

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2021/2022



E-Newsletter Issue 1A/2022
Castle Ashby & Denton Community Larder Launch
March 2022

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Introduction

I have great pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for the Parish Councils and residents of Hackleton and Grange Park. During my first year, as each month went by, more and more of you were using my Facebook: [Stephen.Clarke.31924](https://www.facebook.com/Stephen.Clarke.31924) and responding to my postings on the Community Group pages. Hackleton and Grange Park is a very large area, but by following my daily postings, you will see just how busy I have been on your behalf. In my Monthly News Report, I cover matters that I have been directly involved in at your behest. That way there should be little overlap with other reports you might receive. All three of your Councillors are working in the best interests of the community and you will deal with us all on different issues from time to time.

One Year Old

Our Council is one year old. Since replacing the previous district, borough and county councils on 1 April last year we have been making good progress on our fresh start to deliver better local public services across Daventry, Northampton and South Northants areas. Born from the biggest restructure of local government in Northamptonshire in over 40 years, and having guided communities through the challenges of the Covid pandemic, we now head into our second year with a balanced budget and additional investment in services ahead. Future transformation plans are also taking shape, including:

- Progressing work to join up health and social care services
- Working on our Anti-Poverty plans and skills agenda,
- A new approach to making West Northants a more sustainable and environmentally friendly place to live and work,
- Protecting and improving the local environment, economy and society for future generations
- Laying the foundations for the future through our ambitious Corporate Plan and shaping a number of important strategies

Progress over the First Year

You can read more about our first year in the Council Leader's Report to the Parish Councils, but here are just some details of the progress we have made against our priorities over the past year:

Priority: Improving Life Choices

- Continuing the improvement journey in children's services as recognised by Ofsted
- Progressing plans to join up health and social care services
- Helping the most vulnerable including free school meals, funds to help households with food and energy bills, resettling Afghan families and beginning to co-ordinate the Government's Ukraine response locally
- Developing our Anti-Poverty Strategy with partner organisations and charities
- Council Tax reduction scheme and improving financial support for care leavers
- Developing the Armed Forces Covenant and establishing new armed forces hubs
- New customer experience strategy to improve how residents access our services

Priority: Green and Clean places

- Shaping our new sustainability goals - to net zero the Council's own emissions by 2030 and those of residents and businesses by 2045
- Retaining Green Flag awards for our high-quality parks
- Improving Towcester Water meadows and encouraging community tree planting
- £6.2m community flood protection scheme
- Installing new electric charge points across West Northants
- Crackdowns and prosecutions on environmental offenders, from fly-tipping and food safety to Trading Standards

- New litter charter and community litter-picking initiatives
- Grants for landowners to tackle fly tipping

Priority: Economic Development

- Submitting a bid for city status for Northampton
- Securing £37m funding for regenerating Northampton town centre and Market Square
- Delivering Daventry's new cinema complex
- Redeveloping Brackley Library and delivering our award-winning 'For the Love of Books' reading challenge to over a thousand residents
- Consulting on shaping our Strategic Plan
- Supporting businesses and start-ups with funding, advice and support

Priority: Connected Communities

- Embarking on a major roads improvement programme
- Making plans and funding bids to improve bus services
- Extending Northampton's public e-scooter scheme
- Shaping and progressing our future highways maintenance service and transport infrastructure

Priority: Thriving Villages and Towns

- Providing accommodation and support for rough sleepers
- Localising planning arrangements and simplified, more effective planning enforcement
- Investing in a host of initiatives to make communities safer
- Distributing grant funding for community and voluntary groups
- Re-opening the refurbished and extended Northampton Museum and Art Gallery
- Showcasing our heritage with open days and supporting the Go Northamptonshire destination campaign
- Redevelopment of Avenue campus into 170 new homes
- Working with parishes on Neighbourhood development plans and conservation area appraisals

Priority: Robust Resource Management

- Capping Council Tax rises at £99 per year
- On target to deliver our first year on budget, and setting a balanced budget for the year ahead and making robust plans to tackle financial challenges
- Working to join up local services across the whole West Northants area, to make them better and more cost-effective

I think much has been done but there is much still to do and I hope that you continue to alert me to the problems you face and the issues that you would like me to help resolve. I want to see that the great results we had with South Northamptonshire Council are being reflected in the new Unitary Authority.

So what have I been doing on your behalf?

South Northamptonshire Local Area Planning Committee

In May 2021, I was appointed Chairman of the South Northamptonshire Local Area Planning Committee of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). I have 16 years experience of Development Control and 12 years as the Chairman of the SNC Development Control Committee, it was perhaps a natural progression to now lead the Local Area Planning Committee of which I have long been a part. Since 3 June, I have chaired the monthly SN Local Area Planning Committee for WNC at the Forum, Towcester. There is a big difference for all of us, which is that as a Unitary Authority we are responsible as the Local Highways Authority for Highways, and as the Lead Local Flood Authority for Flooding/Surface Water Drainage.

Planning Policy Committee

I was appointed to the Planning Policy Committee on 6 December 2021. From March 2022 this Committee will take place monthly and it will exercise the Council's executive functions in relation to the preparation and, where applicable, approval of planning policy and neighbourhood planning documents.

Planning Appeals

Over the past year, I have worked on and attended all of the major planning appeals in South Northamptonshire and kept you informed as to the Planning Inspector's progress and subsequent decisions. The current summary is as follows:

- Hartwell, land North of Ashton Road-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land South of Station Road-Dismissed
- Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton- Awaiting decision
- Greens Norton, land off Mill Lane-Withdrawn
- Milton Malsor, land East of Lower Lane-Dismissed
- Blisworth, land off Northampton Road -Dismissed.
- Yardley Gobion, land at Asana Lodge Appeal-Inquiry 8 February 2022 for 3 days-Cancelled
- Yardley Gobion, land East of Northampton Road Hearing Date Offered of 27/07/22 TBC

For those who wished to better understand the Government proposed changes to the Planning System then I gave a very lengthy overview of the Local Government Association's views about the potential changes in one of my Monthly Reports. In the same report, I provided an update on WNC's Spatial Options Consultation as it impacts this area, in particular Grange Park and Quinton.

Audit and Governance Committee

By 28 April, I will have attended six WNC Audit and Governance Committee Meetings at the Guildhall, Northampton. It has been a mammoth task. I have had at least 400-750 pages of reports to read and digest for each meeting beforehand. With the change in structure, I had quite a number of questions about the various audit reports, particularly in relation to the Annual Audit reports of the Predecessor Authorities. We also have discussed and agreed the Audit Planning Report for the year-end 2021 and the Internal Audit update for 2021-2022. There is much to do over the remainder of this year and much to improve, if we are to become an excellent unitary authority.

RSN

I was confirmed as the WNC Lead representative on the Rural Services Network (RSN) previously known as SPARSE. The Rural Services Network is a Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association. It is a membership organisation and works on behalf of its members as the national champion for rural services. It supports its member organisations through the sharing of best practice and rural expertise, and is an advocate on their behalf to ensure that the rural voice is raised up the agenda with parliamentarians and decision makers. I was previously the representative for South Northamptonshire Council and I am very familiar with the service they provide to the rural sector on behalf of rural communities. As the WNC lead representative, I will of course keep you and the Council informed as to RSN's news and recommendations to Government. In this connection, I have reports and updates on Facebook and I remain committed to ensuring that WNC reflects the needs of the rural communities as well as its urban centres in all of its decision-making.

Fix my Street

I have escalated numerous problems on Fix My Street and you will find much of it on my Facebook. I am pleased to say that I have had a fair amount of success. I have focussed my efforts on those problems that have been outstanding for many years, including but not limited to:

- Brafield on the Green- unknown source of running water now accepted to be WNC and not Anglia Water and the problem finally fixed
- Land ownership in question for Surface Flooding Quinton. Finally found to be Grand Union Housing and the problem has now been resolved.
- On-going issues with deformed pavement outside 14 Northampton Road, and broken storm drains Yardley Hastings. All of which were finally fixed.

Fly- Tipping

One of the first tasks I had this year was to go 'Wombling' with Leigh Mitchell and the Hackleton Wombles. We spent the morning clearing litter from the ditch adjacent to the lay-by on the B526 near the Menagerie. But I now know that calling it litter is a misnomer. We collected a pallet, rubber piping, tyres, clean recyclables, builder's rubble, cans, bottles, a VHS video player and bottles with uncertain content! The team continue to do a fantastic job and I applaud them for their hard work.

Fly-tipping is inexcusable. It is, an eyesore for residents, but also a serious public health risk, creating pollution and attracting rats and other vermin. It costs local taxpayers almost £50 million a year to clear up, which could be better spent on other vital services in our communities.

I have also been litter picking in other parishes including Grange Park after the Annual Summer Fete at Foxfields Country Park. Each time, I am involved, I notify 'Bins, Recycling and Street Cleaning' about fly-tipping which is many and various and I try to get them to look at how best to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Over the course of the year, I have repeatedly sought assistance for certain hotspots. I am pleased to say that certain areas are improving and if they don't then the Council doesn't hold back when seeking to take legal action with those repeated offenders. As was the case with the site near Sixfields Reservoir recently, when WNC issued two £400 fixed penalty notices for fly tipping.

I also arranged for two members of the WNC Recycling team to attend and man a stand during the Grange Park Summer Fest on 4 September at Foxfield Country Park. They brought copies of the Litter Charter and the guide with them, and they talked it through with members of Parish Councils and others on the day.

Harmonisation of Green Bin Arrangements

Residents were invited to start signing up for the forthcoming year of optional, chargeable garden waste collections from Monday 14 February. Garden waste collections were being harmonised from 4 April this year, bringing homes in the former South Northants Council area into line with residents in the former Daventry District and Northampton Borough areas, who already choose whether or not to subscribe to paid-for garden waste collections. The annual subscription charge for the service from April 2022 to April 2023 was set at £42 per bin.

I was advised that an extensive communications campaign would be launched to raise awareness of the new 'Green Bin' arrangements and encourage subscriptions, with people living in the former South Northants area urged to look out for an information leaflet, including FAQs about the changes to the collections in their area. I was contacted by a number of residents and Parish Councillors, as some of the villages had not received the garden waste leaflet. WNC organised for another leaflet drop to the villages affected. In the meantime I attached a copy of the leaflet to my Facebook page and shared the details with other groups and residents that I met.

With regards to the cost for smaller bins, there is no reduction for this and all subscriptions are £42. WNC can swap any smaller bins for the full size ones or neighbours are welcome to share a bin/split the cost between them.

Councillor Covid Fund

As you know there is a Councillor COVID Support Fund to allocate money within our wards in order to make a positive impact on the areas we represent and to empower residents to be active in their communities' recovery from the impact of COVID. I received eleven expressions of interest and seven completed applications with seven awards issued. One application didn't meet the criteria, three weren't progressed and one project was funded jointly. I have allocated my entire £2,500 available fund. Councillors Andrew Grant and Fiona Cole may still have some funding available.

I have enclosed a list of projects, which have been supported by me.

Project	Amount
Quinton Jubilee Drama	£300.00 (£206.89 SC £93.11 AG)
Mud Kitchen Café Cogenhoe Community Hub	£217.96
Children's Jubilee Celebration, Denton	£600.00
Surgery Volunteer Patient Car Scheme, Denton	£350
Pensioner's Coronation Tea Party, Brafield	£310
Pre School Outdoor Play Equipment, Cogenhoe	£415.15
Wildflower Project, Denton	£400.00
Total	£2,500 + £93.11 from AG

Ukraine

WNC raised Ukrainian flags at our civic buildings in Daventry, Northampton and Towcester from 28 February 2022 in solidarity with the country's people. Everyone will have watched as the terrible scenes unfolded in the world's news, as the Russian military invaded. We continue to send a message of support to the people of Ukraine, for the horrific situation they find themselves in. They have our sympathy and our support, but they also have our huge admiration for the brave way they are pulling together in the face of adversity.

The Homes for Ukraine scheme opened on Friday 18 March for visa applications from Ukrainians and immediate family members who already have named people willing to sponsor them. People wanting to be sponsors who do not know anyone personally fleeing Ukraine can also record their interest in being a sponsor. Charities, faith groups, universities will have extensive networks with communities and individuals across Europe. WNC will be working closely with them to ensure people who want to help are matched to people from Ukraine. All necessary information can be accessed via the WNC website, where you'll see a button on the main webpage marked 'Ukraine Refugee Appeal'. <https://www.gov.uk/.../news/ukraine-what-you-can-do-to-help>

I hope this is of assistance in this constantly evolving situation. From a Council perspective there are many variables to take into consideration, and the full extent of the responsibilities it puts on host households remains slightly unclear, however, the website will be continually updated, and I will keep you posted too.

<https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov>.

Grants

Each month in my Monthly Report, I provide details of all known available grants. Fortunately, RSN provides me with this information. I aim to try to support community projects with information about suitable available funding. In many circumstances WNC may not have any funding but with other funding grants then they may be able to assist communities or others with match funding. See my monthly reports.

Bus Services

On the 18th September, I told you about the Bus Services Consultation, which closed on 10 October 2021. Residents, parish councils, businesses and groups in Northamptonshire were being invited to share their views on the improvements they would like to see in bus services across the county.

I encouraged all of you that have spoken and written to me about the lack of bus services to participate in this survey and have your say to help shape the future of bus travel in your area. <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/.../bus-service.../>

This was very important because WNC is committed to form an Enhanced Partnership, in order to use our powers to improve services and develop this partnership by April 2022. From that date, the new discretionary forms of bus funding from Government will only be available to services operated, or measures taken, under an Enhanced Partnership or where a franchising scheme has been made.

Key areas that are being developed for inclusion in the BSIP include:

- The need to return patronage to pre-COVID levels before considering expansion
- Patronage growth will mainly come from enhancing existing commercial services
- Filling gaps in evening and Sundays on the most frequent services
- Reinstating withdrawn services in rural areas, and the need to consider reinstating a bus subsidy budget
- The need for improved bus priority to improve journey times and reliability
- The need for better roadworks liaison to improve journey time reliability
- Introducing zero-emission buses to tackle air quality and decarbonisation issues
- Improved information for bus passengers
- Publish a Bus Passenger Charter

The BSIP provides a means for the Council to secure significant additional funding for bus service improvements. However, to maximise the impact of improving our bus services in West Northamptonshire, the Council must consider options for match funding, particularly for Manifesto priority areas such as the reinstatement of rural bus services. As such funding would be beyond current budgets, the final BSIP will make clear that options for funding would need to be considered as part of the Council's budget for 2022-23 and beyond, and included in the public consultation thereon.

If we are to try to make sure that there is a focus on reinstating withdrawn services in rural areas, and WNC is to consider reinstating a bus subsidy budget, then we will need to lobby hard to get those services included in any future budget programmes. I have to say, I am disappointed at the lack of funding for the rural areas. Indeed the Cabinet paper being presented on 12 April 2022 does not address this shortfall.

Parish Casework

Planning Enforcement, Hackleton

On 28 June, I first worked on a planning enforcement issue in Hackleton. It related to Larkfleet Construction who were not complying with their Construction Management Plan September 2020-Condition 7 as shown in S/2020/1691/COND. For several months, I provided local residents with an update about the many and various enquiries raised in relation to Land at Lyne Walk, Hackleton. I engaged with the CEO of Larkfleet and the Site Manager together with the WNC Development Monitoring Officer.

I met them all on site on a weekly basis whilst we started to rectify the position. After achieving the removal of the cabin to an alternative location and re measuring all plots, I was able to assure the residents that all of the distances were in accordance as shown in approved plans. We also considered any potential encroachment onto the Bridleway. The plans showed that the narrowest point for the Bridleway was by the fencing relating to Plot 21, which was 4m from the site boundary. Therefore we further concluded that there had been no further breach of planning control.

I also made the residents aware that if they wished to register their concerns then they should complete the on-line planning enforcement complaint form via the WNC website, as follows:

Home > Planning and building control > Planning enforcement > South Northamptonshire > Report a breach of planning control > Begin this form...

If we are to take subsequent action, then it is important that, residents fill in these forms. I did of course continue to work on these issues on the resident's behalf. If any resident has issues with this development or any other then it is helpful if you attach a photograph or a copy of any logs that you have taken to your planning enforcement complaint form.

Grange Park Parish Council & SEGRO

In April 2020 SEGRO launched a new £10 million fund, The SEGRO Centenary Fund. They intended to build on and extend the company's approach to community engagement and support by launching further initiatives through 2021 to continue to support the community. They have a Community Liaison Group (CLG), which is managing and sharing information relating to the development of the SEGRO Logistics Park Northampton Gateway (SLPNG) and a Community Fund Scheme. Attendees include representatives from Roade Parish Council, Blisworth Parish Council, Milton Malsor Parish Council and Collingtree Parish Council.

Members of Grange Park Parish Council asked me why they were not included in the CLG. In June 2021, I wrote to Lizzie Humphreys, SEGRO enquiring as to why they were excluded. In addition, I investigated the matter with the relevant officers at WNC who provided the following information. The Development Consent Order (DCO), which Government approved in 2019 did not require a Community Fund. But, SNC agreed to administer such a fund via a S106 Agreement and entered into such an agreement with SEGRO and named Roade, Blisworth, Milton Malsor and Courteenhall Parishes as beneficiaries to a £300k fund. 8 months later in 2020 Collingtree Parish Council enquired whether SEGRO would be in favour of adding them to the Community Fund. They agreed and SNC entered into a second S106 Agreement for £75k.

I told Grange Park Parish Council that if the Parish Council wished Grange Park to be a beneficiary of the Community Fund then they would need to apply to SEGRO direct. Before doing so, I suggested that it might be worthwhile speaking to Collingtree Parish Council to gain an understanding as to how they went about things. In the meantime I continued to press for a response from the Partnership Development team.

Over the course of July and August 2021, I was in conversation with SEGRO regarding Grange Park Parish Council's request to be included in their Community Fund Scheme. Grange Park Council was advised that residents of Grange Park were experiencing relatively few or limited negative impacts from SEGRO and that they were a major beneficiary of the investment into the enhancement to M1, J15. Therefore, they were not considered eligible for a grant.

From a highways perspective the proposed development relies fundamentally upon the delivery of the A508 Roade Bypass and in combination with the added capacity at J15 of the M1. It is difficult to understand why Grange Park should have been treated differently to the other local communities. I believed that they should have been included in the Community Fund Scheme at the outset. On their behalf again, I chased Gary Gaskarth, cc Andrew Pilsworth, MD, National Logistics, SEGRO. My email was eventually passed to Kate Bedson, Senior Director who wrote to me on 20 July. We agreed to meet as soon as possible to discuss this matter. This meeting was scheduled for 18 August. Initially, Kate said in her response to me that there was some discretionary funding for local community projects that they could

administer on an annual basis, but that they could not revisit the initial Community Fund Initiative for Grange Park Council, which was at the heart of the present line of enquiry.

I met with Kate Bedson and Neil Impiazzi at the SEGRO site on 18 August 2021. As I had not heard back from Kate as promised, I wrote again on 8 September 2021. I reminded her that when we met, she committed to review the existing S106 Agreements and respond to me regarding item 4 on my agenda. During the meeting she agreed to item 5 and promised to let me have a form of words that would set out how Grange Park could bid for future funds on the same terms as the other Parish Councils.

The details of items 4 and 5 in my Agenda were as follows:

4. Next steps for £75k Grant Funded Project for Grange Park.
Let's work out what needs to be done to create and agree a project and action plan that results in SEGRO investing in Grange Park. Let's agree a form of words that SEGRO can send to Grange Park Parish Council, which makes this commitment.
5. Opportunity to bid for future fund on the same terms as other Parish Councils
Let's agree a form of words that sets out how Grange Park can bid for future funds on the same terms as the other Parish Councils.

On 30 September I received an email from Kate Bedson, Senior Director, National Logistics, SEGRO. They had decided, on a one-off exceptional basis, to extend the benefits that have already been agreed for neighbouring Parish Councils to Grange Park Parish Council. It has been quite a negotiation on my part, and I am delighted that we obtained a resolution to this longstanding issue. I continued to progress the matter with West Northamptonshire Council and SEGRO until the S106 was progressed by the lawyers.

By January 2022, the lawyers involved had finalised the Grange Park Parish Council and SEGRO S106, which had been delayed due to the transition from South Northamptonshire Council to the new Unitary, West Northamptonshire Council. All matters are now resolved and the first tranche of the Community Fund will be paid shortly. I have advised Grange Park Parish Council accordingly.

Applications for SEGRO funding are made using a proforma, which is reviewed by the WNC S106 team to confirm it is in accordance with the terms of the agreement and it is then circulated to the Community Liaison Group for comments. The proforma and comments will then be forwarded with a recommendation for consideration by WNC. If authorised, the funds are then paid out. The applicant and the Community Liaison Group will be advised of the outcome of the application for funding. All that remains is for Grange Park Parish Council to apply for the funds for an eligible project.

Review of Bus Lane Enforcement Scheme

I lobbied hard on Social Media prior to and post the election to let residents have their say on how bus lane rules should operate and be enforced to help keep Northampton's public transport moving. West Northamptonshire Council agreed to seek people's views on its Bus Lane Enforcement Scheme as part of a forthcoming review of the arrangements. Bus priority measures in the town include traffic lanes or sections of the street solely for use by buses, taxis or bicycles to help cut congestion and improve journey times. Enforcement of the bus lane rules has been in place since February last year, when the previous county council installed number-plate recognition cameras at the Weedon Road/St James' Road bus lane and at the Drapery, a bus-only street. The bus lanes were in operation 24/7 with motorists facing a fine of up to £60 if they break the rules.

Since WNC took on these arrangements in April this year, The Council became aware of significant concerns around the Weedon Road/St James camera, while The Drapery cameras appear to be doing the job effectively without controversy. I am pleased to say that WNC finally abolished the 24/7-bus lane in Weedon Road and St James' Road at a Cabinet meeting on 7 December 2022. This decision was made after 10 months of controversy.

Article 4 Land off Horton Road, Hackleton

All three Hackleton and Grange Park Councillors supported the confirmation of the Article 4 Direction at Land off Horton Road, Hackleton in accordance with the General Development Order and the Council's scheme of delegation. The Direction was initially made for six months as an emergency measure.

This month, WNC have confirmed the Article 4 direction relating to the removal of permitted development rights for means of enclosure (gates, fences, walls etc.) relating to the above land. I have also attached on Facebook a copy of the Direction and associated plan, which remains unchanged, but will now continue to have effect unless the local planning authority make a subsequent direction, or cancels the Direction.

Spatial Strategies

I wrote to Jonathan Nunn, WNC Leader and the WNC Cabinet on 13 September before they considered the Spatial Strategies Item 11 on the Agenda. Jonathan Nunn confirmed that my letter would be taken into account in the consultation. I made it clear that I had two primary concerns relating to Item 11, West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan: Spatial Options Consultation-Appendix A-Spatial Options 1e and 1f. I set out my concerns regarding Flood Risk and Appeal Dismissal Reasons in my letter and Monthly Report.

Denton Speed Limit

I received a request from Denton Parish Council to investigate a reduction in the speed limit on the A428. Over several years there have been a few incidents on this road and several requests for NCC Highways to look at how best to improve matters. I escalated the matter to Highways, and they agreed to put Denton Parish Council's Proposal to the Chair of the Road Safety Panel. They considered Denton Parish Council's request for a 40mph limit between the two access points into the village on the A428. There was a lot of discussion surrounding the request and it was decided that it would be useful for Police colleagues to gather some up to date speed data on the sections of road in question. This will enable the panel to make a more informed decision. The request will be considered further at the next meeting when the speed data will be available. In addition, I can advise that as part of the Red Route' process some route hygiene works have been identified along the A428 between Great Houghton and Yardley Hastings. This includes undertaking works to clean/repair/upgrade/replace existing signage, to improve conspicuity of hazards, including junctions, village entrances and lay-bys and to ensure a consistent approach to hazard signing between the two villages.

Consideration was also given to improving the signage at the lay-bys and changing the alignment of the western lay-by to prevent right turns and provide an acceleration lane. This work was all approved and will go into the programme subject to prioritisation. If any other residents want to send information including photographs for the Panel in support of the proposal or any related matter then you can send this to me directly: stephen.clarke@westnorthants.gov.uk

I will keep you informed regarding progress.

Community Walkabouts

In February I started Community Walkabouts. The first was in Brafield and it was most beneficial as it helped me to discuss with the community and councillors the work that needs to be done to ensure that we have a safe and pleasant environment for those who live there. West Northamptonshire has a rich legacy of rural villages with communities that need our support and encouragement to continue to thrive and be socially and economically viable. I intend to complete a similar exercise in the other parishes. Please let me know when you would like to organise a session in your area. Grange Park and Quinton have asked me for a Community Walkabout and I am just awaiting confirmation of suitable dates.

Causeway Bridge, Billing

I worked with Highways regarding the closure of the Causeway Bridge, Billing, which was becoming a major inconvenience to residents of Cogenhoe, Little Houghton, Denton, Brafield and Yardley Hastings. I was able to keep residents informed about the concrete barriers to protect the damage on the bridge being installed

Thursday 13 January and the road being re-opened after that. Highways liaised with Siemens to switch the signals back on before the road was re-opened. The repair works will take place at a later date and we will confirm this once it has been agreed. The repair will take approximately four weeks and will be under a full road closure. I have been asked to investigate whether Highways can keep the concrete blocks in place as a safety measure. I will keep you informed.

Scoping Opinion

WNC received an EIA Scoping Opinion submission on 8 February from the applicant Manor Oak Homes for 900 dwellings on land south and east of Grange Park and issued the Council's response within the agreed timescale.

Great Billing Sand and Gravel Extraction and Restoration

I was asked about the heavy plant in the field on the left at the bottom of the hill as you head out of Cogenhoe towards Whiston. The Great Billing Sand and Gravel Extraction and Restoration Application Sept 2017 covers the activity.

After some research, I was able to ascertain that the estimated recoverable saleable reserve is approximately 2.5 million tonnes. The total programme for the process to a restored site is between 18 and 20 years, of which excavation and reclamation will be approximately 13-15 years with completion of final stages of restoration to follow. The initial extraction areas in the western part of the site were required to create the voids necessary for water management. Extraction of these areas was estimated to take 4 years, before extraction was planned to move eastwards and progress anticlockwise around the site from the south west of the eastern area. The final extraction area will be under the Plant and Operations Area in the western area. The site is included as an allocation in Policy 4 of both plans, MA5 in the previous plan and M4 in the adopted plan and for extraction of 3 million or 2.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel respectively. Policy 28 of the adopted plan also identifies the importance of progressive restoration of sites that enhances biodiversity, local environment and amenity.

Serious Highways Issues outside the Memorial Hall, Brafield

I attended a Traffic Meeting that had been scheduled at the Memorial Hall, Brafield on the Green on 15 November 2021 by Matt Taylor, PCSO. The purpose of the meeting was to address some serious highway issues that had taken place outside the Hall a few weeks ago. There are a number of users of the Hall including a Play Group and Nursery. It was agreed at the meeting that I would discuss with Highways a number of improvements. Other work is being carried out by the Community and the Parish Council to engage local residents in the initiative in order to improve the safety of this very difficult road layout.

Complaints about the quality of Surface Dressing on the Main Road, Hackleton

I received a number of complaints about the quality of the recent Surface Dressing on Main Road, Hackleton, that took place on 13 August 2021. Indeed I was told by several of you that there were many lumps and bumps in the road making it a very uneven road surface, which was much worse than beforehand. I escalated this to Highways and I met with John Coomes, KierWSP Contract Manager, Northamptonshire Highways, Brixworth Depot, Harborough Road, Northamptonshire, NN6 9BX who informed me that he had checked the state of the road in Hackleton and he confirmed that there was a problem, which he would fix.

Casework in Progress

Change of Use for Microlight Airfield Retrospective

Councillor Fiona Cole has called in the Planning Application WNS/2022/0154/FUL, the Runway West of Forest Road, Piddington for consideration. It relates to a change of use from Agricultural to grass runway with associated facilities for use as a microlight airfield (retrospective).

NHS Dental Services, Northamptonshire

I am receiving complaints about the lack of NHS Dental Services in Northamptonshire. It is made worse by the fact that residents are unable to understand the current position, as the various search engines do not have the most up to date information about which Dentists are currently taking on NHS Patients. In fact in a recent BBC investigation dated 7 February 2022, entitled Northamptonshire: Finding an NHS dentist 'a needle in a haystack' - BBC News they found only one dental practice in the county taking on NHS patients.

I enquired how the Northamptonshire CCG intends to address the provision of NHS Dental Services in Northamptonshire, and I was advised that all primary care concerns and complaints come under the remit of NHS England/Improvement and referred to england.contactus@nhs.net.

I anticipate that rising energy costs will severely impact the cost of living and NHS Dental Services will be much needed this year.

Bins left on a narrow street in Conservation Area, Denton

Leaving bins out permanently on narrow streets in a Conservation Area is a problem in Denton. Some people, particularly those who do not have direct access to their rear gardens, have become accustomed to leaving their bins out all of the time. I referred the problem to the Waste & Cleansing team who are working with local residents to resolve the matter.

Parish Events

There are some great traditions across South Northamptonshire and I have enjoyed getting around Hackleton and Grange Park sampling the various events and meeting you all. I received a very warm welcome throughout and I was impressed at the untapped power of enthusiasm emerging after the events had been postponed due to the pandemic.

NHS 5th July

I joined the NHS Big Tea at 3pm on the 5th July by taking a break to celebrate the birthday of our NHS. I Took 5 minutes to wish the #NHS Happy Birthday and with others we donated to NHS Charities at <https://bit.ly/2RUHv59>

Brafield on the Green NHS plaque

A special thank you to Gill Morgan, the Jubilee Committee and Brafield on the Green Parish Council for the new plaque, which is now installed upon the village sign. This was intended to thank the NHS workers, the Essential workers, the Volunteers and to remember all those who lost their lives to COVID-19.

July 5th 1948 was a historic moment in our country's history. It was the day our NHS was born. Since March 2020 when the Coronavirus pandemic changed all our lives we have never been more aware of our NHS doctors, nurses, social care workers and paramedics plus an incredible number of critical workers who have kept us and essential services running. At Brafield on the Green on the 5th July 2021 we had a chance to show our gratitude. Nurse Karen Tilley, as a representative from Denton Village Surgery unveiled the beautiful plaque. I was honoured to attend the official unveiling.

Opening of the Coffee@Carey, Hackleton 27 July 2021

I visited the Coffee@Carey in Hackleton on the 25th May, shortly after it first opened. This was a new initiative and they had only been open for three weeks. It became a good place to meet local residents especially whilst the Lyne Walk enforcement issues were live. I then attended the opening of Coffee@Carey on 27 July 2021 with Andrea Leadsom, MP, Councillor Frances Billingham, Chairman of Hackleton Parish Council and Rev Jennie. Since then I have frequently visited Coffee@Carey at the Carey Baptist Church, 2 Chapel Lane, Hackleton on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, if I need to meet with anyone in Hackleton. Well done to those who have set up this Community Hub in the village.

Regular Community Fundraising events in Little Houghton

I continue to meet several members of the local community at their monthly Afternoon Tea and Coffee Morning events at St Mary's Church, Little Houghton. It is a popular venue with walkers and local residents.

Weekly Community events in Denton

I continue to meet members of the local community at their weekly coffee mornings at St Margaret's Church in Denton. It allows me to address ward issues as they arise.

Judeth Willoughby Charity Fundraiser, Hackleton

On 4 September after the Grange Park Summer Fest, I supported the 'Judeth Willoughby Charity' Fundraiser at the Hackleton Village Hall. The aims of the charity are to assist any person living in Hackleton, Horton, Piddington, Preston Deanery and part of Wootton Fields who is under 25 years and needs to purchase books or tools to further their education.

Mud Kitchen Café, Cogenhoe & Whiston Village Hall

In September, I took the opportunity to support the new Community Hub at the Mud Kitchen Café in Cogenhoe.

Since then I have made use of this facility to meet local residents and discuss casework. Paula and Sean Foster are providing an important service for their community. Since the outset it has been supported by Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council who hold their Community Support Desk, provide a collection point for prescriptions and offer a Monthly Community Lunch there. Sean and Paula now have a Monthly Farmers Market, which is proving to be very successful. It is also a hub for bread collections and various community events.

Grange Park Summer Fest

Grange Park held its Summer Fest on 4 September and I promised I would support them, so I went along early afternoon. I arrived just as others were carrying their Picnic Chairs, Baskets, Hampers, Totes, Coolers, and/or Backpacks into Foxfield Country Park. There was a steady stream of folks until about 3 o'clock. The band, Pure Genius started just after 2 o'clock and promised to play a selection of music from the 70's, 80's and 90's. I managed to get a drink and then proceeded to walk around chatting to some members of the Parish Council and the WNC Waste Partnership. I watched the South Northants Responders demonstrate their life saving skills. Mike Aluko was Master of Ceremonies and I caught up with him and the Chairman Martin Smith, when the Band was playing. There were lots of different things to eat and drink, a Raffle, things for the kids to do and of course the Fun Run. This event was postponed from last year because of the pandemic and so you could sense the untapped power of enthusiasm

Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust (NHCT)

On 11 September, it was the day that all of Northamptonshire's Historic Churches (NHC) were open for the annual sponsored Ride and Stride. It is a sponsored event for cyclists, joggers, walkers and horse riders. Indeed any mode of transport can be used as long as your sponsors are happy. I did a combination of car and walking. Half the money you raise comes directly to your chosen church and the other half to the NHC Trust to give grants towards the restoration of churches in the County. The event ran from 10am to 6pm. My first stop was at The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Bedford Road, Little Houghton. My second stop was at the Church of St Peter, Cogenhoe. My third stop was at the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Whiston. This church was unmanned, but it did have a register for us to sign as proof of attendance. Access to the church is difficult as there is no road access. My fourth stop was at the Church of St Mary Magdalen, Castle Ashby. My fifth stop was at the Church of St Andrew, High Street, Yardley Hastings. My sixth stop was at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, Preston Deanery. My seventh and final stop was at the Church of St John the Baptist, Ashton Road, Hartwell. We not only got our sponsorship forms signed to register our attendance, but we also got a well earned rest and a cup of coffee as we met with a number of parishioners sitting outside in the sunshine.

It was a great day visiting seven of Northamptonshire's Historic Churches. The Northamptonshire Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) was founded in 1955 with the object of raising funds to make grants to churches in Northamptonshire of all denominations for their "preservation, repair and maintenance, improvement, upkeep, beautification and reconstruction". The Trust's funds are raised by donations, subscriptions from friends, and the proceeds of the annual sponsored Ride & Stride, which takes place on the second Saturday in September each year. I have written a comprehensive report on the history of each of the seven churches visited and it is on Facebook. I plan to visit the remaining Hackleton and Grange Park Churches again this year on Saturday 10 September.

The Beat Bus

I met up with PCSO Matt Taylor on 5 January whilst he was out and about with the Beat Bus. At Cogenhoe, one of the residents, Jim asked me to speak to Highways about providing 30 mph signs to prevent the speeding traffic on the main road out of the village. Several others wanted to know about the Billing Bridge, which had been severely damaged. Matt and the Beat Bus had already been to Grange Park, Hackleton and Denton. They were off to Yardley Hastings and Hartwell after Cogenhoe.

Denton Christmas Fayre

I went to the Denton Christmas Fayre on 20 November 2021 in aid of Deafconnect. All funds raised are used to continue to support the deaf community in Northamptonshire. Established in 1874, Deafconnect is the only charity in Northamptonshire supporting deaf people of all ages.

Coffee Morning in aid of the Hope Centre. Little Houghton

I attended a Coffee Morning in aid of the Hope Centre on 20 November 2021. I enjoyed meeting up with everyone at Little Houghton Village Hall. Northampton Hope tackles poverty and exclusion. Their work helps people experiencing the most acute problems of disadvantage and marginalisation, including homelessness, addiction and mental health. As well as giving practical support, they focus on helping people to help themselves, provide support and services that will enable individuals to take back control of their own lives, and campaign with them against the causes of their disadvantage.

Service of Remembrance 11 November 2021

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918 the guns of Europe fell silent. After four years of bitter fighting, The Great War was finally over. The Armistice was signed at 5am in a railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne, France on November 11, 1918. Six hours later, at 11am, the war ended. The first Remembrance Day was conducted in 1919 throughout Britain and the Commonwealth. Originally called Armistice Day, it commemorated the end of hostilities the previous year. It came to symbolise the end of the war and provide an opportunity to remember those who had died.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945 Armistice Day became Remembrance Day to include all those who had fallen in the two World Wars and other conflicts. Armistice Day has been observed every year since 1919 with a two-minute silence at 11am on 11 November across the nation.

As well as standing together in Remembrance on 11 November, we also observe a two-minute silence at 11am on Remembrance Sunday. From peacekeeping missions to supporting the UK's response to Covid-19, our Armed Forces perform incredible tasks every day. At 11.00 am, at the Memorial on the Cogenhoe playing field, Councillor John Bailey laid a wreath on behalf of residents. This was followed by the "Last Post," which is used in public ceremonies commemorating the war dead and then we all observed two minutes silence concluding with "The Rouse (Reveille)."

Then four children from Cogenhoe Primary School laid a wreath on behalf of the school.

Service of Remembrance 14 November 2021

There was a Service for Remembrance at the Great War Memorial - Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire on 14 November 2021. Thank you to Patrick Lovering for reminding us all about the event. The short service was very poignant as a number of those present had relatives named on the war memorial. We sang two hymns

including "Thine be the Glory", which was followed by an Act of Remembrance whilst a list of those to be remembered by name was read by two children standing at the side of the war memorial. Then the 'Last Post' sounded and all were silent, save for the sound of the wind and the leaves swirling and fluttering down onto the green. After Reveille, the Minister said a few words which was followed by an Act of Commitment, then Prayers and a Reading. Our final Hymn was "Guide me, O thou great redeemer", which was followed by an Act of Penitence and further prayers. The national Anthem was sung at the end of our Service of Remembrance.

Little Houghton Fireworks

The dazzling firework display you didn't want to miss.

A special thank you to Annabel and John Strowbridge for hosting the Little Houghton Fireworks event on 5 November 2022. It was a splendid evening and it gave us all an opportunity to meet others from the village. The fireworks were most enjoyable as is seen on the video. To see the skies lighting up in November, with sparkling displays taking place across Northampton and beyond was an experience. You could see everyone's enthusiasm brewing as this would be the first time that we were able to enjoy bonfire night since 2019.

Everyone enjoyed the food-well done John and all the other chefs and stewards who helped with the Firework display and refreshments last night. A special thank you to Annabel for arranging transport for those with mobility problems. It was a very kind gesture picking them up at the entrance to the field just beyond Park Cottage, 81 Bedford Road and driving them all the way up to the top where the refreshments and a good vantage site for the Fireworks display was provided.

Castle Ashby and Denton Community Larder

On 15 March a group of volunteers in Castle Ashby launched a new community larder. They have been looking at a way to get affordable sustainable food to the villages and saving waste, by building on the work that they did during lockdown for the community. Led by Susan Wilson in Castle Ashby they have developed a solution which is an off shoot of the successful community larder in Roade. I was pleased to see the new Community Larder at the Compton Club, Castle Ashby in action and I was impressed by the local interest and the work of the volunteers. TowFood Community Larder offers different categories of membership and it is a community larder network that partners with local supermarkets, businesses and food surplus providers to reduce food waste and distribute affordable food throughout the community. They welcome everyone, with their main ethos being to reduce food waste. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the first Community Larder at Denton the following week as I was isolating with Covid.

MacMillan Coffee Afternoon, Cogenhoe

I attended the MacMillan Coffee Afternoon event at Cogenhoe Village Hall 25 October 2021. I enjoyed some Lemon Drizzle cake and coffee and meeting up with lots of you again. This was my first day out since my eye operation and it was good to catch up on things. Another great MacMillan fundraising event for people facing cancer.

MacMillan Cancer Support, Coffee Morning Yardley Hastings

On 24 September 2021, I joined villagers in Yardley Hastings for their Macmillan Cancer Support, Coffee Morning. It was held at the Memorial Hall and it was very well attended. Debbie and John were doing a great job serving us all with hot croissants and coffee and the cakes were very good indeed. Taking part in this Coffee Morning was the perfect chance to catch up over a cuppa and a slice of cake for a great cause. The money raised at a Macmillan Coffee Morning helps everyone with cancer to live life as fully as they can.

Carbon Battle Bus, DIRFT

On 23 September, I went to DIRFT to hear about the Zero Carbon Tour and see the UK's first 'Carbon Battle Bus'. The Zero Carbon Tour, which, started in the City of London on 28 April and is an eight-month tour

aimed to illustrate the phenomenal array of actions the business community is taking to address the climate crisis and take the net zero carbon message to communities around the world. The tour is travelling across the United Kingdom and it culminated at COP26 in Glasgow in November. This was the only physical stop off for the tour in West Northamptonshire. The tour aimed to share the net zero carbon message to communities across the UK in support of the UN-backed Race to Zero campaign, the world's largest alliance of actors committed to halving global emissions by 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. It highlighted how businesses can set their own net zero carbon targets in line with the Race to Zero's rigorous minimum criteria and implement plans to achieve them.

At the DIRFT stop off, they provided information about how to achieve net zero. There are to be free to attend carbon clinics as well as free Net Zero essentials workshops, which will give participants the tools and knowledge to join the Race to Zero with a robust net zero target and an action plan to support it.

I enjoyed hearing more about this important campaign and what needs to be done to achieve Net Zero.

Quinton Flower and Produce Show 5 September 2021

The Quinton Flower & Produce Show was back on 5 September 2021. This well loved annual event obviously couldn't take place last year, but everyone enjoyed seeing all the entries for 2021! There were award classes for vegetables, flowers, baking, craft and more. There were also classes for the children to enter plus photography, handicrafts and a wide variety of opportunities to show off your garden produce and your culinary and baking skills. The weather was glorious and we all basked in the sunshine, chatting and munching on home made pizzas to order. Afterwards there was a fun auction of the flowers and produce items, which remained. It was a great way to spend a sunny afternoon in Quinton. Thank you to all who worked so hard to make it such a huge success.

Hartwell Church Fete

I went along to the Hartwell Church Fete at Grange Farm House, Park Road, Hartwell on 14 August 2021. It was great to have a chat over a cup of tea and cake in the sunshine. All proceeds were for St John the Baptist Church, Hartwell.

LGA Virtual Annual Conference

I attended the Local Government Association virtual Conference, which was held from 6-8 July 2021.

In writing this report for the entire year, I have tried hard to mention and thank everyone that I have met and worked with along the way. If I have missed anyone then please email me or send me a message on Facebook. I would like you to know that I am passionate about our local community and that I have enjoyed working with you all over the past year as we started to address the issues we face. I know that there is still much to do, but I am confident that together we can make a huge difference to the quality of life of local people and how local issues are dealt with.

All the Best, Steve