within the next twelve months. Officers are also aware of some further interest from other areas within South Northants.

Whilst NP's are prepared by communities, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) has a significant role. This is set out within the Localism Act 2011 and requires that, where NPs are in preparation, the relevant LPA is required to give advice and assistance to the parish preparing the plan.

### **5 Year Land Supply**

National Planning Policy demands that every council has a bank of permissions granted so development can take place in that area. The Joint Core Strategy determines that SNC must have available 1680 planning permissions for dwellings over a rolling 5 year time frame. National Planning Policy also states that where there is not this 5 year land supply then there should be a presumption in favour of development regardless of village confines and other planning tools that the council can rely on.

If an applicant can show less than 5 years land supply it becomes a lot easier to get planning permission, especially in places that would be unlikely in normal circumstances. This then becomes one of the main areas of contention at planning appeals.

At the moment SNC has a 10 year land supply, which means that the LPA can defend the district against speculative development that is not in accordance with our local plans.

### **Conservation and Heritage**

South Northants contains some of the country's most quintessentially English landscapes stretching from the northern Cotswolds to the gentle rolling hills in middle England. These landscapes are interspersed with attractive, largely unspoilt villages of medieval or earlier origin, the Roman town of Towcester, the market town of Brackley, and important examples of designed landscapes at a number of major landed estates.

The Conservation Strategy is a fundamental step to ensuring that our landscape is recognised. It sets out the Council's responsibilities and aspirations for the historic environment within the district, the resources that are available and a programme for how it intends to undertake this task over the next five years.

The district has 1,831 Listed Buildings, 96 villages and two market towns. Both towns and 51 of the 96 villages have historic areas designated as Conservation Areas, which have been updated over the last 5 years, recognising their special architectural and historic interest.

### **Local Planning Issues**

There are two large Rail Freight Interchange proposals in the District. One site is in Milton Malsor and the other immediately adjacent at J 15 of the M1. Each of these applications on their own will have significant impact on local residents and on traffic on the A43 and M1. SNC is being proactive in bringing issues to the attention of The Planning Inspectorate who will take the decisions about these major Infrastructure projects as SNC is only a consultee.

The EuroGarages proposal at J11 on the M40 has faced fierce local opposition. The application was withdrawn in February for further amendments and has recently been resubmitted. I liaise closely with planning officers at SNC in formulating a response to get the best possible mitigation for this area, while recognising that the site is already allocated for commercial use in Cherwell's local plan.

## Brackley Developments

### Leisure Centre.

SNC aim to have the new 6 lane pool, with learner pool and other improvements to the gym areas completed by late summer 2018. Modernisation to the existing Spin Studio has been completed.

### Brackley Town Hall

The Council provided funds for the restoration of Brackley Town Hall as part of the regeneration of Brackley Town Centre which enabled the Town Council to get £2.3m from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Town Hall will re-open this year.

## Towcester Town Expansion

An outline planning permission has been in place since 2014. The design code to cover the design of the houses has been agreed in the past twelve months and the detailed planning permissions for the first approx. 750 been granted.

Ultimately this housing development will bring a relief Road to Towcester. SNC have been working closely with government to get the relief road delivered early. The present agreement states it must be in end to end, by the occupation of the 1017<sup>th</sup> house. SNC want to get this brought forward and SNC has met with the Roads Minister, along with Andrea Leadsom, MP, to keep making the case.

### Moat Lane

Moat Lane continues to be developed with work starting on the corner site along Northampton Road for retail shops and apartments above. The work that has been done is of an exceptionally high standard and is a real enhancement to the town.

The Forum has some excellent conferencing and meeting rooms and is available for business and community use to hire and are some of the best available in the district. The Council chamber can be adapted for different conference styles and is also a great location to hold events.

## Health & Wellbeing in the District

### Youth Provision

Brackley and Towcester Youth Strategy Groups are in the process of setting up as a new South Northants Charity that brings together groups within the community providing youth activities or supporting young people. The charity will help secure funding and enable SNC to do more for young people at a time of significant change and population growth in the district. Trustees will include key stakeholders from both towns and the surrounding villages. The groups are currently going through the process of becoming a Community Interest Organisation (CIO). One reason for a joint group is to have a more networked approach and trying to encourage larger youth clubs to work together, share voluntary staff and skills. It will also be easier to look at the skills and knowledge in the district and

work out training needs for youth clubs and other groups and then delivering appropriate training opportunities for volunteers. The vision for both groups includes appointing a new youth coordinator, a full-time paid post, initially over 2 years to work for both Strategy Groups in supporting current youth provision and also developing new provision. This post would be of particular benefit to Brackley, where SNC see this person providing key skills and the time needed to support a proposed new Skate Park and Youth Centre projects. Funding is needed for this post and bids are being prepared for external funding sources. We estimate the total cost would be around £85,000 over 2 years.

## Horton Hospital Consultation

A large part of the year was spent opposing plans for the reconfiguration of the Horton Hospital. Whilst it was disappointing to lose the Judicial Review in the High Court, SNC and others were successful in getting a referral to the Secretary of State on the proposals for maternity services and he set up an Independent Reconfiguration Panel to review the proposals and make any recommendations. This Panel has advised that decisions relating to the provision of maternity services must be looked at again and so the previous consultations are no longer relevant.

## Supporting Local Business

Both our market towns have a new policy to help bring long term empty properties back into use. SNC will give rates relief on properties that have been empty for more than 6 months in the centre of Brackley or Towcester.

## Silverstone Heritage Project

We have loaned Silverstone Heritage Limited £3m which helped them gain over £9m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a world class facility dedicated to motorsports at the track. This will boost the local economy by bringing in many thousands of extra visitors and providing new jobs in the area. This is on track for opening in 2019.

## Taxi Licensing New Policy

SNC licensing department has been active in making sure that the taxis and private hire cars in the district work to the highest standards including introducing compulsory Safeguarding Training.

A new scheme now allows passengers to rate their journeys and the best drivers will be recognised. Part of the work with taxis also includes training drivers to be aware of criminal activity related to vulnerable people relevant to them. All drivers must now attend a course to learn what signs to look out for when carrying vulnerable passengers and how to report any concerns.

## Help for Residents with 'Home Safe'

The vulnerable, disabled and elderly are being offered free home repairs following a partnership between SNC and Care & Repair (Northamptonshire) Ltd.

The scheme, entitled 'Home Safe', will offer support with a range of small home improvements such as small repairs, home security and energy efficiency measures, gas safety checks, fitting smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, trip reduction measures, the installation of grab and stair rails and assistance with electrics, plumbing and carpentry.

The scheme is available to home owners and tenants on low incomes if one or more of the following criteria applies to them:

- suffer from a long term chronic illness or have a physical disability
- they have been identified by a hospital as needing urgent minor adaptations or services to facilitate discharge
- they are at risk of further injury or illness without essential minor works or services
- 65 or over

For more information on the scheme visit the [Care & Repair](#) website or email [office@careandrepairnorthamptonshire.org.uk](mailto:office@careandrepairnorthamptonshire.org.uk) or call 01604 782250.

## Homelessness in SNC

Homelessness is on the increase both nationally and in South Northamptonshire, with more identified rough sleepers and more households seeking assistance. There were 72% more homeless applications in 2016/17 than 2015/16.

Rough sleeping numbers are low in South Northamptonshire but are increasing. The 2016 Rough Sleeper Estimate returned a total of 3 verified rough sleepers, an increase from 2015's total of zero.

The Council has established the following services in order to meet demand:

- The Council has a successful Deposit Guarantee/Rent In Advance scheme that helped 72 households in the last 18 months.
- The Council has a Tenancy Support Worker, focussed on supporting those going through homelessness crisis or to avoid a crisis; 130 households supported in 2 years.
- The Council is funding a Personal Transitions Coach to work with homeless households in moving forward, developing skills and assets.
- The Council has a Homeless Prevention Fund to help with low level costs to save tenancies, where temporary accommodation would be costly.
- The Council has a Housing Allocations Policy, which prioritises households at risk of homelessness.
- The Council has three dedicated Housing Options Officers, whose role it is to prevent and relieve homelessness wherever possible.

## And Finally

The situation at Northants County Council will of course have a major impact on Local Government organisation in this area. This is covered in more detail in my County Council report, but SNC will be proactive in putting forward its ideas about how reorganisation might look. Any solution SNC puts forward will need to recognise the impact on Cherwell District Council, because of the close working between the two.