

Report for Kilsby Annual Parish Meeting May 2023

Unsurprisingly, the last twelve months since your Parish Meeting in 2022 have been extremely busy. Unfortunately I am not able to attend as many of your monthly Parish Council meetings as I would like to, as other meetings also fall on the same Tuesday in the month. However I do send in a report every month whether or not I am able to come to the meeting and I have been keeping your Parish Council updated with changes in the Planning Service and other functions of West Northants Council (WNC).

The Daventry Area Planning Committee has met in Towcester since March as the council offices in Lodge Road are being closed down. Soon there will only be two area planning committees serving the whole of West Northants. West Northants Council invited the Planning Advisory Service to conduct a peer review of the Service last November. Parts of this review were highly critical, describing “town and parish councils as incandescent” with the planning service and the “worrying culture” observed at Daventry Area Planning Committee posing a significant risk in terms of reputation and also in terms of financial cost”. More details in this link: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 11/04/2023 18:00 \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#) An Action Plan and timetable for improvements is now in place for the Service.

One local issue affecting Kilsby residents is the continued delay of the Barby Sporting Club planning application. I have not received any recent update from the case officer dealing with this application. The applicants may be considering a significant change to the existing scheme. If this is the case then there will be a further consultation before the application comes to committee.

I am in regular contact with Kilsby Action Group regarding the Bericote proposal, which is understandably causing major concern in the village.

All local residents have of course been impacted by the cost of living crisis and the increased charges levied by the Council in its 2023-24 budget. In order to maintain services Council Tax increased by 4.99% and the garden waste charge increased from £42 to £55 per year. Other fees and charges have also gone up – one by an eye watering 132% (the call out fee for vermin infestation is now £86, last year the charge was £37). The highest level of inflation in 40 years and increased demand from Adult Social Care, Home to School Transport and the Children’s Trust has put huge pressure on the Council’s finances. The Trust, which operates independently from West and North Northants, is currently £20.9m over its 2022-23 £130m budget allocated by the two authorities. Around £12m will have to be paid by West Northants, which will have to be found from savings made in other services or unspent reserves.

In the last year WNC has made progress with its net zero and sustainability goals. The Council has pledged to be net zero by 2030 and in February produced a report outlining its baseline CO2e emissions data for its first year. This data will enable the Council to develop a detailed emissions reduction plan and monitor progress towards it. I am part of the cross-party group that is monitoring its progress. Other activities I have been busy with which are contributing to tackling climate change are volunteering at the weekly Daventry Food Larder and supporting a proposal to develop a cycle path between Yelvertoft and Crick.

Over the last year West Northants residents have welcomed over 700 Ukrainian nationals fleeing conflict under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. I have supported local residents who are hosting families and was a host myself to a couple. Sadly there are still 227 Afghan

nationals in our area who have been living in bridging hotels since September 2021, only 6 families have been rehoused locally.

Living in a hotel as a child for 18 months must have a very negative impact on children's development, whatever the resettlement support given by the Council. Our own most vulnerable children have also been in the spotlight recently. In-house therapy and counselling services for children and young people living in care homes was discontinued in 2016. A review found that children in our county with significant mental health issues can wait for as long as two years to be seen by Children and Mental Health Services. At the Full Council meeting in March I proposed a motion to re-examine reintroducing therapeutic care to fostered children and those in children's homes and residential settings. This motion was supported unanimously. The need for such support has recently been made even more pressing, given that the Children's Trust's fostering service was recently rated as inadequate by Ofsted.

Over the last year I have received a number of queries from Kilsby residents which I have been pleased to help with. I hope I can assist further in the next 12 months, my contact details are below.

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