

District Councillor Helen Howell for Stanwick & Hargrave

Chairman of East Northamptonshire Council 2020/21



New Chairman elected at East Northants Council virtually

History was made this week as technology and tradition combined when East Northamptonshire Council (ENC) welcomed a new Chairman for its last Civic Year via the first virtual full council meeting.

Following two previous successful committee meetings, ENC Councillors gathered to witness Cllr Helen Howell take over from outgoing chairman Cllr Dudley Hughes, at the Annual Meeting of the council for 2020/21.

Cllr Howell has served on the council for five years and was Vice-Chairman for the past two years, she will be supported by her consort, Cllr Lee Wilkes. She will now be Chairman of ENC, until it ceases to exist on 31 March 2021 and the new North Northamptonshire Council is formed.

During the virtual meeting, Cllr Howell said:

“Since I first became a Councillor for ENC, I have always felt part of something special; I have met so many wonderful people and hope to continue to do so over my year as Chairman.

“As we enter our final year, we must make it special - East Northamptonshire Council deserves to go out with a fanfare and when we are able to celebrate the district and the people who live in the communities within it, we must do so.”

As soon is permitted, Cllr Howell will be organising a variety of events to raise funds for her chosen charity East Northants First Responders, a group of volunteers who live in the district and are trained by East Midlands Ambulance Service to respond in emergency situations. Having been a volunteer for the group, Cllr Howell has seen first hand the important work they do.

District councillor for Lower Nene Ward, Cllr David Brackenbury was elected as Vice-Chairman for this year.

Council Leader re-elected during virtual meeting

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During East Northamptonshire Council's (ENC) first virtual Full Council meeting on Wednesday, 13 May 2020.

Cllr Steven North, was re-elected unopposed as the Leader of ENC.

The appointment means that Cllr North will now lead ENC for the 10th consecutive year and until it ceases to exist on 31 March 2021 and the new North Northamptonshire Council is formed.

He is also Leader of the ruling Conservative group and represents the council in the Rushden Sartoris Ward.

Cllr David Jenney was re-elected as Deputy Leader and pledged his support to Cllr North, to the council and to the district.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, ENC councillors are currently conducting meetings virtually and during the full council, Cllr North said:

“It’s a great privilege to lead the council for a 10th year, especially as we enter this final year as East Northamptonshire Council. This was always going to be an unusual occasion; however I never expected to be doing the last Annual Meeting virtually.

“Knowing that the new North Northamptonshire Council will come into existence on 1 April 2021 over the past year, we have continued to work on our legacy projects, and more recently alongside the current situation - these remain our focus.

“One of our key projects is Enterprise Centre, East Northants in Raunds and I am pleased to announce it is nearly complete and will be a valuable support for businesses old and new as our economy recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

“We also continue to work on future wider development in the district, and our work on the Local Plan is nearly complete, alongside our continued work on the Rushden Sustainable Urban Extension and Tresham Garden Village.

“We are always keen to support local communities and earlier this year, we agreed our last round of Communities Facilities Fund. Since the initiative was launched in 2013, we have used money received from the New Homes Bonus, to award nearly £3 million to projects up and down the district, both large and small. It has been a privilege to see what a difference these projects make and we hope to be able to celebrate their success later in the year.

“Throughout the last couple of months, I have used the Greenway more than ever and it has shown me just what an important project it is and we are looking to add to the route whilst protecting it for the future.

“As you can see, the last year for ENC will see us looking to the future whilst celebrating the council’s 46 year history, as well as the community projects across the district.”

Plans to create two new councils undergo major redesign as Covid crisis continues

With tackling the Coronavirus everyone’s top priority, plans for creating two new councils in Northamptonshire will be scaled down, with a new approach called ‘Safe and Legal Plus’.

New legislation that came into effect on 8 May, as expected confirms the new North and West Northamptonshire Councils will start on 1 April 2021. This follows the postponement of this spring’s scheduled unitary elections due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The North and West Shadow Councils’ Executives at their first meetings in late June will be considering proposals to prioritise work to ensure all services are set up safely and legally for day one of the two new authorities, whilst still working hard to bring together and improve as many existing services as possible.

Preparations will continue towards setting up the new countywide Children’s Trust by 1 April next year, with the timescale dependent on the ongoing pandemic response.

The priorities of the proposed revised Safe and Legal Plus programme include:

- Ensuring all services for the new councils are ready to go next April so residents continue to access services as they usually would.

- Setting up the new North and West shadow authorities, which are made up of the existing district, borough and county councillors. They will meet in June and replace the West and North Northants Joint Committees.
- Ensuring budgets are set for each new council, and developing plans for equalising Council Tax rates across each unitary area.
- Bringing together the existing district and borough services into the new North and West unitary councils and splitting county council services across the two areas.
- Even better joint working in Adults Services and Health and Social Care, with improved ways of working to improve services for residents and deliver significant savings.

Cllr Russell Roberts, Leader of the new North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority said: “Our councils and services are facing unprecedented challenges in responding to the Covid pandemic and the health and welfare of our residents is at the forefront of everything we are doing.

“We’re working on the assumption that safe and legal is deliverable by 1 April 2021 but due to the uncertainty that exists at the moment, we will continually review what is possible to achieve and by when as we move through the next few months.

“We’ve had to re-think our ambitions as to what we can achieve by Go Live Day, but while the focus is on Safe and Legal we’ll be doing what we can between now and April.”

Councillor Ian McCord, Leader of the new West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, said: “Providing essential public services to residents and businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic has rightly been our top priority, with work on the new councils put on the back burner. As a result, we’ve had to scale back how much we can do before launch of the two new councils next April. We’ll certainly have each new council up and running on time, but will complete much of the behind-the-scenes work of integrating staff from the previous councils later on. What’s most important is that residents relying on public services continue to see them run smoothly.”

To view the vision document, ‘Prospectus for Change-the next chapter’ and to find out more about the new Safe and Legal Plus approach for the unitary preparations

visit futurenorthantswest.org/information/ and futurenorthantsnorth.org/publications-and-background-documents/

Centre manager brings two decades of expertise to Enterprise Centre East Northants

Industry expert, Fiona Wells has been appointed as the new centre manager for Enterprise Centre East Northants.

East Northamptonshire Council, which is delivering the flagship centre, appointed BizSpace to manage the day-to-day operation in March this year.

BizSpace is one of the leading experts in managed centre and the on-site team will be headed up by Fiona Wells who has a wealth of experience. Fiona has 14 years’ experience in managing business centres and specialises in promoting and letting business space.

Having worked with Kent Thameside, Thurrock and Luton Borough Councils, Fiona enjoys building a community with all customers and contractors alike. Fiona attends a number of local and national networking/exhibitions to attract new clients.

Fiona said: “I am both keen and excited to be working on the council’s flagship project whilst joining forces with such a vibrant and modern company and UK’s leading provider BizSpace.”

ENC is working with Total Project Integration (TPI) and R H Partnership Architects to deliver the £8 million project. ENC, which is funding the project, received a contribution of £1.695 million funding from the SEMLEP’s Local Growth

Fund in order to deliver the centre as part of Enterprising East Northants, the council's economic arm for sustainable job creation and business growth.

To register your interest or for more information please call: 0808 1787 060 or visit: www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/ecen

Council supports over 900 businesses with £10m in grants, but urges more to apply

913 businesses in East Northamptonshire have now received over £10.3m in grants through the Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

The grants, each worth either £10,000 or £25,000, come from central Government and is distributed to companies by East Northamptonshire Council, providing vital support for organisations across the district during the coronavirus pandemic.

Cllr Steven North, Leader of East Northamptonshire Council says:

"I'm relieved to see that so many businesses have already received their grant and I want to thank the council's Business Rates team for working hard to get this much needed support out there. This really is just the beginning and we now need businesses who feel they are eligible to receive the grant to contact us urgently and apply.

"There has been some misunderstanding that this is a loan and will need to be paid back. This is not true, all monies distributed are a grant and no company will be expected to pay anything back, so please don't be put off applying. We want to help as many businesses as we can to ensure the district has a prosperous economic future."

All businesses identified by ENC have been contacted via either email or post to the business address. If a business in the district hasn't already been contacted by ENC, they are advised to contact customerservices@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk for further details and assistance.

Any business that doesn't fit the criteria set by the Government to receive a grant, are advised to contact SEMLEP, a regional dedicated gateway adviser who can talk through your business needs, at growthhub@semlep.com or call 01604 212696.

Business owners should keep up-to-date with the Government guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/business-support> or contact their dedicated Business Support Helpline at www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline or on 0300 456 3565 or 01604 212 696.

Northamptonshire Coronavirus support line

There is a dedicated support line launched to help those in need in Northamptonshire during the coronavirus pandemic.

Open between 9am and 5pm each day.

Those requiring help are asked to call the support line on the following number:

0300 126 1000 (option 5)

And finally from me!

I am truly honoured to have been appointed Chairman of East Northamptonshire Council in this, the last year of this Council. I am more honoured to represent and support the residents of my Ward, Stanwick and Hargrave. I hope I have served you well as your ward member for the past 5 years and I am committed to do so for this last year as not only your ward member but Chairman of this Council. We are in unprecedented times and there is an awful lot of strain and stress on everyone. I remain fully committed to representing you all in any way I can. Please feel free to

invite me along to any virtual meetings you are holding as a group or community and as soon as we are all able to meet again I will be planning to support my charity by holding fund raising events throughout the District. We are all working towards the setup of the new North Northamptonshire Unitary Council with elections in May 2021. It will be challenging as things have had to change due to the pandemic but it is still business as usual and there is a lot of work to do to be ready for vesting day on 1st April 2021. I am pleased to have been invited to join the new Council's Governance Task and Finish group and look forward to the challenges ahead.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need my assistance in any way. In the meantime **Stay Alert & Stay Safe.**

My usual contact details are: hhowell@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk please include the suffix **(action)** in the subject heading. You can also leave a message for me at ENC on 01832 742000.

I am happy to make virtual visits via Zoom if it helps.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Helen".

Cllr Helen Howell

Chairman of East Northamptonshire Council