

SNC 2018-2019 Annual Summary

South Northants District continues to be ranked as a great place to live and work. Unemployment is one of the lowest in the country, although SNC runs a job club to help anyone get back into work.

The waste and recycling record is one of which we remain proud and is the best in the County.

But lost among all of that we had a successful year as SNC, the **Brackley Pool** was opened, we had visit from HRH Prince Harry to Silverstone, we had a successful commemoration lunch to mark the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1. We also held dinners to celebrate the sporting achievements of **Mercedes Formula 1** team who won for the 5th successive year, and we celebrated the success of **Brackley Town FC** who won a fairy tale final at Wembley to bring on the FA Trophy.

As we move forward with the local government reform program (LGR) we are holding regular **Parish & Town Clerks Forums**, with alternate Forums including the Parish Council Chairmen.

Local Government Reform (LGR)

Proceedings over the past year have been dominated by the events at the County Council (NCC) and dealing with the fallout from it. As we began the new municipal year in 2018 NCC had just issued a Section 114 Notice, the local government equivalent of a bankruptcy notice. Max Caller had reported in his opinion Best Value was not being satisfied and that such was the mess at NCC it was not possible to recover this in a sensible time period and concluded that the best thing to do was to have two new unitary councils.

Creating the 2 unitary councils would mean abolishing NCC and the 7 districts and boroughs. He proposed that there should be one in the North encompassing Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and East Northants and one in the West taking in Daventry, South Northants and Northampton Borough.

Max Caller also recommended that the Secretary of State appoint Commissioners to take over the running of the council.

In May the Secretary of State advised he was minded to appoint Commissioners for take control of all matters of Financial and Strategic decision making and Governance and Scrutiny. Mr Tony McArdle and Mr Brian Roberts were appointed. In November a third Commissioner, Malcom Newsomme was appointed to take over Children's services and to recommend how these would be structured in the future.

At the same time as appointing the commissioners the Sec of State issued an invitation to all the districts and boroughs and the county council to request that they submit a proposal for the future governance of the county. That invitation set out some strict rules that needed to be followed for a proposal to be considered valid.

- Whole councils to be used as building blocks
- A single county proposal was not allowed
- A population had to be substantially in excess of 300,000
- The proposal had to have a credible geography

- Whilst it was also possible to overstep the county boundary it was also necessary to respect the laws on policing.

In effect this meant that there was only one proposal that would fulfil all the criteria, namely the one set out by Max Caller for West and North unitary councils.

On 31 August all the councils, except for Corby, who for political reasons, submitted a proposal to the Secretary of State.

To date, the Sec of State has not given any indication as to whether or not he is minded to implement those. He has taken longer to read and consider the proposal than he gave the councils to prepare them.

The councils are working on the assumption that the Sec of State will approve these proposals and so are not wasting time waiting but beginning to make some of the preparations for unitary councils.

As a result of this, Cherwell and South Northants both decided that their partnership would need to cease. This process has been ongoing since the autumn and will be complete by June.

The unwinding of the Cherwell partnership has resulted in a management restructure at SNC. Yvonne Rees took a new post of joint chief executive of Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell and Richard Ellis took up the post of Chief Executive of SNC. The other members of the senior management also split between Cherwell and South Northants.

In December an order was passed in parliament to delay the elections that were due in 2019 until 2020. That should dovetail with the new elections for the new councils.

The current timetable is not fixed, but is something along the lines of: -

- Secretary of State consultation ended 25 January 2019
- Secretary of State to indicate his opinion of the proposal – spring 2019

Assuming he is minded to proceed, and that no Brexit related events cause a delay, then:

- Orders will be laid in Parliament around the time of the Easter Recess, approx. late April /May
- Shadow council will come into being 14 days after the order is made
- Shadow council will comprise of all the members of all the councils and those from NCC who represent this area
- Shadow council will elect a shadow executive to do the work and prepare for day 1
- The new council will come into being 1 April 2020
- SNC will cease to be a council on 1 April 2020
- Elections to the new unitary authority will be 7 May 2020

There is a lot of work between now and then to get a council set up and running to be safe and legal on day 1. Thereafter there will be many issues to be dealt with but the focus will be on being ready for the first day.

In reality there will not be a great deal of difference on the first day. A lot of effort will be placed in getting statutory items sorted and harmonised where required. For example, housing allocations policy and taxi licensing policy would need to be the same whereas at present Daventry, South Northants and Northampton have different ones.

Transformation (SNC/Cherwell)

One year-ago SNC and our partners at Cherwell District Council were delivering joined-up services to both communities with considerable benefit to our residents and significant value for money savings to Council Tax payers.

However, with the failure of NCC we will very likely find that around May 2020 (unless the national constitutional issues interfere), our Council, Daventry District Council and Northampton Borough Council, will be replaced by a new West Northamptonshire Council.

The law does not allow for Local Authorities to be part of the new West Northamptonshire proposal as they are under a different Police and Crime commissioner area.

Cherwell having made the decision to leave our working arrangement then had discussions with Oxfordshire County Council and our joint Chief Executive Yvonne Rees applied for and was appointed as the Joint Chief Executive at Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council. SNC then appointed our Interim Chief Executive Richard Ellis.

Richard had been part of Yvonne's management team, so he was able to hit the ground running dealing with the arrangements with Cherwell and the pressing work on setting up the new shadow board necessary to bring about the creation of the West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority. Our new management team is in place and we have the necessary officers to continue to provide our excellent services to our residents.

The ongoing excellent relationship with Cherwell is a great way of how local Government can work together in partnership and as we go into the unknown let's hope South Northants commitment to providing great services and strong financial management over many years will be at the forefront of the new Unitary Council for West Northamptonshire.

SNC Financial Highlights

Funding from Central Government is now limited to the Rural Services Delivery Grant. However, our growth in terms of homes and businesses allows us to continue to balance the books.

SNC continue to be one of the best at collecting council tax with 99% of all tax collected. The national average is 98% and SNC remains the 16th best in the whole of England on collection rates. We are considerably higher than the other Authorities in Northamptonshire.

	Rank 2017/18	2017/18 Rate
Corby	206	97.1%
Daventry	123	98.1%
East Northamptonshire	158	97.8%
Kettering	152	97.8%
Northampton	247	96.3%
South Northamptonshire	16	99.0%
Wellingborough	128	98.1%

New Homes Bonus

Unlike many Councils SNC uses some of the New Homes Bonus it receives from new developments to invest in the local community. Local organisations can bid for grants to help them achieve their objectives.

Grants are awarded by the Community Funding Panel that meets for times a year and application forms and details of the criteria can be found on the SNC web site.

In 2018-19, almost £1.507m of grant funding was awarded to communities within South Northamptonshire across 167 projects to improve their environment and lifestyle. Over the lifetime of the New Homes Bonus Scheme over £3.3m has been re-invested in the Community.

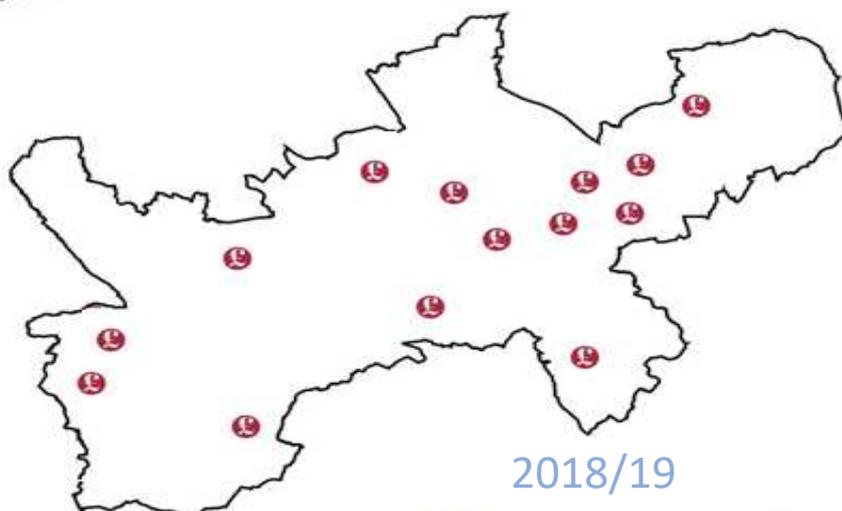
Examples of grants made include:

Towcester Youth Coffee House	£64K
Ability	£60K
Hartwell Parish Council	£54K
Brackley Town Football Club	£39K
Roads Village Hall	£37K
Marston St Lawrence Village Hall	£33K
Silverstone Parish Council	£30K
Friends of Heseltine Gallery	£39K
Shutlanger Parish Council	£25K
Litchborough Village Hall Committee	£23K
Roads Village Hall	£20K
Wicken Parish Council	£20K
Abthorpe Old School	£20K
Grange Park Parish Council	£15K

The map below shows the geographical spread of grants made at the January meeting of the Community Funding Panel.



South Northamptonshire Council

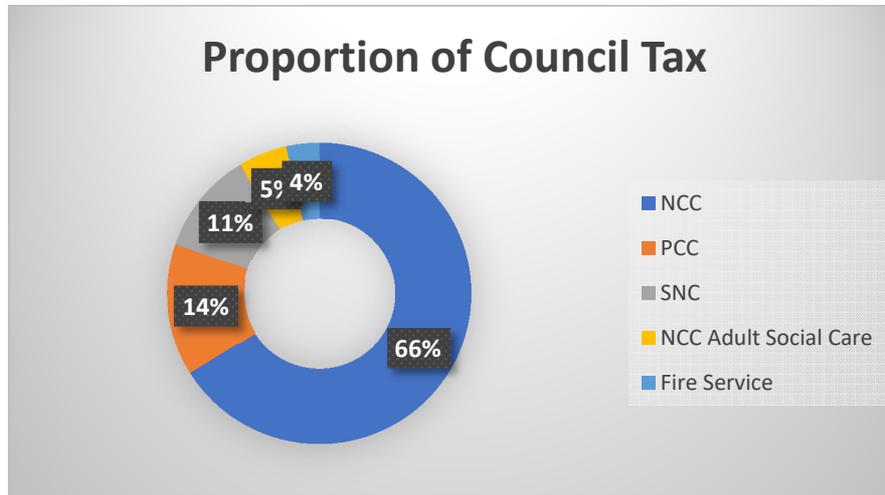


2018/19

Local Community Grants

Council Tax

The SNC part of the Council Tax bill was raised by 2.99% which is £5.55 a year for a Band D property, making total now £191.33 per year. The increase is in line with inflation. SNC only get to keep 11% of the total bill. Northants County take the biggest share at 71%, PCC 14% and the Fire Service 4%.



The SNC proportion of the Council Tax will increase by under 11p per week.

The breakdown of the Council Tax bill is below for a Band D Property:

Body	2018/19	Increase	Increase Amount	2018/19
NCC ¹	£1,146.63	4.99%	-£0.25	£1,146.38
NCC Adult Social Care ²	£89.72	0.00%	£0.00	£89.72
PCC ³	£221.04	11.00%	£24.00	£245.04
Fire Service ⁴			£60.76	£60.76
SNC	£185.78	2.99%	£5.55	£191.33
Total	£1,643.17	5.48%	£90.06	£1,733.23

This year there are a number of differences:

Note 1 From 2019/20 the Fire Service comes under the responsibility of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Therefore, the cost for the Fire Service has been removed from the County element of the bill, hence the seeming decrease. In fact, the County's part has increased by the 2.99%, the maximum allowed by the Government without a referendum. The Government has permitted the County to surcharge the residents by an additional 2% to offset the woeful state of the County's finances.

Note 2 The Government allows the charging of an Adult Social Care premium. Councils were allowed to raise it by 2% per annum over 3 years, or 3% over two years. NCC have already increased it by the 3% in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and therefore there is no further increase allowed for 2019/20.

Note 3 The Government this year has allowed Police and Crime Commissioners to raise their portion of the Council Tax by a maximum of £24. The Northamptonshire Police and crime Commissioner has decided to apply this increase in full.

Note 4 This year the Fire Service portion of the Council Tax is shown separately, previously it had been included in the overall figure for the County.

In addition, individual Parish Precepts will be levied and charged for.

Planning

Local Plan part 2

After five lengthy years, South Northants completed the LPP2 and submitted it to the Inspectorate ahead of schedule on the 22nd January 2019. It has been acknowledged, and we have been allocated an Inspector who will begin his due diligence in June 2019. Any issues raised will be done so through a Programme Manager also appointed, which means that points raised and answers given will be guided through the Programme Manager. There were some issues relating to 'employment land' north of the A43 and some parish 'green spaces' that may be contentious, but apart from that, the Council are confident with their submission.

Should issues be raised by the Inspector requiring attention, they will once again be presented for public consultation and should this be the case, it is likely that the Plan will become 'statute' during the winter of 2019. At this stage it will replace the 1997 South Northamptonshire Local Plan.

South Northamptonshire Land Supply

This Council has built up a good reserve of planning land in-hand. We have been fortunate with growth for both dwellings and employment land in Brackley, Silverstone, Deanshanger and Towcester. This has enabled us to build to 11.2 years of land supply. (The Governments guide is 5 years plus 20%).

With the anticipated Unitary, even with, SNC 11.2 years, Daventry DC 6 plus years and Northampton BC 2.3 years these numbers will not meet the average figure required by the Government's minimum requirement! This actually puts greater emphasis on the need to protect our rural villages and thus we encourage Neighbourhood Plans.

Neighbourhood Plan

Two Neighbourhood Plans have been 'made': - Harpole and Kislingbury. The latter winning a National Award with presentations made in London. There are a number of other villages/parishes that are at various stages of 'making' their plans and when completed will be presented for consultation and scrutinisation. Once adopted and 'made' they will lie alongside the Local Plan Part 2.

Although some expense is incurred when preparing the NP, it is a vital means of protecting our rural villages. Whilst promoting acceptable development it avoids speculative development.

Conservation and Heritage

This Council is fortunate firstly to have such a committed Conservation team but also to have a District with so many Conservation areas. The team continue to work through our total of 96 villages and hamlets, updating where necessary and removing certain villages that no longer marry up to the Conservation requirements, thus we maintain a very high standard.

Again South Northants is blessed with many monuments, buildings of architectural interest and special landscape areas. These remain an asset to our area and play an enormously important part in our tourism visitations. We are very conscious of maintaining these items to the highest standard.

Health & Wellbeing in the District

Brackley Leisure Centre. January this year saw the official opening of Brackley Leisure Centre, it was a truly special day. Olympian champion swimmer Mark Foster said he hopes the new pools will inspire future generations to stay healthy as he cut the ribbon on South Northants Councils £4.5m redevelopment of Brackley Leisure Centre. SNC promised Brackley a new pool and we have delivered it.

Towcester Centre for Leisure. We are incredibly pleased and proud that we are able to commit just over £1million towards making long overdue improvements to Towcester Centre for Leisure. More and more people are using our leisure centres, we know that people who come from the town and the surrounding areas to Towcester will all really welcome this investment.

Summer activities for children. 1207 children from across our District enjoyed the summer activities we provided, making 2018 a record year. Much work went into ensuring we were able to provide great opportunities through the summer holidays to children from all walks of life, including those with disabilities and children from low income families.

Towcester & Brackley Community Fun Days took place at the Islington Road Recreation Ground in Towcester in May and at Brackley's Leisure Centre in Springfield Way in June. Hundreds of families attended these free events which showcased the clubs and activities available to young people in South Northamptonshire.

Disability Sport. We started the South Northants Disability Sports Forum just over a year ago and the Forum consists of local sports clubs, third sector organisations, Legacy Leisure, Northamptonshire Sport and of course South Northants Council. One of the aims of the Forum is to break down the barriers faced by disabled people making it possible for people to lead healthy lives, and that means all people.

Towcester Watermeadows came to life in October when Chairman Cllr Richard Dallyn hosted a fun run to raise money for the hospices which serve South Northamptonshire.

The Watermeadows are currently underused, Cllr Dallyn thought this would be a great way to introduce new people to this wonderful public space, and for anyone who keeps putting off that lifestyle change, this could be their first step towards a longer and better life.

Art & Culture

Centre Screen. The rural cinema scheme continues to be popular in communities where the village hall or library (in Brackley) is a convenient place for residents to get together for social activities. Some village groups have invested in their own film equipment now, but many rely on Centre Screen to provide it, show the film and deal with licensing. There are more regular screenings in South Northants than other parts of the county: Blakesley, Blisworth, Brackley, Cogenhoe, Culworth, Evenley, King's Sutton, Marston St. Lawrence, Milton Malsor, Moreton Pinkney, Nether Heyford, Paulerspury and Whittlebury.

Private Sector Housing Initiatives

Home Safe Project. This year sees the launch of the second year of the Home Safe Project to improve the wellbeing of low-income households by assisting with essential works to their homes. In 2018 the project helped 29 households by assisting with general repair works and improving security, lighting, warmth as well as adaptations to support access and mobility issues reducing the risk of falls.

Financial Assistance for Adaptations and Repairs. Private Sector Housing provides Disabled Facility Grants to help people with a disability undertake major adaptations to their homes to facilitate access in and around their home. Last year, 49 people and their families were assisted in the provision of level access showers, stair and through floor lifts, ceiling track hoists, ramps and door widening.

New affordable housing. We work hard with housing associations to provide additional affordable homes to meet the housing needs of local residents. Since April 2018 there have been 145 new affordable homes built across the district. We have a strong delivery programme for the remainder of this financial year and into 2019/20.

Communities

Residents will now benefit from a new community transport scheme. ABILITY Community Transport is providing a service across the rural communities of South Northants to provide a weekly shopper bus service to the main shopping areas of Towcester, Stony Stratford, Wolverton and Northampton. South Northants Council has awarded a grant of £59,924 towards ABILITY's total project costs of £171,214.

Good Neighbour schemes are established by communities and run by local people to provide day to day support for other residents in their village and community, particularly those more isolated or older residents, who may need help on an occasional or regular basis.

South Northants Council Wellbeing Activity Map, developed by SNCs Community Services Team is now live on our website. You can search for activities near where you live by entering your postcode

on the website. Lots of the activities are free of charge and none cost more than £5 per session. They include opportunities for sports, arts, learning and socialising.

Annual Comfort & Joy Campaign. The annual Comfort and Joy campaign, started in 2015, ran again in December, which helps those who are staying in refuges as a result of experiencing domestic abuse. Jointly organised by the Daventry District and South Northamptonshire Community Safety Partnership and the Daventry District Forum, its aim is to provide people with a few gifts and treats, as well as food, toiletries and other essential items.

Environmental Services Report

This year has been very active and positive for our teams in Waste & Recycling, Licensing and Environmental Health, with significant achievements thanks to their hard work.

Waste & Recycling

We were the 7th best authority in England for recycling out of 345 areas and one place higher than before. Of the waste we collect, 60.5% is recycled thanks to our residents taking care to make sure the right things go in the right bins – this is good for the environment and keeps costs down.

Our booking system for collecting bulky waste – such as kitchen appliances and furniture – is now on line. This has seen an increase in the number of collections made and has proved a great success with 97% of those who have used us happy with the service. For £34 we will collect up to six items.

Street cleaning is another service we provide and are planning to introduce on-street recycling bins in Towcester at car parks, and in Brackley at sites to be determined. The bins have two compartments one for litter and the other for recyclables such as cans, plastic bottles etc.

Licensing

Safeguarding of young and vulnerable people is increasingly important and we are playing our part by training staff in licensed premises, hotels and the like as well as taxi drivers. This teaches people who meet the public what to look out for and what to do if they see it.

Other activities include working across the county to ensure high standards in taxi and hire car services including regular checks to make sure vehicles are safe and drivers properly licensed.

Working with Community Protection and Environmental Protection to address nuisance issues has also been successful. We have further undertaken training on new animal licensing regulations.

improve and the number of campsite operators taking part in the scheme has also increased.

Supporting Local Business



This year, South Northamptonshire features in a national league table of local authority areas as being in the top 40% places in the country. The ranking is a measure of growth, innovation, social equality, health and happiness. Despite it being a time of uncertainty, the District continues to be a good place to live, work, invest and grow.

Eighty-three per cent of the working age population is employed, and the District's workforce also has an above average level of education, with over ninety per cent qualified to NVQ1 and above.

The Council's Business Support Adviser continues to help businesses in the District. The Council assists new and small business start-ups, which supports the wider work of the Economic Growth Team in working closely with our business community to support investment and growth. In 2018/19, over 100 businesses received such support helping them to expand and create new employment.

The District has historically experienced high levels of out commuting and low job density, which has impacted on the sustainability of urban and rural settlements. Despite low levels of official unemployment, demand is still high for the Job Club and Job Match Service, which has been running since 2009 and supported 477 people into work.