

## Introduction and Welcome!

Welcome to my latest Update.

As the end of the year rapidly approaches, I have been reflecting on the last 12 months. I thought it would be nice to end the year looking back with this special '2022: A Year in Review' issue. I have highlighted some of the poignant events that have helped make this year unique. I am looking forward to 2023 which will no doubt bring new challenges and successes.

I also wanted to focus on the Council's draft budget proposals for next year (2023/24). These were set out at today's meeting of the Executive (22 December). We have also launched our budget consultation today too and we are really keen to get your views on. You can take part via our [consultation portal](#).

I have also included information on the news that the Executive approved a Carbon Management Plan that will drive delivery of our goal to be carbon neutral. The Council is supporting families this Winter and I have included some information on that as well as the news that North Northamptonshire has been allocated £4.8m of Shared Prosperity Funding. This is all positive news for North Northamptonshire.

I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to all staff, elected members, parish and town councils, voluntary and partner organisations for all their hard work in what has been a challenging year for everyone.

Thank you to everyone who has joined us at our events, taken part in our consultations and shown an interest in the work the Council does (and in local democracy).

I am very conscious that many of our staff will continue to work over the Christmas period to ensure that local public services carry on running. This is the case whatever the weather or the occasion and I am very grateful for their commitment and dedication.

Whatever your plans are, and however you celebrate, I hope you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

## Draft Budget for 2023/24

I am delighted to be able to share details of North Northamptonshire Council's draft budget for the next financial year.

I'm sure you'll all agree that it has been another challenging 12 months for everyone. Despite this, our staff and elected members have been working tirelessly to ensure that we strive to provide the best for the residents of North Northamptonshire.

We know our services are vital to our residents and local businesses and we are seeing an increase in demand for our services in these difficult times. Unprecedented levels of inflation driven by global events present significant challenges for everyone: individuals, businesses and local authorities, making running costs more expensive.

Creating an efficient Council which can deliver vital services while being robust enough to withstand economic uncertainty is the cornerstone of North Northamptonshire Council's budget proposals for 2023/24.

Putting this budget together has not been easy and we have been very cautious with our finances. We continue to work tirelessly to deliver savings, to innovate, improve services and to attract funding from outside the area.

A report, that was discussed at Executive today (22 December), proposed that the Council sets a balanced budget for 2023/24. This means that we will ensure that the Council spends within its means, whilst also protecting vital services. While this is challenging, we have laid strong foundations for financial stability against a backdrop of global financial uncertainty.

The net (revenue) budget for the Council for 2023/24 is £336 million. This money will be used to provide a range of vital services to residents and businesses across the area including care to vulnerable adults and children, education, the disposal and collection of waste, household waste recycling, highways, economic development, housing and support for the homeless plus much more.

We would like your views on our budget proposals. You can take part in the budget process and have your say via our [consultation portal](#).

### Next steps

The consultation on our draft budget will run until midnight on Friday 27 January.

The Executive will then meet on 9 February to consider final budget proposals for recommendation to Full Council on 23 February.

You can [watch meetings of the Executive and the Council on our YouTube channel](#).

## Executive approves Carbon Management Plan

Today, the Executive approved a new Carbon Management Plan.

In July 2021, the Council declared a Climate and Environment emergency and set out its aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

The Carbon Management Plan sets out how the Council will achieve this goal, by establishing its baseline carbon emission and identifying key areas of focus to ensure its targets are met.

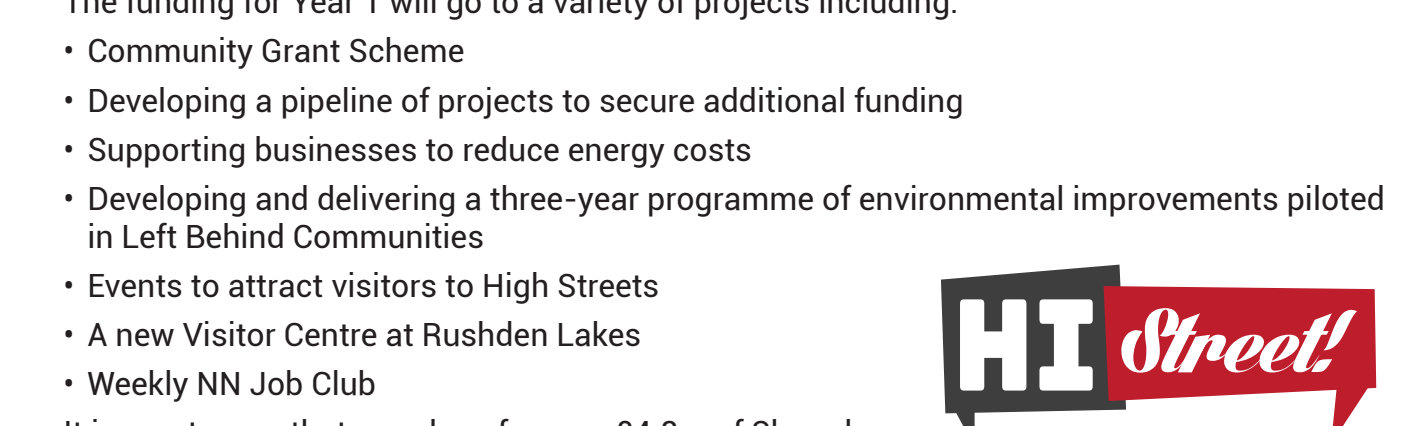
The Plan has been broken down into priority areas including buildings, fleet and carbon off-setting. It has been developed with input from services across the council and looks at a variety of actions from behavioural change through to improving energy efficiency of buildings and large-scale investment decisions in carbon reducing technology.

Right from the beginning of Council, we have been clear that tackling climate change and looking after the environment must be the 'green thread' that runs through the organisation. We take our responsibility of reducing emissions across North Northamptonshire extremely seriously, which is why I am delighted that we have now approved our Carbon Management Plan.

As part of the work to develop the plan, the Carbon Emissions for the Council have been calculated to be around 13,600 tonnes CO2e per year, with the largest emitters being identified as electricity, gas and emissions from closed land fill sites.

The Council has set aside £1 million of funding across three years to help support it on its journey to becoming carbon neutral.

You can read our [Carbon Management Plan online](#).



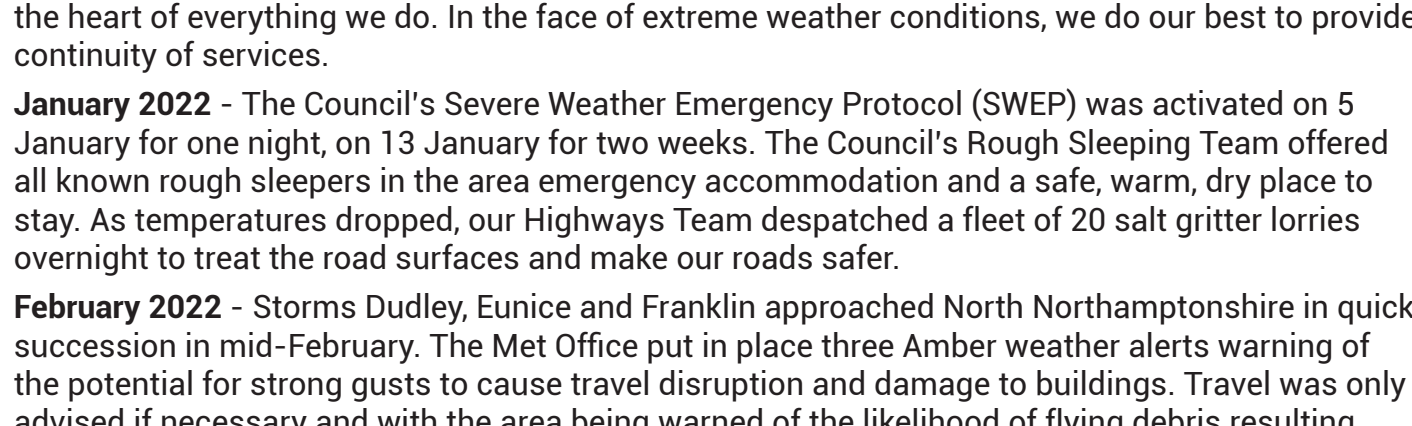
## Supporting families this Winter

North Northamptonshire Council is committed to supporting the health of our children and families. Those parents, guardians, or carers with a child eligible for Free School Meals, who also started in either Reception or Year 7 this Autumn Term, are being given a one-off school clothing grant payment of £50.

Those eligible will be sent a voucher code by their child's school, which must be redeemed by Tuesday 31 January 2023. This can be used at a supermarket, chosen by the recipient, to buy school clothes such as a warm coat or shoes.

I am pleased that the Council has opted to support this important initiative. School uniforms, particularly when starting a new school, can be costly, and put immense strain on anyone who is already struggling to balance a tight budget. We believe that this payment will ensure that their children are suitably wrapped up warm during the coldest months.

Find out more about the support we are giving on our [website](#).



## North Northamptonshire allocated £4.8m of Shared Prosperity Funding

I am delighted to say that projects across North Northamptonshire will receive funding boosts following approval from central Government, as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

All areas of the UK will receive an allocation of the Fund, but to unlock the money, North Northamptonshire Council had to submit an Investment Plan, setting out the challenges and opportunities in the area across three areas: Communities and Place, Supporting Local Businesses, People and Skills.

The Investment Plan has now been approved, which means funding will be released for Year 1 and has been provisionally allocated for Years 2 and 3.

The funding for Year 1 will go to a variety of projects including:

- Community Grant Scheme
- Developing a pipeline of projects to secure additional funding
- Supporting businesses to reduce energy costs
- Developing and delivering a three-year programme of environmental improvements piloted in Left Behind Communities
- Events to attract visitors to High Streets
- A new Visitor Centre at Rushden Lakes
- Weekly NN Job Club

It is great news that our plans for over £4.8m of Shared Prosperity Funding have been approved or allocated and work can start on a range of exciting projects that will bring growth and development to the area.

These funds should help make a difference across North Northamptonshire, impacting local communities and supporting businesses in the area.

Further details about community grants and opportunities for business and community groups to apply for funding will be made available soon and I will ensure that details are included in this Update.



## Some highlights from the last year

### Delivering modern public services (whatever the weather)

The weather is a favourite topic of conversation between Brits. However, it can be a challenge and a cause for concern. In the space of 12 months, the weather gauge has swung from one extreme to the other (and back again).

Staff and Councillors at North Northamptonshire Council put residents and local communities at the heart of everything we do. In the face of extreme weather conditions, we do our best to provide continuity of services.

**January 2022** - The Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was activated on 5 January for one night, on 13 January for two weeks. The Council's Rough Sleeping Team offered all known rough sleepers in the area emergency accommodation and a safe, warm, dry place to stay. As temperatures dropped, our Highways Team despatched a fleet of 20 salt gritter lorries overnight to treat the road surfaces and make our roads safer.

**February 2022** - Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin approached North Northamptonshire in quick succession in mid-February. The Met Office put in place three Amber weather alerts warning of the potential for strong gusts to cause travel disruption and damage to buildings. Travel was only affected if necessary and with the area being warned of the likelihood of flying debris resulting in serious injury and risk to life. For the safety of our residents, our council parks and household waste and recycling centres (tips) were temporarily closed until the storms had passed.

**June 2022** - In mid-June, the forecast of Wildfire risk showed as 'Level 5 - Exceptional', meaning that wildfires, should they start, could spread extremely quickly. To protect our visitors and green spaces, we issued a ban on all barbecues in our parks and woodlands across North Northamptonshire.

**July 2022** - In mid-July, the Met Office issued its first ever Red weather warning for extreme heat as temperatures reached 38 degrees in the county. We worked with partner agencies and voluntary services to provide water, sun cream, and homeless and shelter stations for rough sleepers and the homelessness community throughout the district.

**December 2022** - The Council's Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) was activated on 7 December as temperatures plummeted. As at the start of the year, our Rough Sleeping Team offered emergency accommodation to all known rough sleepers in the area. We also issued warnings of keeping off frozen lakes following the tragedy in Lilling.



## The Queen's New Year Honours

2022 got off to a flying start. I was delighted to see some very talented local people receiving recognition in The Queen's New Year Honours. It was a great way to see in the New Year. They are an inspiration to us all. We shall have to wait and see if any North Northamptonshire residents feature in the King's New Year Honours.

### Local residents recognised in the New Year's Honours

North Northamptonshire Council congratulates local residents from North Northamptonshire who were recognised in the Queen's New Year's Honours at the start of 2022.

From Olympians and Paralympians to public sector workers, as well as volunteers and those making a difference in their communities, 11 individuals received honours:

- **Aaron Shrive BEM** - Desborough - Supplied the NHS with PPE. For services to the Covid-19 response.
- **Alison Duckles CBE** - Wellingborough - Head, Learning and Development, Laing O'Rourke. For services to education.
- **Professor Ben Hodgkinson BEM** - Geddington - Created CPAP device. For services to the NHS during COVID-19.
- **Charlotte Worthington MBE** - Corby - Olympic gold medal winner. For services to BMX racing.
- **Dylan Fletcher-Scott MBE** - Formerly of Desborough - Olympic gold medal winner. For services to sailing.
- **Julie West BEM** - Rushden - Poppy Appeal volunteer, Rushden Branch Royal British Legion. For voluntary service to veterans.
- **Kevin Moseley MBE** - Wollaston - Founder and Chief Executive Officer, SwimFin Ltd. For services to international trade, to investment and to charity.
- **Maisie Summers-Newton MBE** - Wollaston - Paralympic gold medal winner. For services to swimming.
- **Timothy Aldous BEM** - Kettering - Works Supervisor, Forestry England. For services to forestry.
- **Vincent James BEM** - Irchester - Employee, Network Rail. For services to prisoners.
- **Yvonne Baker OBE** - Rushden - Chief Executive, STEM Learning. For services to STEM education.



## Standing in solidarity with Ukraine

In February this year, North Northamptonshire Council condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and vowed to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. At a meeting of Full Council on 24 February, I moved a motion speaking out against the act of aggression in Eastern Europe. The motion was seconded by the Labour Group and supported by the Green Alliance, giving cross-party support.

In March, North and West Northamptonshire Councils announced that they would support the Government in its efforts to help resettle refugees from Ukraine via the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

In the evening of Thursday 3 March, North Northamptonshire Council held a vigil at the Corby Cube as a show of solidarity and support for the people of Ukraine.

Members of the public attended for a moment of quiet reflection.

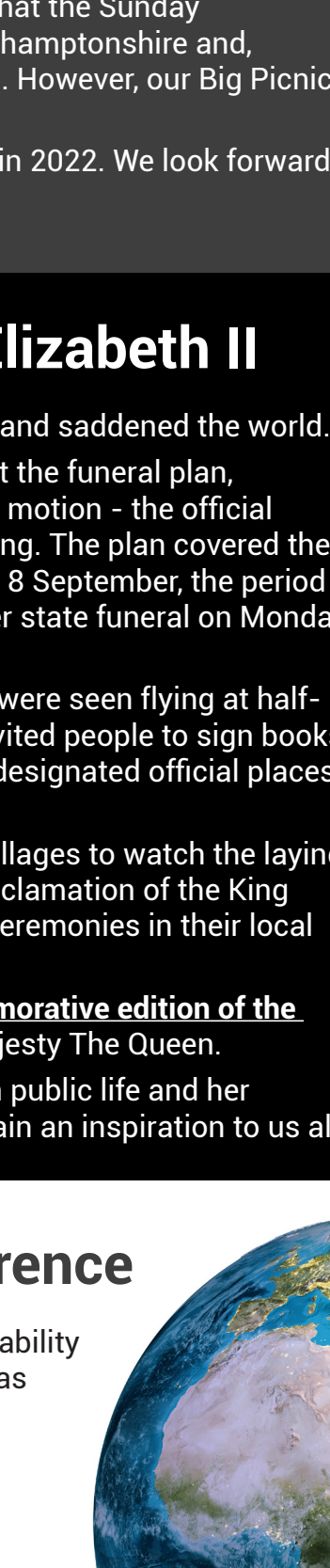
The Cube was chosen by the Council as it is the heart of North Northamptonshire's democratic decision making and symbolised the democracy which is under attack in Ukraine.

In December, to help cover rising living costs, North Northamptonshire Council increased payments for Homes for Ukraine hosts from £350 to £550 a month from November through to March 2023.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we have supported the people of Ukraine and have welcomed 500 refugees into the area. 390 are staying with hosts. For those not staying with hosts, some have moved into their own accommodation or move to other areas in the UK, whilst others have returned to Ukraine.

We will continue to do all we can to help.

I would like to thank everyone who taken part in the Homes for Ukraine scheme so far, you are really making a difference to people's lives. We are always looking for more hosts and you can find information on how to apply on our [Ukraine web pages](#).



## Making services more accessible

Regarding Council services, I wanted to highlight a key improvement that we have made over the last year.

We have made improvements across a wide range of services and although I acknowledge we still have much to do, the choice was not easy. One service that I did want to say something about is the Council's online service on the website.

The Council's online service is vitally important. It allows customers to access information at a time and place that suits them. We are continuing to develop and improve the content available and we still have a lot that we want to do.

However, North Northamptonshire Council's website has got off to a really strong start and it has been independently ranked as being the most accessible council website in the country for residents and businesses. Making services and information easily accessible to residents and business is just one part of our commitment to delivering modern public services. We don't see this as the end of the journey, we see it as just the start!

The [Cost of Living](#) information recently added to the Council's website provides a good example of the sort of advice and information that is available to our customers day and night, seven days a week.

**Cost of living**  
Helping residents who need support with the cost of living

**Council and Government support**

[Household Support Fund](#) [Apply for Council Tax Support](#)

## weareone

On 1 April 2022, North Northamptonshire Council celebrated its first birthday.

The Council marked the occasion by thanking all local residents, businesses, Council staff and members, parish and town councils, voluntary and community sector organisations and partner agencies for working with us through the challenges of the Council's first year.

The Council is proud to serve North Northamptonshire and everyone who lives and works in the area.

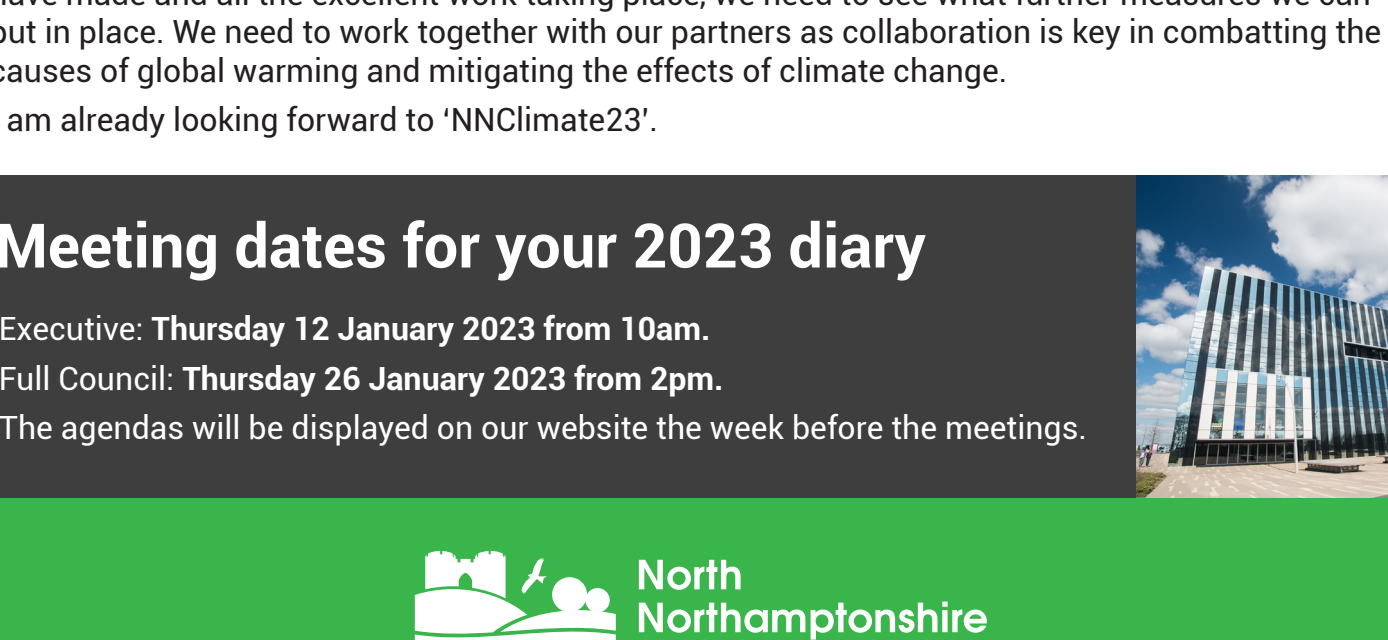
These are just a some of the highlights of our celebration:

- We have had to deal with some difficult legacy issues. They have not been easy to deal with, but we have not shied away from our responsibilities. Where we have made mistakes, we have put our hands up straight away and apologised, and focused on taking corrective action without delay. These are behaviours linked to our Council's values.
- We continue to transform services, looking at how we can evolve so that our services become more efficient and effective - and drive the delivery of the Council's key commitments.
- Creating a new Council within the context of a pandemic was immensely difficult and I would like to thank everyone for their tremendous hard work and understanding. I look forward to the challenges and opportunities as we move towards our third year.

## Events return to our towns and high streets

It was wonderful to see events returning to our towns and high streets this year after the Government lifted COVID-19 restrictions and issued their 'Living with COVID-19' white paper.

This allowed the Council to organise and host an extensive series of events, including the return of the International Waendel Walk (May), the Health and Wellbeing Festival (September), the Corby Bonfire and Fireworks Display (November) and the Christmas Lights Switch-On Events in (November).



The Council worked with partners from the community and public sectors to deliver several inaugural events to promote our services and offer advice including the Festival of Social Care (July), the Older People's Fair (July) and the Adult Social Care Showcase (October).

The biggest event of the year was, of course, the Platinum Jubilee. There were some fabulous events and activities that took place across the UK. It was unfortunate that the Sunday was accompanied by a Met Office Yellow weather warning in North Northamptonshire and, understandably, a number of events across the area had to be cancelled. However, our Big Picnic Lunch still took you and your family and friends for the rain.

Thank you to you and your family and friends for supporting our events in 2022. We look forward to hosting more events in 2023.

## In memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

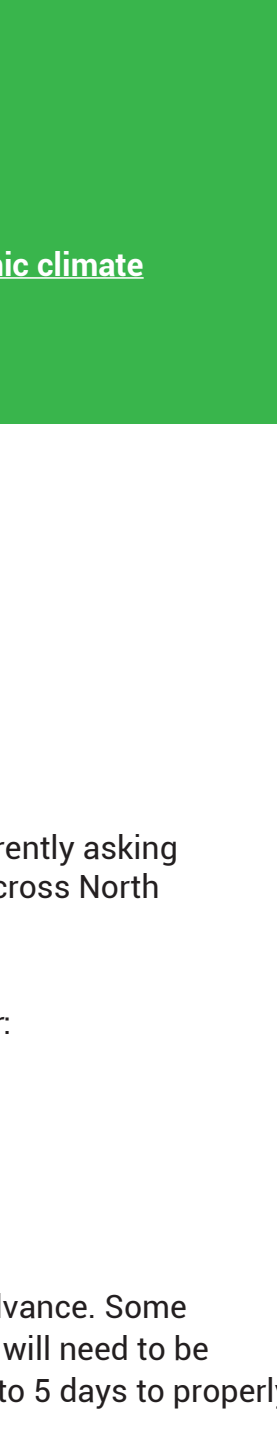
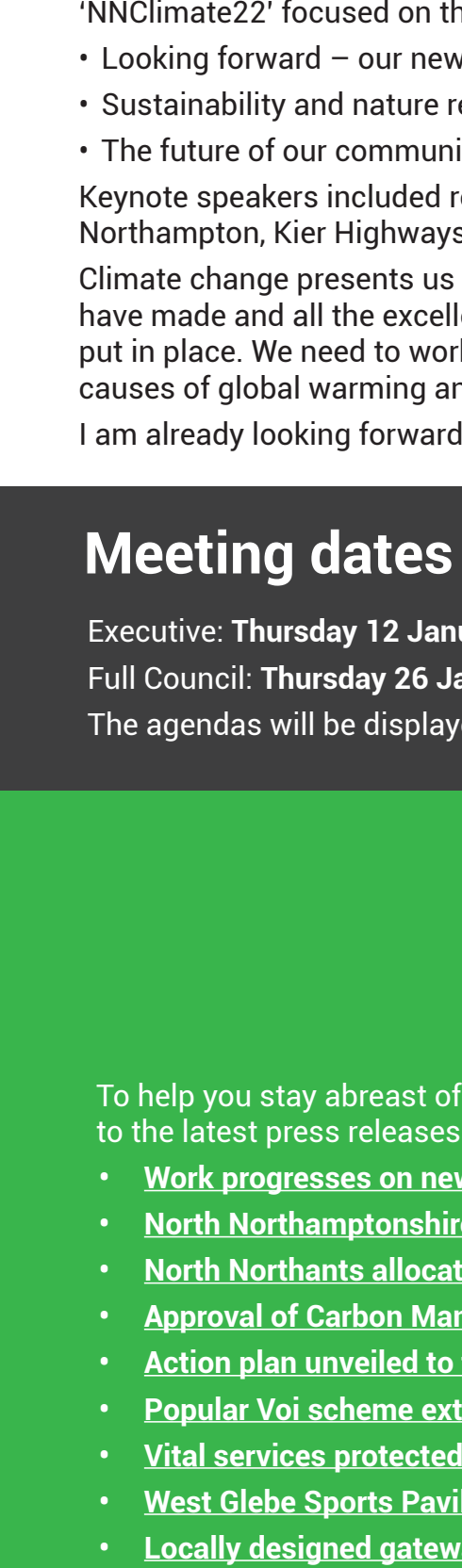
The death of Queen Elizabeth II shocked and saddened the world. The news that Operation London Bridge, in motion - the official protocol for marking Her Majesty's passing, the plan covered the announcement of her death on Thursday 8 September, the period of official mourning, and the details of her state funeral on Monday 19 September.

In North Northamptonshire, Union Flags were seen flying at half-mast on public buildings. The Council invited people to sign books of condolence to pay their respects and designated official places for the laying of floral tributes.

People gathered across our towns and villages to watch the laying of wreaths, to hear the reading of the Proclamation of the King and to attend Service of Remembrance ceremonies in their local churches.

The Council dedicated a special [Commemorative edition of the Leader's Update](#) to pay tribute to Her Majesty The Queen.

Her Majesty played such an active role in public life and her kindness, caring and dedication will remain an inspiration to us all.



### Top Facebook posts so far this week (19-21 December 2022)

- Work progresses on new affordable homes in Irthlingborough: (Reach 6,194, Post Clicks 743)
- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England are currently asking for residents' thoughts on proposed changes to electoral wards across North Northamptonshire. Have your say before 6 February 2023 (Reach 2,301, Post Clicks 367)
- North Northamptonshire Council is supporting families this Winter: (Reach 1,432, Post Clicks 41)

### Top Tweets so far this week (19-21 December 2022)

- North Northants allocated £4.8m of Shared Prosperity Funding (Impressions 1,141, Engagements 42)
- If your turkey is frozen, check the guidance on the packaging in advance. Some turkeys can be cooked from frozen. However, most frozen turkeys will need to be defrosted. Plan in advance, as a whole turkey can take between 3 to 5 days to properly defrost. (Impressions 490, Engagements 6)
- Make sure you are following North Northants tourism channels to keep up-to-date with latest events, offers and places to discover. This is Kettering - @ThisisKettering Love Corby - @lovecorbyuk Destination Nene Valley - @NeneValley Chester House Estate - @ChesterHouse\_UK (Impressions 428, Engagements 12)

## Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have ideas of items to include in future updates please let me know at [executive@northnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:executive@northnorthants.gov.uk)

With Best Wishes,  
Jason

Follow me on Twitter  
[@SmithersJason](#)

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