Woodford & Weedon Ward Annual Report 2024/25

Cllrs David Smith, Jo Gilford and Rupert Frost

Over the past 12 months our Council has sought to foster a thriving and sustainable region and remains dedicated to improving public services, enhancing infrastructure and ensuring economic growth in a way that respects our environment and heritage.

Our Waste & Recycling Centres now operate every day of the week, ensuring consistent and reliable service when we need it. No changes to waste collections will be made until 2028, and we are committed to conducting a full consultation with residents to determine their preferences for new contracts.

Valued green areas have been safeguarded by inviting communities to propose sites for official designation as protected spaces. Wildflower verges have been introduced at pilot sites in multiple locations with more planned later this year. We developed a new tree strategy that protects significant trees and sets out guidelines for suitable planting by location.

We set what we believed to be a fair council tax and have not raised it by more than £99 per year for Band D properties. We have reduced the Council's debt year on year, giving us flexibility for capital investment in the future. We keep delivering balanced budgets, maintaining strong reserves to protect frontline services and support efficiency savings. Since 2021 we have secured over £115m in savings by focusing on key contracts, minimising excess spend and negotiating effectively with providers. Reducing the Council's debt year-on-year has given us more flexibility for capital investment.

The latest AI technology is revolutionising the way our Council delivers services. Predictive analytics, which examines vast amounts of data, allows us to identify patterns that lead to homelessness, enabling early intervention that prevents crisis and saves resources. In addition, our new AI-powered chat bot on the Council's website offers residents a fast, efficient way to get answers to simple queries – freeing up our customer service teams to tackle more complex issues.

Support for service personnel continues, as we maintain our Gold Award under the Armed Forces Covenant's Employer Recognition scheme.

An additional £10m has been invested over the past year in our highways throughout West Northamptonshire and we will continue to prioritise consistent road maintenance and improvements year on year. Five Roadmender machines have already completed 14,657 sq. m of repairs in their first year. A JCB Pothole Pro has repaired 30,480 sq. m of roads in the past year, operating four times faster than traditional methods. We regularly meet with highways personnel and take up individual cases affecting residents where necessary.

Flooding has been a massive challenge in our ward over the past year and we are working with parish councils and flood wardens to do whatever is necessary to ensure our drains and culverts can handle the next extreme weather event.

We continue to monitor the 200-bus service and remain committed to it. Community bus services that connect our villages with urban routes and amenities will always be backed by us, ensuring accessible and efficient public transport for all.

If re-elected on May 1st, we will drive forward improvements in highways, flood prevention, planning and enforcement. Please let us know if we can help with any service provided by West Northamptonshire Council, you should find us easy to contact and we will continue to try to make sure at least one of us attends all your parish council meetings.

Very best wishes, David, Jo and Rupert