

Woodford cum Membris Parish Council

Five-Year Strategy 2026–2031

Our vision

A safe, welcoming and well-connected parish where Woodford Halse, Hinton and West Farndon thrive as one community — protecting local character, improving everyday services, supporting wellbeing, and investing wisely for the future.

Our mission

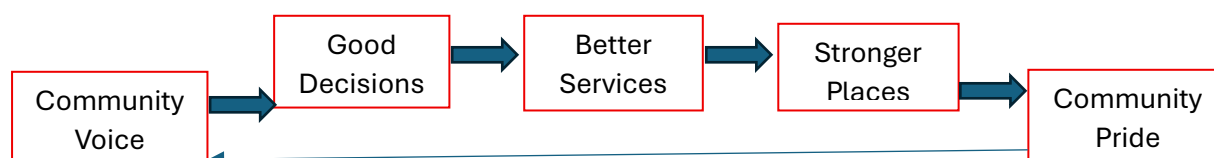
The Parish Council will:

- **Represent residents effectively**
- **Maintain and improve local assets and services**
- **Shape growth in line with local character**
- **Strengthen community life and inclusion**
- **Work openly, responsibly and in partnership**

Strategy at a glance

Theme	What success looks like by 2031
Community assets	Village buildings and outdoor spaces are well-maintained, well-used and financially sustainable.
Highways & movement	Safer walking routes, good lighting, stronger advocacy on roads and parking, and clearer reporting of issues.
Public safety & resilience	Stronger local resilience for flooding, community safety and emergency preparedness.
Environment & cleanliness	Cleaner streets, cared-for green spaces, stronger biodiversity and better tree management.
Play, sport & wellbeing	Better play provision, stronger support for clubs, and more activities for all ages.
Planning & development	Growth better reflects a revised Neighbourhood Plan and community priorities.
Communication & engagement	Residents feel informed, heard and able to influence decisions.
Governance & finance	A capable, transparent council with sound reserves, clear plans and measurable outcomes.

A visual summary



This strategy works as a cycle: **listen well, plan well, deliver well, and build trust.**

Strategic principles

1. Protect what matters most

 Preserve the parish's identity, facilities, green spaces including the Great Central Woodland and local heritage.

2. Improve everyday quality of life

 Focus on the things residents notice daily: lighting, safety, litter, footpaths, play areas, woodland and information.

3. Spend public money wisely

 Link priorities to realistic budgets, grants, reserves and long-term maintenance planning.

4. Work with others

 Use partnerships with West Northamptonshire Council, local groups, schools, police, NHS partners, volunteers and businesses to achieve more.

5. Put residents at the centre

 Consult, communicate and report progress clearly.

Strategic priorities 2026–2031

1) Strong community assets and places

The Parish Council already manages a significant range of community assets including halls, sports-related facilities, allotments, burial ground, public toilets, bus shelters, lighting and the Great Central Woodland. The previous strategy also highlighted the Village Centre as a community hub and noted the importance of planned maintenance across older buildings.

Aim

To ensure all Council-owned buildings, land and facilities are **safe, attractive, compliant, well-used and financially sustainable**.

Priorities

- Continue with a **full asset condition survey** and 3-year rolling funded maintenance schedule.
- Prioritise investment in the **Village Centre and Memorial Hall**.
- Improve the use and visibility of community buildings as flexible, multi-use spaces.
- Review the long-term future of underused or difficult-to-maintain spaces.
- Increase income where appropriate through bookings, leases, grants and partnerships.
- Improve accessibility standards across council-managed venues.

Illustration: asset pyramid



Buildings

Halls, library-related spaces, community rooms



Land & open space

Woodland, verges, common areas, burial ground, allotments



Facilities

Play areas, pavilion, sports provision, bus shelters, toilets, lighting

Outcomes by 2031

- 100% of Council assets covered by an up-to-date maintenance and compliance plan.
- Clear annual investment priorities approved through the budget process.
- Increased community use of key venues.
- Fewer reactive repairs and more planned maintenance.

2) Safer roads, walking routes and public realm

The Council is not the highways authority, but it plays an important role in **advocacy, coordination and local improvements**. The previous strategy highlighted road safety, replacement of older street lighting which has been achieved, Community Speed Watch, and support for safer routes to school.

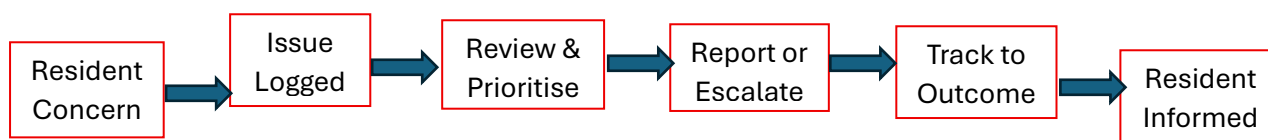
Aim

To make the parish **safer and easier to move around**, especially on foot, for children, older residents and those with limited mobility.

Priorities

- Work with **West Northamptonshire Council** and other partners to press for road safety improvements at key concern points.
- Maintain parish-managed lighting where needed for safety, efficiency.
- Support safer walking links between residential areas, schools, community facilities and local services.
- Strengthen local reporting and escalation of potholes, signage defects, overgrown paths and drainage issues.
- Review parking pressure hotspots and advocate practical solutions where these affect safety or access.
- Support and promote local traffic-calming and community speed awareness initiatives.
- Consider any plan that improves safety, including pedestrian crossings and one-way systems

Illustration: safer movement journey



Outcomes by 2031

- A clear annual list of highways and access priorities is maintained.
- More street lighting is provided where required.
- Footpath and access concerns are logged and tracked more consistently.
- Residents can see visible Council action on road safety concerns.

3) Public safety, resilience and preparedness

Parish councils are often the most immediate tier of local government when disruption happens. Whether the issue is flooding, storms, anti-social behaviour, vandalism or service interruption, the Council can help the parish respond more confidently.

Aim

To improve **local resilience, preparedness and reassurance** so the parish is better able to respond to emergencies and local safety concerns.

Priorities

- Review and refresh any parish emergency or resilience arrangements.
- Build stronger working relationships with police, fire, highways, flood-risk and health partners.
- Map vulnerable locations, priority contacts, community facilities and potential support hubs.
- Improve lighting, visibility and maintenance in areas where perceptions of safety are low.
- Support local initiatives that reduce isolation and improve neighbour-to-neighbour support.
- Keep key public information available and easy to access during disruptions.

Illustration: resilience wheel



Outcomes by 2031

- The parish has a refreshed local resilience framework.
- Key contacts and responsibilities are clearer in the event of disruption.
- Better coordination exists between the Parish Council and relevant agencies.
- Public confidence improves that the Council can support the community in difficult circumstances.

4) Clean, green and environmentally responsible parish

The previous strategy included public hygiene, land management and the stewardship of spaces such as the Great Central Woodland. This remains an area where residents notice Council performance directly.

Aim

To maintain a parish that is **clean, cared for, greener and better prepared for environmental pressures**.

Priorities

- Maintain high standards for litter, dog waste, grass cutting, bins and public conveniences.
- Develop a more structured approach to tree and hedge management (probably a funded 5-year programme), biodiversity and habitat improvement.
- Protect and improve green spaces for both recreation and nature.
- Support practical environmental measures such as reduced energy use, efficient lighting and lower-maintenance planting where suitable.
- Encourage community participation in planting, clean-up days and local environmental projects.
- Consider climate resilience in asset management, drainage and land care decisions.
- Consider purchasing small parcels of land that would improve the environment

Illustration: the green balance

Care for people	Care for place	Care for nature
Clean streets and facilities	Attractive open spaces	Trees, hedges, habitats and biodiversity
Safe paths and verges	Well-maintained assets	Climate resilience and stewardship

Outcomes by 2031

- Visible standards of cleanliness and maintenance are sustained.
- A biodiversity and tree & hedge-management approach is in place.
- Environmental considerations are built into procurement and project decisions.
- Community participation in environmental action increases.

5) Play, sport and wellbeing for all ages

The earlier strategy recognised the importance of parks, play areas, sports facilities and recreation grounds. These spaces are central to health, community life and pride in the parish.

Aim

To provide and support **inclusive, safe and appealing recreation opportunities** for children, young people, families, adults and older residents.

Priorities

- Review the condition, safety and relevance of existing play and sports facilities.
- Plan phased investment in play equipment, surfacing, seating and accessibility.
- Work with clubs, schools, community organisations and others to improve use of recreational spaces.
- Encourage activities that support physical and mental wellbeing.
- Ensure facilities are welcoming for a wider range of ages and abilities.
- Consider informal recreation as well as organised sport.

Illustration: wellbeing ladder

Play → Activity → Connection → Confidence → Wellbeing

Outcomes by 2031

- Play and recreation facilities are maintained to a good standard.
- More residents use local spaces for activity and social connection.
- Investment decisions are based on evidence of need and usage.
- Recreation provision better reflects all age groups, not only children.

6) Planning, development and local character

The Parish Council has an important consultative role on planning applications and in shaping how development affects the area. The parish's local character, environment, infrastructure and community facilities should remain central to this work. The Council's role in commenting on planning applications and representing residents is set out in its public information.

Aim

To help ensure any development is **well-designed, appropriately located and aligned with parish priorities that includes no development outside the confines of the village and any other development is matched with the correct infrastructure.**

Priorities

- Maintain a consistent, evidence-based approach to planning responses.
- Use the existing **Neighbourhood Plan** that will require review/amendment following the West Northants Council new Local Plan to 2041 publication and other adopted policy tools wherever applicable.
- Focus on the impact of development on traffic, drainage, design, infrastructure, services and amenity.
- Seek developer contributions and mitigations where appropriate and lawful.
- Communicate clearly with residents about major planning matters and Council responses.
- Monitor cumulative impacts of change across the parish.

Illustration: planning test

A development proposal should be assessed against six questions:

1. **Does it fit the character of the parish?**
2. **Does it align with the Neighbourhood Plan?**
3. **Does it protect amenity and safety?**
4. **Can infrastructure cope?**
5. **Does it add community value?**
6. **Is it sustainable over time?**

Outcomes by 2031

- Planning responses are timely, transparent and grounded in policy.
- Residents better understand the Council's role and limits in planning decisions.
- The Council is better prepared to address cumulative development pressures.
- Local character is more strongly defended in consultation responses.
- The Neighbourhood Plan is kept up-to-date and used to influence Planning Authority decisions.

7) Communication, consultation and community voice

A strong parish strategy depends on residents knowing what the Council does, how to influence decisions and where to find reliable information. The Council already publishes agendas, minutes and public documents on its website and has its own Facebook page that links to the wider Community Page which provides a good base for stronger engagement.

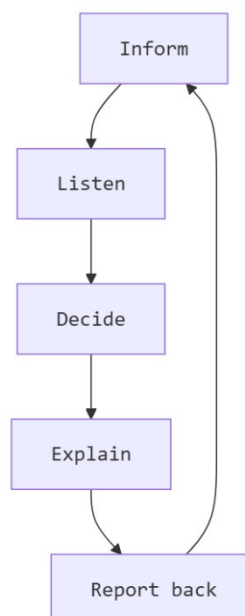
Aim

To ensure residents feel **informed, listened to and able to shape local priorities**.

Priorities

- Improve the clarity, accessibility and regularity of Council communications.
- Use a mix of channels: website, noticeboards, meetings, social media and printed updates where appropriate.
- Run consultation or listening exercises on major projects and recurring local concerns.
- Make it easier for residents to understand who is responsible for what.
- Publish progress updates against this strategy at least annually.
- Encourage broader participation from underrepresented groups, including younger residents.

Illustration: communication loop



Outcomes by 2031

- Residents have clearer, more regular updates about Council activity.
- Consultations are better targeted and easier to understand.
- Community trust and visibility of the Council improve.
- Progress against priorities is published consistently.

8) Strong governance, staffing and financial sustainability

A good strategy only succeeds if the Council has the governance, capacity and financial discipline to deliver it. The Council's legal responsibilities, meeting cycle and published procedures already provide a foundation, but the next five years should strengthen delivery discipline and long-term planning.

Aim

To be a **well-run, transparent and financially resilient council** that plans ahead and delivers consistently.

Priorities

- Align annual budgets and precept decisions with strategic priorities.
- Maintain appropriate reserves, with clear earmarking for asset renewal and major projects.
- Keep policies, risk management, compliance and internal controls up to date.
- Review staffing, contractor arrangements and member roles to ensure capacity matches workload.
- Improve project planning and reporting for larger works and investments.
- Strengthen member development through training and induction.

Illustration: good governance foundation

Foundation	Why it matters
Sound finance	Keeps services stable and major repairs affordable
Good governance	Reduces risk and improves accountability
Clear priorities	Helps the council make consistent decisions
Skilled people	Improves delivery and community confidence

Outcomes by 2031

- Budgeting is clearly linked to strategic goals.
- Reserve planning supports long-term asset maintenance.
- Council reporting is clearer and more outcome-focused.
- Members and officers have the tools and training needed to deliver effectively.

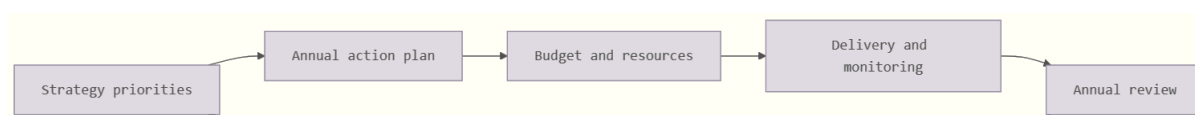
Delivery plan

How the strategy will be delivered

This strategy should be implemented through a simple annual cycle:

1. **Set annual priorities** from the five-year strategy.
2. **Approve budget allocations** and identify grants or partnership funding.
3. **Assign lead members, officers or committees** for each priority.
4. **Track progress quarterly** using a short action plan.
5. **Publish an annual review** for residents.

Illustration: yearly delivery cycle



Suggested implementation timetable

Year	Focus
Year 1	Asset review, communications refresh, baseline condition surveys, priority list for highways and play areas
Year 2	Begin highest-priority capital improvements, strengthen environmental plan, refresh resilience arrangements
Year 3	Review progress, expand community engagement, target underused assets and service improvements
Year 4	Deliver second phase capital works, reassess financial position and emerging planning pressures
Year 5	Evaluate outcomes, consult residents, prepare next five-year strategy

Measuring success

The Council should keep performance measures **simple, visible and practical**.

Suggested indicators

- Number of priority asset repairs completed each year
- Proportion of Council assets with up-to-date condition and compliance records
- Usage levels for community venues and recreation facilities
- Number of highways or environmental issues logged, escalated and resolved
- Resident participation in consultations and community events
- Progress on play-area improvements
- Cleanliness and maintenance inspection results
- Annual publication of strategy progress and budget alignment

Illustration: success dashboard

- Services maintained well
- Assets planned, not just repaired
- Residents informed and involved
- Public spaces cleaner, safer, greener
- Money linked to priorities

Risks and assumptions

No five-year strategy can control everything. Delivery will depend on:

- available funding and inflationary pressure
- contractor capacity and supply costs
- decisions by principal authorities and external agencies
- planning and development pressures
- volunteer, including for Councillor positions and community participation
- changing legal or statutory requirements

The Council should therefore review the strategy **every year**, while keeping the overall direction stable.

Closing statement

Woodford cum Membris Parish Council's 2026–2031 Strategy sets a practical course for the next five years: to care for community assets, improve safety and local environment, support wellbeing, represent residents strongly in planning matters, and govern with openness and responsibility. By focusing on visible priorities and measurable delivery, the Council can protect what matters locally while preparing the parish confidently for the future.
