

## NEWS REPORT SEPTEMBER 2025

### Monthly Highlights

Sam Simons suggests that we meet on site with the WNC design team to discuss the Leys Lane Footpath as there are nuances that would need Parish Council agreement. I will liaise with Sam regarding availability and advise Mike Billingham accordingly.

I have recommended a site visit with Highways and members of the Great Houghton Parish Council to consider and discuss the street lights further. We just need the Parish Council to agree a suitable date and time of day for us to meet.

Last month, I met with Paul Cook, Director Homes2Inspire/Shaw Trust who own and operate Robin House, 35 High Street, Great Houghton. Carley Musson, the line manager for the home, joined us and they answered my questions regarding the facility. As a result, I have suggested that they meet with the Great Houghton Parish Council in October at a date and time that is convenient. Carly and the home manager will be the best people to attend a meeting with the Parish Council. The agenda for the meeting would be:

- A summary of the work of H2I and the charity Shaw Trust. The strategic partnership with NCT.
- A summary of the of issues about finding suitable homes for looked after children.
- Without our breaking confidentiality, the work of the home with this child.
- Next steps any agreed actions from the meeting.

I am still awaiting an update from Tamara Roberts, Planning Enforcement regarding the gate and boundary treatments and whether they have responded to Mike Billingham already.

The Green Hill Solar Farm applicant submitted a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate on 23 May 2025 and the application was accepted on 19 June 2025. It will be determined by the Secretary of State, not local councils. The application is now in the pre-examination stage, during which members of the public, councils, and other stakeholders can submit a relevant representation to take part in the examination. For further information, to view the submission documents and the latest updates on the application, please visit the Planning Inspectorate's website.

<https://nsip-documents.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/...>

Once operational it will primarily impact North Northamptonshire. However during the two year construction phase West Northamptonshire will provide road access to certain sites. As a result, I have reviewed the relevant transport assessment details for Green Hill Solar Farm sites BESS and G. On 29 August 2025, I completed a site visit in order to understand the route access through West Northamptonshire. A number of residents have expressed concerns about the various access routes for cars, HGVs and abnormal loads and I wanted to take a look at the following two routes impacting Cogenhoe and the Houghtons ward.

- Access to Green Hill BESS is from Junction M1 Exit 15 via Wootton, Hardingstone, Brackmills turning right onto the A428 towards Brafield, Billing Road, York Avenue, Whiston Road and then Station Road and onto the substation site.
- Access to Green Hill Site G is from M1 Exit 14 via the A509 north to meet the A428 and turning right into a new access off the A428.

Having gained a better understanding of both routes, I have highlighted my concerns to WNC. See My Monthly Report.

On 9 September 2025, I met with Dan Johnson, Street Cleaning Supervisor and Elizabeth Newbery, Neighbourhood Warden, Environmental Health to carry out a site visit to three fly-tipping hot spots in the ward of Cogenhoe and the Houghtons. At the larger end of the scale fly-tipping can involve several truckloads of household, construction and demolition waste being tipped on different types of land and uncontrolled illegal waste disposal can be hazardous to the public, especially if it contains toxic material or asbestos. There are a number of hotspots in my ward that have attracted a significant amount of fly-tipped waste over the past several years, and I am trying to address this. We discussed how best to deal with the problems in Castle Ashby, Yardley Hastings and the A428, including options such as providing clear signage indicating that fly-tipping is illegal and implementing surveillance to deter offenders from dumping their waste at known fly-tipping hotspots. ANPR and AI can be used to quickly identify perpetrators from

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their vehicles. I would like us to have a planned program of activity that is rolled out over the remainder of this term of the Council. Once I have further news, I shall be in touch.

West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) is asking bus users to take part in a survey to help enhance local bus services. This is being delivered in partnership with sustainable travel consultancy GO Travel Solutions. The survey will provide feedback on current bus services from a broad range of different users across West Northamptonshire. Results will be used to guide future planning and investment in local bus services. The survey forms part of the area's Bus Service Improvement Plan, funded by the UK Government. Anyone who has used a bus in West Northamptonshire within the last four weeks is invited to complete the 5-minute survey. The survey is open until Friday 19 September. To take part, visit: [www.go-travel-solutions.com/wnc-bus-survey](http://www.go-travel-solutions.com/wnc-bus-survey).

Community organisations are now able to apply for vital funds via West Northamptonshire Council, Welcoming Spaces Grant Scheme, which runs until 10am on Monday 6 October 2025. See My Monthly Report.

West Northamptonshire Council is working hard to keep its books balanced despite continued financial pressures and rising demand for key services. This year WNC set a revenue budget for 2025-26 of £431.8 million (excluding the Dedicated Schools Grant), having initially started the budgetary process last summer with an anticipated £53m gap which it managed to close. In its latest budget monitoring update going to Cabinet later this month, WNC is currently forecasting a £9.6m overspend this year, equivalent to just over 2% of its budget, due to ongoing financial pressures in key services such as children's, education and adults.

The update, based in the authority's finances four months into the 2025-26 financial year, provides an early snapshot of the Council's in-year challenges and work is already under way towards closing the gap by the end of March 2026. Last year the Council also found itself forecasting overspends at various points of the budgetary process, however finished the financial year on budget. The Council's revenue monitoring and medium-term financial plan will be the subject of discussion at the Cabinet meeting on Thursday, 18 September in the Forum, Towcester from 6pm.

A former Reform UK councillor who was elected to West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) in May has officially been expelled from the party after an internal investigation. In June, just five weeks after the local elections, the group announced that the member for Hackleton and Roade had been suspended. Reform UK said Cllr Adam Smith will not have the whip restored after they found that he brought "both the party and the Reform UK group on West Northamptonshire Council into disrepute". He is currently sitting as an independent councillor.

On 1 September 2025, WNC issued Planning Contravention Notices to the owners of three hotels being used by the Home Office for asylum accommodation. The Council believes a breach of planning control may have occurred at the hotels and this is the first formal step in finding out more information before deciding whether enforcement action is required. The hotel owners have 21 days to respond to the notice and failure to do so is an offence under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Alongside actively collating the evidence it needs for a robust legal case, as part of its action WNC is also ensuring it follows the full process for using formal planning enforcement powers. Epping Forest District Council is trying to block a hotel from housing asylum seekers and it has confirmed its plan to appeal directly to the Supreme Court. Migrants were due to be moved out of The Bell Hotel in Epping, Essex, after Epping Forest District Council secured a temporary injunction in August. This was later overturned at the Court of Appeal, which went on to rule the legal challenge could go no further. But the Conservative-run council said on 4 September 2025 that its legal team had been instructed to proceed with an application to the Supreme Court.

I am just back from a short vacation in Argyll & Bute. I had a wonderful time and it was so relaxing to spend time with family whilst reconnecting with the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

I am glad to be back and I look forward to re-engaging with you all shortly.

*All the Best, Steve*

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