

Report for Parishes

Apart from a couple of Parishes meeting in April, most annual Parish meetings will be taking place after day one of the new council!

That we have got to this point after the testing year we have had is quite something. Before writing this update I had a look at the last and my, what a difference a year makes. It was written in February, just as the news was beginning to be dominated by the virus. Last February blueprints for the operation of the services of the new Council were being developed and the ambition was for significant transformation in the way services were delivered – to improve the customer experience and, of course, save money. The impact of Covid, and the need for council staff to become deeply involved in the response hampered much of the preparation, and it was feared that the most basic ‘safe and legal’ delivery would be all that could be achieved. However, significant ambition has returned and major transformation in ways of working began in Q3 2020 in adult services, the Children’s Trust was established in November and most services have been split in two – unless there is a good reason not to.

In addition to splitting services from NCC across the two councils, we have had to combine and incorporate the services offered by SNC, Daventry and Northampton Borough. This work stream has shown that there are in excess of 1000 different services offered across the council.

We will be the 5th largest Unitary in England after Cornwall, Buckinghamshire, County Durham and Wiltshire

Have a net budget of £326,570,000

Have a staff headcount of 2295

Serving a population of 432,000

One of the major issues in establishing a new Council, has been preparing its first budget and setting Council Tax. Of course with three different local councils and a county council there were 3 different council tax rates. It is a legal requirement that by the start of year 8 we must all be harmonised and charged the same band rates. There is very little leeway in how to achieve this, however it was agreed that it should be done over 3 years with a consistent adjustment across each sovereign council until parity is reached.

	Average Band D Council Tax 2020/21	Average Band D Council Tax 2021/22	Change (£)	Change (%)
Daventry	£1,451.56	£1,536.55	£84.99	5.83%
Northampton	£1,516.26	£1,584.20	£67.94	4.46%
South Northamptonshire	£1,481.75	£1,559.80	£78.05	5.25%
Average	£1,491.94	£1,566.39	£74.45	4.99%

We have had to raise Council Tax by 1.99% and the Social Care Precept by 3%. 2/3 of council income is now made up of Council Tax (compared to just over 1/3 just eight years ago), and, while the new Council will seek to deliver more, for less, the average Band D council tax in West Northamptonshire (excluding Police, Fire and Parish) is £1566 vs an average for English shire unitaries of £1618.

Over the last 3 years the finances of the County Council been brought under control. Following a transformation of and by the finance team, NCC has gone from a position of negative reserves in 2018, to in 2021, bequeathing reserves of c£48m to West Northamptonshire, as well as a year of delivering services within the expected budget envelope. This profound change of ethos will serve our residents well as we embark on our journey as a new unitary council in the heart of England.