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IN



Your monthly news update from Northamptonshire County Council*

Featured



Budget Approved

Full Council have today approved the [budget and council plan](#).



Make a difference to a local child

We have joined up with eight other local authorities in the region to launch an [urgent appeal](#) for foster carers.



Love your heart

The NHS Health Check is a sophisticated check of your heart health. [Get yours free](#).



Women's Tour Returns!

World class cycling returns to Northamptonshire this June with a stage of the [2015 Women's Tour](#) taking place in the county.

In the Headlines



Full Council has approved the Budget and Council Plan

A budget to protect frontline services and increase income

Final budget proposals aimed at protecting frontline services from cuts, helping them become more self-financing and saving another £68m worth of taxpayers' money have been agreed by councillors today.

The budget report discussed by councillors at today's full council meeting showed that over the next five years the costs of providing services due to a continued surge in demand and other pressures will rise by £104m while the money given to us by government will reduce by £79m. This means the cost of running services will be double the amount of money available to us.

To plug this growing gap today's budget agreement commits the council to working more closely with partners while other services will start to work on the Next Generation Council as described in the Council Plan by becoming fully self-financing.

Meanwhile the position of the county as the lowest taxing county council in the country will be maintained with a council tax rise of just 1.95 per cent.

Cabinet member for finance Cllr Bill Parker said: "What this budget does is make sure that while longer term plans for total transformation of services are developed, we continue in our work to protect those frontline and critical services despite the significant amount of budget reductions we are having to implement.

"Once again those services most treasured by our communities and those which help wellbeing such as libraries and country parks are protected. Once again we are investing in core safeguarding services to make sure we do all we can to protect society's most vulnerable.

"However when you are taking this sort of money out of services you have to make tough decisions which we know will not be popular. We are having to look at the fees and charges we apply to people who use our services, partner organisations and others who operate in the county such as utility companies."

Biggest ever transformation of services agreed by full council

The Council Plan was voted on by councillors this afternoon and, now approved, first steps will be taken to move entirely away from directly delivering services into a 'Next Generation Model' where an expert core council will commission specialist social enterprises to carry out activity to help achieve its goals for the county and meet customer expectations.

Now the plan has been approved, work will start to explore how services currently run directly by the council can become separate stand-alone organisations free from statutory restraints and deliver services with the twin aims of safeguarding the county's most vulnerable and creating greater wellbeing in the county.

Leader of the council Cllr Jim Harker said: "The traditional model of local government not only no longer works financially but also doesn't meet the needs of citizens any more. We are serving people with a totally new set of expectations about how they receive goods and services with an expectation of greater individual choice and more responsiveness. Our Next Generation Model will not only help rise to these expectations but do so in a way which is affordable.

"It is certainly no exaggeration to say that this is the biggest transformation of services in Northamptonshire since the creation of this council 125 years ago."

The Council Plan was formally adopted today along with the council's budget for the next financial year and beyond. The Council Plan explains how during this period a much smaller organisation will be retained as the Northamptonshire County Council Group which will commission others to achieve its outcomes.

This would see the creation of four new separate organisations which will be employed by the council to deliver for the county. These could be:-

- A Children Services Mutual – to deliver safeguarding and other services for young people

- Accountable Care Organisation – to deliver services to protect vulnerable adults.
- Wellbeing Community Organisation – to deliver health and wellbeing services.
- Place Shaping Company – to deliver services to improve Northamptonshire as a place.

The first such organisation being looked at is a Wellbeing Community Interest Company – with work now getting underway with partners to look at how this would operate.

Cabinet member for finance Cllr Bill Parker said: “As well as these larger organisations the message is clear that other services would also be able to form new enterprises either as private businesses, social enterprises, charities or as part of the voluntary sector. They would all be free to win other contracts to generate additional income to help reduce their costs to the council.

“We have already seen how this can be done in our back office through our LGSS model. By winning new contracts and earning extra income LGSS has systematically reduced the costs of these services to the county council. The Next Generation Model will look to expand this spirit across our front line.”

- [Read the full budget details and council plan](#)



Construction officially begins on our Angel Street headquarters

On Wednesday 11 February, we celebrated the official beginning of construction on our new headquarters with a sod-cutting ceremony attended by councillors, county council staff, and our contractor Galliford Try.

Purpose-built headquarters

The project will see county council staff moved out of 12 buildings in Northampton, including County Hall, into one purpose-built headquarters in the town centre.

How soon will building work begin?

The first phase of the works on our former staff car park in Northampton’s Angel Street will focus on preparing the site for construction, including the demolition of several small buildings, with the actual concrete shell of the building emerging over the summer months this year.

The work is being carried out by contractor Galliford Try and it is expected that the building will be formally handed over to the county council after completion by the end of October 2016 with full occupation by December of that year.

- [Read more about the project and see progress on the webcam](#)



Become a Library Guardian

LibrayPlus Trust, a charity created to support Northamptonshire libraries, is encouraging people across the county to consider signing up to become a library guardian

Enhancing services

By becoming a guardian, library users can contribute towards enhancing library services by making a one-off donation or a regular monthly payment to LibraryPlus Trust.

In return, guardians will benefit from a discount on library services including book reservations, early bird invitations to exclusive library and literary events, and regular email bulletins on how their money is helping to support libraries across the county

Make a difference

You can become a guardian for just £2 a month, or a family guardian (up to two adults and three children) for £4 a month, or make a one-off donation.

- [Find out more on the LibraryPlus Trust website](#)

What's On



7 March – Get involved in the Blacklight Run! – The brightest 5K on earth is coming to Northampton – [Sign up as a participant or volunteer](#) and be a part of this amazing run/party.



Fostering Information Events – A series of informal information evenings are coming up for anyone who might have been considering becoming a foster carer. [Find the next event near you.](#)



Adult Learning Spring & Summer Courses – Designing a wedding cake, or decorating one. Getting trim for summer with an exercise class. Having a go at wakeboarding, cycling, table tennis or planning and writing a novel! Search our [course catalogue online now.](#)



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