



Council

A meeting of the Council will be held at The Great Hall at The Guildhall, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Thursday 29 June 2023 at 5.00 pm
Councillors are hereby summoned to attend

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Declarations of Interest Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.
3.	Minutes of Council (Pages 7 - 14) To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of Annual Council held on 18 May 2023.
4.	Chair's Announcements To receive communications from the Chair of the Council.
5.	Public Participation (1) Receipt of Petitions (if any) from Local Government Electors for the District (2) Questions (if any) from the Public
6.	Opposition Priority Business Proposed by: Cllr Bob Purser Seconded by: Cllr Wendy Randall The West Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2025 Priority 3 Improving Connectivity states: 'We will improve the quality of our roads and the timeliness of pothole assessment and the associated repairs process.' It will result in 'improved road quality' and 'Our roads repair programme will be a beacon of efficiency'.

The condition of urban and rural roads in West Northamptonshire continues to deteriorate. Potholes are rife and carriageways are breaking up, with roads and cycle paths dangerous to cyclists. It is recognised that WNC inherited from the predecessor Northamptonshire County Council an inadequate budget and poorly managed Highways contract.

Nonetheless, after two years of the new authority, even with the additional 'short-term fixes' for 2023/24 of £1.8 and £1m funds identified by the Government and West Northants Council respectively, the level of investment is inadequate, so that the condition of roads, cycle paths and pavements continues to deteriorate.

Additionally, the new contract agreed in mid-2022 with assurances of improvement has not reached the minimum standard set by this Council.

Therefore, to achieve the objectives set in the Corporate Plan, this Council invites the Leader of the Council to instruct the Cabinet Member for Highways to:

1. Specify where the additional £2.8million for 2023-24 is being spent
2. Bring forward to Cabinet a costed five-year investment plan for bringing the roads paths and cycle ways up to a good standard.
3. Improve the performance of the contract with Kier to good by June 2024 and if this is not achieved bring a report to this Council setting out options for terminating the contract.

7. Cabinet Reports and Record of Decisions Taken by Council (Pages 15 - 102)

Items of Business

8. Annual Report and Summary of Performance 2022/23 (Pages 103 - 188)

9. Updates to the Constitution (Pages 189 - 192)

10. Update to Political Balance and Committee Places (Pages 193 - 196)

11. Chief Officer Fixed Term Appointment and Remuneration (Pages 197 - 202)

12. Integrated Care Northamptonshire - Outcomes Framework (Pages 203 - 210)

13. Motions

Motion 1

Proposed by: Cllr Sally Beardsworth

Seconded by: Cllr Rosie Humphreys

Background

Last month, the Career's Leave Bill, championed by Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain was passed and will shortly become law. Millions of people care for loved ones, doing everything from day-to-day physical caring, washing, dressing and feeding for those who cannot care for themselves, to things like shopping for a household elderly relative. Yet far too many unpaid carers go without adequate support and struggle to balance caring responsibilities and work.

Earlier this month (5th June – 9th June) it was Carers Week.

Research has revealed that 19 million people in the UK have provided unpaid care but have not been identified as carers. Many simply see themselves as a parent, partner or friend.

This means millions of carers could have missed out on vital support. This figure equates to approximately 73%.

Research also shows that providing unpaid care has had a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of 8 million people in the UK. Too often caring comes at the cost of carers own health. 31% of those who have provided unpaid care have said that their own health and wellbeing had suffered as a result of their caring role. This is an issue that has been flagged through the engagement process of the Health & Wellbeing strategy in our own area of West Northamptonshire.

More must and needs to be done both at a national and local level.

Resolution

This council therefore resolves to convene a roundtable, during Parliament's Summer recess, with our local MP's, a cross-party members group, unpaid carers from across our council area and WNC council officers to understand the problem specifically within our own area and explore what further can be done to recognise and improve the situation for unpaid carers who ultimately save local authorities and the state millions of pounds.

Motion 2

Proposed by: Cllr Cheryl Hawes

Seconded by: Cllr Harry Barrett

This Council is shocked by recent incidents of knife crime in West Northamptonshire.

Partners in the CSP include; West Northants Council, Northants Police, Probation Service, Integrated Care Board and the Fire Service, as well as including Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation (NHS) Trust, Office of the Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Youth Offending Service, Voluntary and Community and Faith Sector Organisations, Registered Housing Providers, Northamptonshire Children's Trust and the University of Northampton

Further notes, that the Government of this day announced that it would amend the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to ensure that serious violence is an explicit priority for Community Safety Partnerships, and by making sure they have a strategy in place to tackle serious violence.

	<p>This Council will therefore:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to acknowledge and promote the ongoing work of the Community Safety Partnership. 2. Bring forward initiatives to promote community engagement on community safety. 3. Recognise the value of taking a public health approach, to continue to bring forward the production of a Serious Violence Strategy as required under The Serious Violence Duty by January 2024 4. Note the recent Serious Case Reviews and develop an action plan from the recommendations that have come forward. 5. Recommend that West Northamptonshire Council observe the date of the first visit of the Knife Angel, the national monument against violence and aggression, to our region, and from this point forward mark a program of 'Anti-knife and violence crime' events each spring, that reflect our commitment to tackling this problem, that has an adverse effect on our communities. 6. Encourage all Councillors to commit to becoming an 'Anti Violence Champion' by signing or re-signing a pledge.
<p>14.</p>	<p>Urgent Business (previously agreed with the Chairman)</p> <p>The Chair to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.</p>

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
21 June 2023

Council Members:

Councillor John Shephard (Chair)

Councillor Jo Gilford (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Ann Addison

Councillor Rufia Ashraf

Councillor Jamal Alwahabi

Councillor Azizur Rahman

Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb

Councillor Fiona Baker

Councillor Dermot Bambridge

Councillor Harry Barrett

Councillor William Barter

Councillor Sally Beardsworth

Councillor Phil Bignell

Councillor Lizzy Bowen

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Councillor Adam Brown

Councillor Michael Brown

Councillor Muna Cali

Councillor Alan Chantler

Councillor Pinder Chauhan

Councillor Nazim Choudary

Councillor Imran Ahmed Chowdhury BEM

Councillor Paul Clark

Councillor Stephen Clarke

Councillor Maggie Clubley

Councillor Fiona Cole

Councillor Raymond Connolly

Councillor Karen Cooper

Councillor Daniel Cribbin

Councillor Julie Davenport

Councillor Janice Duffy

Councillor Paul Dyball

Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Alison Eastwood
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Terry Gilford
Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage
Councillor Mike Hallam
Councillor Lauryn Harrington-Carter
Councillor Cheryl Hawes
Councillor Stephen Hibbert
Councillor Nigel Hinch
Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Daniel Lister
Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Mike Warren
Councillor Terrie Eales
Councillor Penelope Flavell
Councillor Rupert Frost
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor Andrew Grant
Councillor Enam Haque
Councillor Jonathan Harris
Councillor Rosie Herring
Councillor James Hill
Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor David James
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Anna King
Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Malcolm Longley
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Suresh Patel
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence and the appointment of substitute Members should be notified to democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare that fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Evacuation Procedure

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Email: democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk

Or by writing to:

West Northamptonshire Council
One Angel Square
Angel Street
Northampton
NN1 1ED



Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at The Great Hall, The Guildhall, Northampton on Thursday 18 May 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Andre Gonzalez De Savage (Chair)

Councillor John Shephard (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Ann Addison

Councillor Rufia Ashraf

Councillor Azizur Rahman

Councillor Anthony S. Bagot-Webb

Councillor Fiona Baker

Councillor Dermot Bambridge

Councillor Harry Barrett

Councillor Sally Beardsworth

Councillor Phil Bignell

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Councillor Adam Brown

Councillor Muna Cali

Councillor Alan Chantler

Councillor Pinder Chauhan

Councillor Paul Clark

Councillor Stephen Clarke

Councillor Maggie Clubley

Councillor Raymond Connolly

Councillor Daniel Cribbin

Councillor Julie Davenport

Councillor Janice Duffy

Councillor Paul Dyball

Councillor Terrie Eales

Councillor Alison Eastwood

Councillor Rupert Frost

Councillor Jo Gilford

Councillor Terry Gilford

Councillor Matt Golby

Councillor Andrew Grant

Councillor Mike Hallam

Councillor Enam Haque

Councillor Jonathan Harris

Councillor Cheryl Hawes

Councillor Rosie Herring

Councillor Stephen Hibbert

Councillor James Hill

Councillor Nigel Hinch

Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere

Councillor Mark Hughes
Councillor Rosie Humphreys
Councillor David James
Councillor Paul Joyce
Councillor Andrew Kilbride
Councillor Anna King
Councillor Jamie Lane
Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Malcolm Longley
Councillor Greg Lunn
Councillor Charles Manners
Councillor Peter Matten
Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Colin Morgan
Councillor Charles Morton
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Kevin Parker
Councillor Suresh Patel
Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Bob Purser
Councillor Wendy Randall
Councillor Jake Roberts
Councillor Sam Rumens
Councillor Cathrine Russell
Councillor Lisa Samiotis
Councillor Brian Sargeant
Councillor Sue Sharps
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Zoe Smith
Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Councillor Laura Stevenson
Councillor Danielle Stone
Councillor Winston Strachan
Councillor Nick Sturges-Alex
Councillor Mike Warren

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor Jamal Alwahabi
Councillor William Barter
Councillor Lizzy Bowen
Councillor Michael Brown
Councillor Fiona Cole
Councillor Karen Cooper
Councillor Gareth Eales
Councillor Louisa Fowler
Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
Councillor Koulla Jolley
Councillor Daniel Lister
Councillor Ian McCord
Councillor Emma Roberts

Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz

111. Election of Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. He advised members that it had been a privilege to serve as Chairman. He had been able to attend around 350 events and had been able to promote many community groups in his year as Chairman. He highlighted the work of East Hunsbury Parish Council. He passed his thanks on to Reverend Dr Ted Hale for supporting him over the past year.

The Chairman then paid tribute to HM Queen Elizabeth II, who had passed away during his term of office. He highlighted the events he had been involved in during this period, leading up to the coronation of King Charles III. He also mentioned his chosen charities, the Air Ambulance and Northants Search and Rescue.

Councillor Longley proposed that Councillor John Shephard be elected Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council for the year 2023-24.

Councillor Nunn seconded the proposal.

Upon a vote, the proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor John Shephard be elected Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council for the year 2023-24.

112. Appointment of Vice-Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council

Councillor A Brown proposed that Councillor Jo Gilford be appointed Vice-Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council for the year 2023-24.

Councillor Addison seconded the proposal.

Upon a vote, the proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Jo Gilford be appointed Vice-Chairman of West Northamptonshire Council for the year 2023-24.

113. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

114. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Former Northampton Borough Councillor Frank Lilley, who represented the New Duston Ward from 1999-2003 had passed away.

- He thanked members for electing him as Chairman and promised to work energetically and diligently in the role.
- He paid tribute to the outgoing Chairman, who had actively supported many events.
- He highlighted the work of Councillor Charles Manners, who had driven a truckload of equipment to Ukraine.
- He paid tribute to the officers of the Council who were responsible for delivering services and who had been shortlisted for awards.

115. **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2023 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

116. **Updates to the Constitution: Changes to Planning Committees**

Councillor Patel presented the report which sought Council's consideration of the recommendations made by the Democracy and Standards Committee in relation to proposed updates to the Constitution in relation to the structure and operation of the Council's Planning Committees. He proposed alterations to the recommendations about the threshold for items to go to each committee, the start time of meetings and applications submitted by members.

Councillor Grant seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- The PAS report highlighted bad behaviours and recommended a reduction of committees.
- Northampton was being "sliced in half".
- Afternoon meetings were not serving residents.
- Public participation was central to democracy; Towcester was not accessible to many Northampton residents, and a 2pm start was not accessible to working residents or members
- Previous planning committee meetings sometimes ran for 5 hours or more; 6pm starts would mean that meetings ran late into the night.
- It was necessary for a balance to be struck between officer time and member availability.

Separate votes were taken on each proposed alteration.

Upon a vote, the alteration to paragraph 5.5 of the report (relating to thresholds that would identify the most relevant committee) was agreed.

Upon a vote, the alteration to recommendation B (iv) (relating to meeting start times) was lost.

Upon a vote, the alteration to paragraph 5.4.9 (relating to applications submitted by members) was agreed.

Upon a vote, the alteration to Section 17 of the Constitution (relating to applications submitted by members) was agreed.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Noted the decision taken at the previous meeting to abolish the existing three Local Area Planning Committees and the establishment of two new Planning Committees;
- b) Approved the following recommendations of the Democracy and Standards Committee:
 - i. That the Planning Committee – North be composed of eleven members and be constituted to deal with planning applications falling within the following wards: Braunston & Crick, Brixworth, Moulton, Long Buckby, Daventry West, Daventry East, Woodford & Weedon, Duston West & St Crispin, Duston East, Dallington Spencer, Abington & Phippsville, Kingsthorpe North, Kingsthorpe South, Boothville & Parklands, Headlands, Talavera and Billing & Rectory Farm;
 - ii. That the Planning Committee – South be composed of eleven members and be constituted to deal with planning applications falling within the following wards: Bugbrooke, Towcester & Roade, Hackleton & Grange Park, Silverstone, Deanshanger, Middleton Cheney, Brackley, St George, Sixfields, East Hunsbury & Shelfleys, Delapre & Rushmere, Castle, Riverside Park and Nene Valley.
 - iii. That the Planning Committee – North will meet in Northampton and the Planning Committee – South will meet in Towcester, except where the applications on the agenda are exclusively located within Northampton wards;
 - iv. That meetings of both Planning Committees convene at 6pm, subject to the provisions of the Constitution.
 - v. That named substitutes be permitted but limited to 2 Conservative, 1 from each of the other groups, to be drawn exclusively from the other Planning Committee and/or the Strategic Planning Committee;
 - vi. That the threshold for applications to be determined by the Planning Committees be amended as set out in section 5.5 of the report (as amended);
 - vii. That the threshold for applications to be determined by the Strategic Planning Committee be amended as set out in the report (as amended);
 - viii. That Section 17 of the Planning Protocol (Development Proposals submitted by Councillors and Officers) be amended to clarify that planning proposals submitted by Councillors should be determined by the Planning Committee that does not cover the ward to which the application relates.
- c) Noted the retention of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Planning Policy Committee as currently structured.
- d) Agreed that these changes come into effect immediately and will be reviewed by the Democracy and Standards Committee, in consultation with Planning Committee chairs after a period of six months.

- e) Delegated to the Monitoring Officer the power to make these amendments and any consequential amendments that may be necessary.
- f)

117. **Committee Proportionality and Appointment of Members to Committees and other bodies**

Councillor Nunn presented the report to Council which sought Members' approval regarding allocation of places on committees between the political groups in accordance with the political balance requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and to confirm the appointment of Committee Chairs, Deputy Chairs and members. The report also invited Council to note the names of the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the political groups and to note the members of the Cabinet.

Councillor A Brown seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and made the following comments:

- Some members had been removed from committee appointments without warning, they felt that this was unacceptable.
- There were equalities issues; only 3 chair/vice chair posts were filled by women.
- There was concern around the appointment of some chairs that had previously had responsibility for "failed" services at Northamptonshire County Council.
- Opposition members should be chairing Overview and Scrutiny committees; the authority should not be able to "mark its own homework".
- Residents had been contacting Cabinet Members and getting no responses. Assistant cabinet members should respond if Cabinet Members were too busy.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Received the names of the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the political groups as set out at Appendix A of the report.
- b) Noted the members of the Cabinet set out at Appendix A of the report.
- c) Agreed to constitute and decide on the allocation of places on committees between the political groups in accordance with the political balance requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, as set out in section 5 of the report.
- d) Confirmed the appointment of Committee Chairs, Deputy Chairs and members to the various Committees and Joint Committees as set out at Appendix A of the report.
- e) Delegated to the Monitoring Officer the power to appoint Councillors and substitute Councillors to Committees and sub-Committees in accordance with the wishes of the Group Leaders except where appointments to those bodies is exercisable only by the Cabinet.

118. **Calendar of Meetings 2023-24**

Councillor Patel presented the report which sought Council's approval of the Calendar of Meetings for the year 2023-2024.

Councillor Kilbride seconded the report.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

1. Council approved the calendar of meetings for 2023-2024, as set out at Appendix A of the report.

119. **Honorary Alderman Scheme**

Councillor Gonzalez De Savage presented the report which proposed that former Councillors who had served for 12 years or more as Councillors in the area of West Northamptonshire be eligible to be considered for conferment of the title of "Honorary Alderman". For the purposes of continuity, this would apply to Councillors who served at the former Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council, South Northamptonshire Council, and the part of Northamptonshire County Council which covered the West Northamptonshire area.

Councillor Larratt seconded the report.

Members discussed the report.

RESOLVED:

Council:

- a) Agreed to the scheme for the enrolment of Honorary Aldermen of West Northamptonshire Council as set out in Appendix A of the report.

120. **Urgent Business (previously agreed with the Chairman)**

None advised.

The meeting closed at 6.57 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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Report of Councillor Jonathan Nunn Leader of the Council

29th June 2023

Since our last meeting I have worked with the Cabinet, Members, the Chief Executive and Officers across all areas of the Council. Many of these activities and issues are referred to in more detail in Cabinet colleagues' reports.

Sustainability

Our cross-party member working group continues to meet on a monthly basis to drive our sustainability programme activity and we are grateful to all members involved for their time and commitment. An application for the UK100 Leadership Academy has been submitted for a further working group member.

A school presentation at Northampton School for Girls was well received, we will continue to engage with schools and look at options to deliver more face-to-face talks.

No Mow May has officially finished, a debrief meeting has been arranged to look at lessons learned and plan any changes for next year. Although quite a significant change in attitudes to not cutting grass and verge areas, we have seen many embrace this idea, to the benefit of enhancing biodiversity.

We are in active discussions with University of Northampton PhD students about joint projects to look at scope 3 supply chain emissions.

Collection of the 2022/23 emissions data is now underway, and an emissions reduction plan is in development, following the publication of our baseline emissions data. This will enable the delivery of our 2030 net zero target for West Northants Council.

Communications

Our communications service have led work on our second annual report which is on tonight's agenda and celebrates the many achievements of our hard working colleagues and councillors over the past year, the huge amount of progress we have made as a new council along with the challenges we face.

Work is underway on the first issue of our new West Northants resident magazine, which was recommended by a cross-party working group some time ago, and which will be launched this summer, providing all residents with useful information about local services and events.

The communications service continues to deliver a high volume of proactive campaigns including:

- Armed Forces Week
- Heat health
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- ASC system transformation

- Director of Public Health report comms
- Health & Wellbeing strategy
- Learning & Development
- Apprenticeships
- Boundary review
- Voter ID
- Legal services team launch
- Safer interactions -customer services team
- Do it online campaign
- Equality Strategy Launch
- Governance
- Registrars
- You said we did
- New Payment options
- Coat of Arms
- Canvass 2023
- Best Practice for contract management
- Corporate Social Value

Local Government Chronicle Awards

The council was proud to be a finalist in this year's LGC awards in four categories!

These included Climate Response, Health and Social Care, Large Team of the Year and Rising Star, and we received two highly commended awards for Health and Social Care and Rising Star.

This is an excellent reflection of all the hard work that colleagues and councillors have put in to make a difference in West Northants.

Civic

Coronation:

Across the Coronation Weekend, people came together across West Northants in a splendid celebration.

The Coronation Big Lunch took place at Delapre Abbey on Sunday 7th May with over 5,000 residents enjoying picnics and a range of performances and activities with friends and family into the evening, followed by screenings of the coronation concert.

Street parties and events in other locations across the West Northants community were also organised by town and parish councils and community groups which were promoted on our website and through our communications channels.

On Monday 8 May 2023, members of the public took part in The Big Help Out across West Northamptonshire, volunteering to support their local areas and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the Coronation Weekend.

Transformation

The Transformation Portfolio continues to focus on priority projects linked to significant savings or complex delivery, furthermore over the period process and practices have been introduced to better integrate technology projects into governance processes. Highlights of each directorates key developments is as follows:

Place

Consultation has begun with HR and the unions on a revised aggregated structure which will deliver £350k efficiency in 2023/24 and to enhance this the phase 1 of the DEF Mastergov system has now been delivered onto a single system for WNC for planning. Phase 2 will drive forward further efficiencies and exploit the advantages of the new system, with a 'go live' date of July 2023. A local plan workshop has also been scheduled and all members invited.

The Home to School Transport Policy proposals consultation continues with feedback being sought through the consultation survey, mailbox and the 5 consultation events held across West Northamptonshire. Planning work has also began on refreshing our independent travel training offer as well as on safer walking routes. Also, WNC is looking to build partnerships with local leading Virtual Reality suppliers to provide experiences in a safe environment to encourage children and young people to travel independently.

Communities and Opportunities

Housing solutions and aggregation transformation remains on track to deliver its £500k target in a very difficult operational environment. As well as structural changes to align roles and responsibilities, work has focused on drafting a single allocations policy, with operational managers in both WNC and Northamptonshire Partnership Homes providing feedback. A single homelessness pathway workstream continues to develop our offer against rising demand, national policy and rising housing subsidy loss. In terms of system architecture, options have been presented to rationalise our systems in this area and provide a single system depending on choices around the allocations policy.

The Debt & Money Advice project has been bringing together officers from across WNC's services which provide debt and money advice into a single team to provide efficiencies and consistency, and to this end from May 23rd two officers from adult social care have joined the team for an initial two-month pilot.

People

Reablement West continues to tightly monitor the number of starts in the service each week and the reduction in care hours the reablement offer has delivered, continuing the robust tracking which has delivered £4m in cost avoidance over a 3 year period. Recruitment of staff is still a risk, as it is nationally, however the service is currently able to fill 73% of roles.

The Home Care Redesign project is on track for implementation in August 2023. Fifty five providers responded to the tender for this project which is very positive. Those tenders are currently being evaluated, with the aim of awarding the contract at the end of June 2023, which is currently on track.

The Supported Living Review Project is gathering pace as the current 'as is' position has been mapped, and through current activity £314k of the £600k target for 2023/24 has been

achieved. The project continues to analyse provider returns to establish a complete 'As Is' demand analysis for current housing stock within the supported living/supported accommodation markets.

Optimisation of single-handed care is a £1m project that in 2022/23 secured £817k of saving as well as significant cost avoidance. In order to build on that success, the project is delivering the recruitment of additional resource to proactively review a list of 200 high-cost packages where double handed care is still in place.

Corporate

The Connected Customer programme continues to delivery on the customer excellence strategy by bringing initial contact services into the contact centre. The project has onboarded the Revenue and Benefits team in Northampton, reducing the abandonment rate of calls and delivering a more consistent experience for across West Northamptonshire. The project team are currently preparing to onboard Planning Services in the next phase, so that agents can provide customers with advice and information for which there is not a requirement for a back-office expert. The delivery of a single customer experience management system continues at pace with Daventry's legacy system being integrated in the current phase. The programme is also initiating workstreams around ensuring web content is inclusive to all residents.

Future Ways of Working continues at pace to deliver an ambitious £750k savings target. The Abbey Centre works continue at pace with the first cohorts of staffing moving in throughout June 2023, although this has of course been negatively impacted by the flood caused by a leaking water tank. Work as also been completed with Northamptonshire Children's Trust to facilitate their move into Abbey to provide a better, joined up locality offer to residents. Teams have also come together in our other locations, such as Revenues and Benefits having moved into One Angel Square, again supporting the aggregation of services.

The Legal Services review is on track to deliver a £500k efficiency saving, and in doing so moving to an in-house delivery model. Recruitment is progressing well with posts being successfully filled at all levels, thus mitigating one of the largest risks in the project. The migration to a single cloud-based instance of IKEN remains on track.

Pay & Grading has successfully delivered circa 1,200 outcomes on time and in a coordinated manner, as well as running the communications and a number of briefing sessions for various levels of the organisation. The focus for the project is to now manage the appeals process in the same efficient manner, and develop the support offer for career management to support impacted employees.

Finance

Transformation support is currently focused on initiating a project to ensure that West Northants Council can develop a roadmap to be PCI DSS compliant, and thereby reduce that organisational risk. This involves services across the authority as well as coordinating action on our IT infrastructure.

Transformation have also been supporting the activity surrounding services and charges with North Northamptonshire.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council

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June 2023

HOUSING

Work is progressing on the Housing Delivery Plan to underpin the recently adopted Housing Strategy. The Housing Partnership Board met on 23rd May 2023 – proposing a sub-group of the Board will be formed to drive the delivery of affordable homes. Key strategic partners such as Northamptonshire Partnership Homes, Grand Union Housing, Futures Housing Group and Midland Heart are represented on the Board alongside senior WNC staff from Housing, Adult Social Care and Northamptonshire Children’s Trust.

The project to introduce a single WNC housing allocation scheme has moved through the initial phases and milestones including presentations to senior officers and Executive Programme Board (5th June 2023). A draft version of the policy will be agreed by Cabinet in July before the document undergoes a 12-week public consultation period. Following any revisions prompted by responses to the consultation exercise the final version of the document will be taken to Cabinet in November for approval. Implementation of the new policy will be a significant phase of the project and will include identification of a single IT system, training of staff and processing of application renewals.

The relationship with Northamptonshire Partnership Homes continues to improve as both organisations work together to develop the quality assurance framework and plan together for the introduction of the new regulatory regime next year. Representatives of both NPH and WNC will attend a joint meeting with the Regulator for Social Housing on 26th July 2023 to discuss the new standards.

The Team continues to investigate complaints relating to housing conditions in Private Rented accommodation, and operate both the mandatory and additional licensing schemes for houses in multiple occupation

Since the last Council meeting in March the team have been successful in concluding a number of enforcement cases in the Magistrates Court:

- An organised group of criminal landlords that were illegally renting single family dwelling and then converting them to houses in multiple occupation, without ensuring the necessary licensing and safety measures, were fined in the Magistrates Court. In sentencing the group, the District Judge remarked that this was a deliberate, large-scale operation of falsity and that the defendants broke safety laws with no regard to the safety of the tenants, or the neighbours of the properties, engineered solely for financial gain and profit. The District Judge awarded sentencing fines totalling £414,000 with an additional £20,000 awarded as a contribution towards the Council’s costs.
- A Northampton landlord that was operating unlicensed houses in multiple occupation, with failings to ensure the safety and maintenance of the property. The landlord was sentenced to a fine of £100,000 with an additional £15,000 awarded as a contribution towards the Council’s costs.

CULTURE & LEISURE

The Library Service

Over the winter period the libraries have been part of the network of warm spaces helping people navigate the cost-of-living crisis, providing warm, safe spaces and hot drinks and soup so that people could work or relax without worrying about the cost of heating their homes. Central Library alone saw an increase of between 2000 and 4000 extra visits each month whilst running the scheme. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with customers reporting that having access to the warm spaces offer had been really important to their physical and mental wellbeing and in some cases meant that they were not having to choose between feeding their families and heating their homes.

In February, the first Reading Friends group was launched at the Central Library with plans to roll out across the West Northamptonshire Libraries over the coming months. Reading Friends is an innovative reading befriending programme administered by The Reading Agency, developed with funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, that tackles loneliness through the power of reading. Reading Friends helps both participants and volunteers feel more connected to others and research shows that reading together can help older people to build social networks, connect with others, and has a positive impact on empathy, cognitive function and wellbeing.

The Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire provided by libraries saw another very successful year delivering support to local start ups and SMEs. This was the third and final year of the DCMS funding to enhance the offer and we were able to support another 11 local businesses to develop through the kickstart grant programme and supported the launch of 33 new businesses in West Northamptonshire. UKSPF funding will see this work continue and develop over the next two years.

Northamptonshire Museum & Gallery

As of April 1st, the museum service has attained the prestigious status of being an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. This NPO designation brings along £450k in funding over three years, which will be utilized to execute the ambitious Histories of Northamptonshire Project. This project was conceived to address the necessity of preserving the identity of historic Northamptonshire while expanding the cultural offerings of the museum(s) beyond their physical confines and into the broader West Northants region. The project will actively involve individuals, groups, communities, and organizations in the task of presenting the rich historical narratives of Northamptonshire through a structured program comprising exhibitions, events, and digital activities.

The initial phase of this undertaking has already commenced, with the museum service collaborating closely with the library service to establish four satellite exhibition spaces within local libraries. The chosen locations for these spaces are Brackley, Towcester, Daventry, and Weston Favell. Currently, we are in the process of procuring eight high-quality, high-security display cases, which are expected to be installed by the middle to late summer. These exhibition spaces will feature a dynamic programme of exhibitions, co-curated in collaboration with various communities, groups, and individuals.

Northampton Museum & Art Gallery participated in the festivities commemorating the Coronation of King Charles III on Saturday, May 6. To create a vibrant atmosphere, Guildhall Road was temporarily closed and transformed into a lively street party featuring enticing food stalls and captivating music performances. As part of our contribution, the museum arranged a live stream of the coronation proceedings in the Central Hall, which attracted an audience of over 150 individuals. Moreover, we organized engaging activities such as a trail, face painting, and balloon modelling specifically catered to families. This resulted in an impressive turnout of 1,500 visitors on that day alone, marking it as the highest single day attendance we have experienced since our reopening.

The resumption of the Treasure valuation committee by the British Museum, as a crucial component of the Portable Antiquities Scheme following the disruptions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, has presented exciting opportunities for the museum. In the past month, we have successfully acquired a remarkable array of materials that will form an integral part of our NPO project, leaving a lasting impact on our visitors. These acquisitions include:

- A Bronze Age gold bracelet, purchased with a generous grant of £900 from Northamptonshire Archaeological Society.
- A significant Bronze Age axe/palstave hoard discovered in Northants, generously donated by a diligent metal detectorist, with an estimated value of £400.
- Another remarkable Bronze Age axe/palstave hoard unearthed in Northants, with half of it generously donated by a metal detectorist and the other half purchased, valuing at £52.
- A striking Bronze Age gold strip, also donated by a dedicated metal detectorist, further enriching our collection with an estimated value of £600.

These remarkable acquisitions highlight our commitment to preserving and showcasing the rich historical heritage of Northamptonshire. They will undoubtedly enhance the Histories of Northamptonshire project and will initially be displayed as part of the offsite display programme.

The renowned painting 'Sacred and Profane Love' by John Collier has been on loan to the Hamburger Kunsthalle in Hamburg as part of a major four month exhibition titled 'Femme Fatale - Gaze - Power - Gender,'. As one of Germany's largest and most revered art museums, the Hamburger Kunsthalle has curated an exceptional exhibition featuring not only Collier's masterpiece but also works by other notable British artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John William Waterhouse. To date there have been 90,444 visitors to the exhibition.

Archives and Heritage Service

The first quarter of the new financial year has seen the service launch a revised web presence on the West Northamptonshire Council website. This site replaces an outdated and information-poor site that had not been updated since the service was managed under Northamptonshire County Council. Much work remains to be done in developing the pages further, but it is an important step forward in ensuring a presence on the West Northants council site to which researchers can refer for all the service's basic visiting information.

The service received extremely positive feedback from its customer survey undertaken in February this year, with the results published in March. Of the questions about user satisfaction, no-one said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Everyone using the service was satisfied. We can be pleased to note that the service has 100% user satisfaction (taking satisfied and very satisfied together).

Looking at the percentages of very satisfied, these are extremely high, especially at a time when the service was coping with staff shortages and illness. For example, 96% were very satisfied they had been treated fairly and sensitively, and 93% were very satisfied with the service overall. The main aspect on which people wanted the service to improve was the online catalogue whereby people can search for the descriptions and references of documents that they might wish to consult. This is largely outside the control of the service and it has now been accepted that the issue will only be addressed by a migration of the whole database to a updated version of the software. It is hoped that this can be addressed in the next quarter. Many researchers also chose to leave comments on the survey and 19% of these were to make written comments about the staff. These included, 'Excellent facility and friendly helpful staff', 'Thanks to all the staff for answering enquiries and great help!', 'Everyone was very friendly', and 'Very helpful and willing to go above and beyond'.

The only other points to note in the first quarter are the continuing pressure on the small team at a busy time of year. It is hoped that the March 2022 staffing structure will largely be in place by the summer. Also that there remain issues to be managed in respect of the building and its long-term capacity and suitability for archives storage.

Sport, Leisure & Culture

The cost-of-living rise has hit the leisure industry hard with the impact of rising energy costs. Local Authorities and Leisure Operators face continued challenges with the cost of running swimming pools, despite high demand for use (for example swimming lessons), operating costs remain higher than income generated. The Council's Leisure operators in West Northamptonshire are working hard to mitigate risks and reduce energy consumption. These actions are proving successful to date as all the council owned pools have remained open since returning from Covid-19.

In support of the rise in energy costs the Government announced its £63m Swimming Pool Support Fund. This fund will be administered by Sport England. WNC has submitted information to a factfinder survey being collated by Sport England. This is part of the scoping from Sport England for Local Authorities to request support from the Governments £63m Swimming Pool Support Fund. It is worth noting that the fund is limited so expectations should be 'appropriate and realistic' given the 300+ local authorities across the country.

The first distribution of funding is anticipated during late Autumn/Winter this year.

Consultants KKP (Knight, Kavanagh & Page) are on track to complete the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) and Sports Facilities Strategy (SFS) by the end of 2023. Both the PPS and SFS will play a key role in providing an evidence base for sports facility provision across West Northamptonshire. The strategies will detail the level of existing sports facilities and how this meets current population needs as well as forecasting against local population growth up to 2041.

The service is currently working with British Cycling (National Governing Body for cycling) to formalise a partnership which will see increased opportunities for cycling across West Northamptonshire. The partnership, expected to launch this summer will bring added social value including local recruitment and volunteering opportunities.

Councillor Adam Brown
Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure

Report on User survey for Assistant Director and Cabinet Member

Background

Under the terms of the Inter-Authority Agreement, and as matter of good practice, the Archives Service aims to undertake a survey of user views at least once a year. During the year, a record is kept of any compliments and (very infrequent) complaints. However, this does not necessarily tell senior officers and members what users' views are about the details of the service.

Therefore, during the month of February 2023 all researchers who came to the service were issued with a copy of a short questionnaire about their experience. A version of this was sent to those who purchased digital copies via email but only one was returned and this has not been included in the figures as not being statistically valid. The website was in the process of being migrated from the old Northants County Council site to the new West Northants one, so it was not considered to be a good time to try to survey web users. February is a good month, however, as it is usually among the busiest in terms of physical users of the service.

A total of 75 questionnaires were returned, making one return worth less than 2%. It was felt that this gave a sufficient sample and was better than the previous year.

User satisfaction

Of the questions about user satisfaction, no-one said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Also, no-one refrained from giving an opinion. Everyone using the service was satisfied. We can be pleased to state the service has 100% user satisfaction. This has been broken down a bit further, but it is important not to lose track of the fact that to have all of your users saying they are satisfied, despite the fact that the service was at this time operating at half staffing, is an achievement. There were certainly a number of very busy days in February when researchers did not get as much time spent with them as they might have done if had not been so busy. On the other hand, users were getting the benefit of very experienced and senior staff on duty, covering for vacancies in the front-line team.

Question	Very satisfied number	Very satisfied %	Satisfied number	Satisfied %	Total
Are you satisfied with the overall service that you received today?	70	93	5	7	100%
Are you satisfied with the friendliness and helpfulness of the staff?	69	92	6	8	100%

Are you satisfied that the staff understood your needs?	71	95	4	5	100%
Are you satisfied that you were treated fairly and sensitively by our staff?	72	96	3	4	100%

Feedback on the service

All users were asked to specify what changes they would like to see; this was from a list of options based on the feedback offered last year, but with space for people to add additional comments or other thoughts. The aim was to try to make it easier to group the feedback and get a clear impression of the issues that were worrying researchers. The results were not a surprise, but it is nice to note that 35% of users did not see any need for any change or make a comment. That the overwhelming desire is for improvement to the online catalogue was expected, as this is something that the service provider, working with the service has failed to resolve to date. Some resolutions are proposed in the final section.

What changes would you like us to consider about the way we deliver our service?	Numbers	Percentages
Nothing comes to mind	25	29%
Improvement to online catalogue	25	29%
More catalogues online	15	17%
More document images online to assist researchers outside the County	17	19%
Clearer service standards so I know what I can expect	0	0%
No Comment	5	6%

In addition, many researchers chose to leave comments, and 19% of these were to make written comments about the staff. These included, 'Excellent facility and friendly helpful staff', 'Thanks to all the staff for answering enquiries and great help! Everyone was very friendly', and 'Very helpful and willing to go above and beyond'. 17% made comments about the online catalogue, mainly about its speed but some asking for more detail. The latter is simply not possible because of resources, the former can be addressed if the authority is willing to spend some money and set up a new contract to enable an upgrade to be done.

Five people did comment on the opening hours, saying that these were too limited to meet their needs. The points were reasonable. However, with current levels of resourcing there is simply no way that the desire for longer opening hours could be addressed. Nor does a 6% interest in change (with only one person mentioning lunchtime opening, for example) suggest this is a top priority for users.

Four people expressed their concern about the cold in the public rooms in the strongest terms. One researcher even knitted staff fingerless gloves, she was so distressed at how cold everyone looked! Luckily this immediate situation seems to have been addressed, though the longer-term situation with the gas boiler has not yet been resolved. There were a few other random requests, such as for a coffee machine or tea maker, neither of which are economically viable given the numbers visiting.

Conclusions

AS before, the speed of the online catalogue is a source of most frustration to researchers. In the period between the two surveys, work has been done with the software supplier to try to address the issues. Although overall the service feels that the speed had improved, it has become clear that the only way to address the issue is for an upgrade to the whole software. Given the poor level of service provision the service has experienced from the supplier Adlib, an investigation has been done into alternative archive software packages. However, Adlib (now run by Axiell) has made a reduced quote for the upgrade as an incentive to remain with them. A short note has been prepared for Procurement and this will be followed through the appropriate channels. The old software system will no longer be supported from the end of the year, so a decision is required swiftly in any case.

Otherwise, it is simply pleasing to note the positive nature of the survey results.

S Bridges

April 2023

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June 2023

Restructure and Recruitment

Work continues to restructure the Planning Service and the formal consultation with staff and the unions completes on Friday 23rd June. This will be followed by a period of internal recruitment during July and a dedicated external recruitment campaign to fill any remaining vacancies and to add capacity and resilience into the Service.

West Northamptonshire Local Plan

Work continues to progress on preparing the new Local Plan for West Northamptonshire.

A report setting out the new timetable for the preparation of the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, known as the Local Development Scheme, was approved by Planning Policy Committee on 28th March.

On 3rd May, Planning Policy Officers held a workshop to which all Members were invited to discuss their thoughts on which policies in existing plans work well, where future improvements are required and to identify gaps in existing policy coverage.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report on the Local Plan at its meeting on 21st June. The report considered how Members would be involved in the plan making process as it develops.

The PAS (Planning Advisory Service) Review of the planning service, undertaken in late 2022, identified that further support was available from PAS to assist in local plan production. This support included a review of the evidence base and a review of the project management work that is underway. The council has taken up these offers of further support and officers attended a joint technical workshop with representatives from PAS. The advice and recommendations contained in the resulting reports will help the council to undertake the next stages of plan preparation.

Neighbourhood Plans

Following a successful referendum, a Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) for Harlestone on 21st April.

Planning Policy Committee

In addition to the above-mentioned workstreams, Members debated the government's recent consultation on the proposed changes to planning fees and permitted development rights and agreed a corporate response on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council.

At the Planning Policy Committee meeting on 23rd May Members agreed that consultation could be undertaken on Conservation Area Appraisals and designations for Scaldwell and Holdenby. The consultations will start in mid-June.

Development Management

Planning application caseloads continue to be high, however planning performance across West Northamptonshire has been consistently improving with 85.7% of major applications and 81.85% of non-major applications being determined within agreed timescales during April and May 2023 against a target of 70%. The Service is pleased to report that there is no validation backlog within the legacy Northampton area and that the validation backlog in the legacy South Northamptonshire and Daventry areas is steadily reducing.

A major transformation project was undertaken during March and April to integrate the DEF planning software across the former South Northamptonshire and Daventry areas. This was particularly important to improve service delivery given that our staff dealing with applications in the former Daventry area were reliant on paper files and outdated ICT, which is now no longer the case.

There were several Planning Appeals lodged relating to major developments that were received during January and February 2023 which have since progressed to hearings and inquiries. One of the cases was subject to an excellent result which in turn led to another appeal being withdrawn. In fact, so far this year the percentage of dismissed appeals (including many written representations appeals not listed below) each month far exceeds the national average. Major scale development planning appeals being determined by a public inquiry or hearing are listed below.

Hearings or Public Inquiries subject to decisions:

1) Land South of The Wharf, Bugbrooke, Northamptonshire, Construction of 52.no new dwellings with associated open spaces, roads, and drainage infrastructure.

Appeal dismissed. The appellant had sought to undermine the Councils 5-year housing land supply position for the former South Northants area, which was successfully defended at appeal.

2) Land at Stratford Road, Deanshanger, Outline application for 67 dwellings with all matters reserved other than access.

Appeal withdrawn. After the above appeal was dismissed, officers suggested the applicant withdraw their appeal (as they had been trying to apply identical arguments), which they did.

Hearings or Public Inquires awaiting a decision:

1) Land off Holly Lodge Drive, Boughton, Northamptonshire, Outline application for construction of up to 65 dwellings, Public Inquiry took place Tuesday 18 April to Thursday 20 April.

2) Land at Milton Road, Gayton, Northampton, Northamptonshire, Solar farm, Public Inquiry Public Inquiry took place Tuesday 23 May to Friday 26 May.

Forthcoming Hearings or Public Inquires:

1) Land South of Halse Road, Greatworth, Northamptonshire, Solar farm, Public Inquiry - Tuesday 6 June to Friday 9 June.

2) Land North of Blenheim Rise, Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire, Outline planning permission for residential development of up to 32 no. dwellings with all matters reserved except access.

Including affordable housing, together with creation of new areas of open space, a new access off Hampton Drive, landscaping, and all enabling and ancillary works. Hearing Date: 13 & 14 June

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs

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29th June 2023

Highways and Transport Services

North West Relief Road

Works started on site in April 2022 and is now due for completion during late Summer 2024. Works are now out of the ground and approximately 52% complete with of two identified programme delays relating to archaeological works and Network Rail possessions, unfortunately pushing the completion date out into early September. The project team continues to work hard to ensure this type of challenge through the contract mechanisms is robust and where possible, opportunities to bring savings to the scheme are fully explored to ensure delivery remains in budget, as is currently the case.

Constructing the river bridge and railway bridge structures is the next stage of major works, with focus being on the beam installation scheduled for July. Whilst all agreements are in place with Network Rail, this is the key area of risk in the coming period and completing this milestone on time will be a significant achievement.

Close liaison with affected landowners, residents and the travelling public continues to ensure all are kept up to date with progress and any potential impact of the works. Liaison with Persimmons and the Althorp estate in particular has been important in this past period, as flexibility in the working approach where our schemes abut each other has been necessary.

The team continue to assess the off-site mitigation works for Boughton village, now exploring opportunities to dissuade traffic from the Overstone / Vyse Road link and instead travelling east/west along Holly Lodge Drive and the A5076. Kier continues to develop the following three Conditioned schemes, with detail designs expected during September:

- Mitigation Scheme 2 J3 Harborough Rd / Vyse Rd
- Mitigation Scheme 3 J7 Harlestone Road / York Way Roundabout / New Sandy Lane
- Mitigation Scheme 4 Harborough Road / Holly Lodge Drive junction

NGMS

Liaison with National Highways continues, both to secure Technical Approval for the Queen Eleanor element and the review of the overarching Memorandum of Understanding.

Kier are well underway in reviewing the estimates for both Queen Eleanor and Brackmills junctions, which will support the ongoing review of delivery and consideration of future approvals and funding requirements / options.

Upton Adoptions

With the northern roundabout now adopted, the next significant area of work in the north-east of Upton will commence during July, with adoption planned for September 2023.

Close liaison with Homes England continues to ensure consideration is given to implementing all remaining work as swiftly as is reasonably possible.

Cliftonville Corridor

Post-scheme survey work is expected to be undertaken during June to assess the benefits achieved, as per the NPIF grant requirements. Air quality comparison surveys will be undertaken in October 2023 to ensure a like for like comparison of atmospheric conditions.

Farthinghoe Bypass

WNC continues work on revised Benefits to Cost Ratio (BCR) to take into account savings based on accident reduction and environmental benefits. This work, considering the implications on both Option 0 and Option 1 is now expected to be fully completed in early July, with initial BCR results available mid-June.

Towcester Relief Road

WNC recently hosted a meeting with National Highways and Persimmon. The meeting was positive in that National Highways are reviewing Persimmon's design information and requests for departures. They were of the view that it was likely that they would be able to agree to those departures in the next month and that this would pave the way for the design to be formally submitted with potential approval in the autumn – assuming there were no further issues.

Northampton Public Realm / Developments

Collaborative working continues between the Highways and Regeneration teams to support the development and implementation of the Abington Street/Fish St public realm scheme. This approach should see the successful use of the Highways Term Contract in delivering this key local improvement.

Active Travel

The 'Abington Area Active Travel Scheme' has now finished public consultation, with all comments, online survey results and feedback from the live exhibitions at Abington Museum and Bridgewater Primary School being analysed and compiled into the final consultation report, due July 23. The report will be publicly available and publicised via WNC's Consultation Portal so all stakeholders can view it. Where possible, specific enquiries by residents have been responded to. The overall opinions of the scheme are positive at this stage, with some further focus needed on the details of the scheme as presented as well as some pre-existing safety concerns in the area which the consultation usefully highlighted. Following presentation of the consultation report and next steps agreed, it is expected that detailed design will commence. This will be undertaken by Kier through WNC's Highways Service contract and we're currently in discussions regarding timescales, as this will inform when the scheme will be at a presentable stage to go to Cabinet for further decision making.

During May, a meeting was held with Active Travel England (ATE) to discuss design challenges identified through the consultation. As the key funding and inspectorate body for active travel schemes, the input and ongoing support from ATE is key. The main area of focus was the King Edward Road/ Abington Park/ Park Avenue South junction, which is the key area of pre-existing safety concerns. However, ATE suggested a few other improvements elsewhere to the scheme which will be considered. ATE have been approached very recently to enquire about increased funding to reflect increases in costs since the scheme was first proposed in 2021 and to enable the suggested improvements. The team have already secured around £870k from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), but it is expected that there will still be a funding shortfall. We await a response from ATE regarding this question and will update accordingly.

We secured money from the Department for Transport for funding to help develop a new Active Travel Strategy for West Northamptonshire. In October 2022, the draft Ambition Statement, the first phase of developing the strategy, was presented and agreed at the Active Travel Oversight Group. As part of a directorate-wide review to establish how all the strategies being developed fit together, it was agreed that the Active Travel Strategy needs to be developed in line with the vision and objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan. The Local Transport Plan will set out the high-level vision, objectives, policies and schemes for highways and transport within West Northants (draft to be produced by summer 2024). A draft Interim Active Travel Strategy that sets the direction for the next two years while the LTP is developed was presented to the oversight group in late May. A further meeting is being arranged in late June to go through the Action Plan for 2023-25 in more detail prior to internal sign off of the document.

A first draft of the Daventry LCWIP was produced in December 2022. Public consultation is planned for autumn 2023.

Following submission of our Self-Assessment form to Active Travel England, we have received an indicative revenue funding allocation of £152,723 for the Capability and Ambition Fund 2022/23. We submitted our proforma on 30th September. Our submission was based around a number of elements, including developing a LCWIP for Towcester, feasibility design on emerging draft proposals from the Daventry LCWIP and behavioural change (interactive travel map, cycle training, loan e-bikes) centred on the Delapre cycle hub. We were successful and informed of the funding allocation in November although any official announcement was embargoed until 12th January. We are starting to deliver the Capability project with our partners. The development of the Towcester LCWIP is now well underway. The second stakeholder workshop is scheduled for mid-July where we will be presenting progress to date and seeking input on which routes should be audited over the summer.

Active Travel England (ATE) announced on 19th May that we had been successful in securing £642,871 from the Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4). Following endorsement of the Active Quarter at the January 2023 Cabinet, the focus of our bid was delivery of 1.3km of traffic free routes that will link those living in the town centre and Far Cotton with employment in Brackmills via Delapre Abbey, supporting the ongoing wellbeing, social prescribing and cycling hub at Delapre Abbey. The traffic free routes will be complemented by covered cycle parking, benches and wayfinding signage. Construction is planned for Autumn 2023.

We were not successful in securing development funding to undertake feasibility design on two key corridors. The value of these bids was over and above our indicative allocation so were directly competing with other construction schemes, that ATE indicated they would view more favourably.

Brampton Valley Way and Brixworth Country Park, two popular walking and cycling venues, are not directly connected other than by a rough track, Merry Tom Lane, despite being relatively

close. It is not an easy route for people riding or walking between the two venues, especially when crossing the A508 in the vicinity of the entrance to the Country Park. We are looking to establish a safe and accessible route between the two venues.

Transport – Buses & Rail

Cabinet agreed to form an Enhanced Partnership with local bus operators in April 2022. This is one of the key steps in delivering the Government's National Bus Strategy - Bus Back Better - within West Northamptonshire. Unfortunately, along with many other authorities, we were unsuccessful in securing any Government funding to take forward improvements to our bus network.

Consultants undertaking the Bus Service Review will shortly deliver their final report. This will then be discussed at a meeting of the Bus Working Group.

We are currently progressing two key elements of work to progress our work on buses. The first is to work with commercial bus operators to co-design a sustainable network of services following the end of Government financial support for the loss of passengers. This funding was originally expected to end in October, but Government has now announced that funding will continue until June 2023. The second linked piece of work is looking at how we improve the provision of bus services for rural areas. A cross party steering group will continue to meet quarterly to help review and shape the work related to the implementation of the strategy.

Government have also announced their intention to extend fund the £2 maximum adult single bus fare that was due to end in June 2023 for another three months to 31 October 2023. This is a voluntary scheme and operators will need to re-confirm their participation beyond June 2023. New operators will also be able to join the scheme.

Transport for London (TfL) are currently undertaking engagement on their proposal to withdraw Day Travelcards, which will impact rail passengers in West Northamptonshire who currently purchase a Travelcard for onward travel in London. We have written to TfL to object and asking them to fully consider the increased cost to rail passengers outside of London.

Traffic Enforcement

In December we consulted regarding the potential for WNC to apply to extend our existing powers to enable us to enforce Moving Traffic Offences, the consultation showed that a significant majority of those responding supported the proposal and the sites that have been selected for an initial phase of implementation. The application to extend our powers into this area was submitted in February and it is likely that we will receive the results of that application in the summer.

In April the traffic enforcement team completed their disaggregation of the service and the WNC team are now dedicated to the WNC area. This has concluded the work to disaggregate the Highways and Transport Service, however we will continue to work with all our neighbours.

Highway Maintenance

The new contract with Kier has now been operational for nine months and whilst with any new contract there have been some teething issues overall progress has been good, although there are still some aspects to be addressed. We have agreed the Annual Plan for 23/24 and we are now in the process of communicating what we are doing over the next year to members, residents and key stakeholders.

Following the continued cold and wet weather through spring we had a large volume of defects on the network. We have managed to maintain our response times throughout and anything deemed unsafe has been attended to within these timescales. We now look forward to what we can do to better prepare for the next colder season, and what we can do to be better prepared to respond to increased volume, and what information we can gather to proactively deal with our network.

To improve efficiency and deliver better quality repairs. we are in the process of investing in our fleet with the purchase of a JCB pothole pro and a further Thermal Road Repairer. This investment will allow us to achieve beyond just fixing defects when they become unsafe by tackling defect hot spots proactively. We are also using the contractual investment fund to provide greater information for FixMyStreet and new materials that will reduce time spent finding and fixing each defect.

Waste Management Services

The refuse and recycling collections continue to perform at a good level with few complaints.

Garden Waste Subscriptions for 23-24 have commenced. Residents can sign up via the Council's website, or by phoning customer services and a new option to pay by annual direct debit has been included this year. Since the payment system went live, 79,207 subscriptions have been purchased with approximately 16% using the direct debit option.

Household Waste Recycling Centres continue to operate with no issues despite the visitor numbers reaching unprecedented levels in April and May 2023. During these two months, there were an additional 19,000 site users compared to the same period in 2022.

The various communications campaigns have progressed as follows:

- The battery fire campaign, "Never Bin Batteries" with the aim of reducing the number of batteries being disposed of in bins was launched in May.
- The Northampton food waste campaign (fully funded by a Public Health grant) to increase the number of residents using the separate food waste collection service and reduce the amount of food being disposed of with residual waste has commenced.
- The contamination campaign to improve the quality of recyclables collected in the co-mingled kerbside bin has commenced. Veolia are progressing with taking action when they find the wrong materials in the recycling bin. The Council will increase its communications to residents across West Northamptonshire to encourage everyone to use the 'right bin'.

A sticker highlighting these three campaigns, with 'directional messaging' will be added to every household waste bin over the summer months.

Work on developing a resources and waste strategy for West Northamptonshire continues. The strategy will provide a future direction for the waste services as current contracts expire. Four members working group meetings have taken place, which have helped explore members' priorities for the waste service, opportunities for improvements to the collection services and opportunities to develop waste infrastructure. We plan to consult with residents on the waste and resources strategy in the summer.

Our Waste App which previously covered the Daventry and South areas is now available for the residents of Northampton. This is now being promoted by a communications campaign. The project to set up the "Report It" element of the app is currently with the digital team to develop, and we anticipate it will be 'live' for residents to use it later this year.

Litter and Street Cleansing

Crews continue to provide a regular cleansing service in and around the residential areas of West Northants and cleansing works are also underway on the local high-speed roads, although work on the A5, A14, A43 and A45 is subject to National Highways facilitating the safe clearance of litter on these roads.

A cross council initiative including the waste team, regulatory services and the communities' team is working to progress various projects in order to assist with cleaning up of local areas and encourage residents to take pride in their area and help maintain the environment.

Using a grant received from Keep Britain Tidy and The Chewing Gum Task Force, the piece of gum and graffiti removal equipment which can be towed around West Northamptonshire has now been delivered and staff training conducted. We will be clearing areas of Towcester, Brackley and Daventry of gum and then erecting signage to say that it has been done. Gold Street in Northampton has already been cleaned of gum and the signs erected.

Grounds Maintenance

Mowing operations are well underway and into their third cut, the grass has continued to flourish under the recent warm and wet weather conditions, but the recent equipment replacement programme has aided the service by providing new kit for this season and a faster, more efficient service will be provided this year. As part of the equipment overhaul, a number of electric devices have been introduced to reduce the services carbon footprint.

In Northampton, our contractor, is providing flower beds in our parks and gardens, as well as hanging baskets, troughs and jardinières as a part of Northampton in Bloom on behalf of the Town Council and some Parish Councils.

Environment, Countryside, and Parks

Countryside, parks, and outdoor learning

These services continue to provide a key frontline service for the people of West Northamptonshire. The Countryside and Park Rangers and Education Rangers have face to face contact with our customers daily. The Park Rangers and Countryside Rangers are multiskilled and carry out practical tasks, public engagement, and enforcement. The Education Rangers provide young children with an exciting way for them to learn and experience the countryside. They are given the opportunity to explore woodlands, ponds, rivers, meadows and to participate in orienteering, cross country navigation, and team building games.

Thrive Awards

I am delighted to congratulate Vikkie Maloney, Park Ranger, on being the winner of the 2023 Innovate Award at the Council's THRIVE Awards. Vikkie is a master at using existing materials and land to transform spaces into areas that can be used and loved by residents of all ages, so that they can connect with and learn about nature. Vikkie's passion and hard work is clear in everything she does, and her drive to create green spaces that allow residents and wildlife to THRIVE will help towards making West Northants a clean and green place to live, work and visit.

Creating an outdoor classroom at Bradlaugh Fields is a favourite of hers, where she runs groups with children and young people and provides outdoor activities and education to the groups

that attend. Her most recent project has been at the Racecourse where she has turned the bottom half of a disused building and surrounding space that was a hotspot for anti-social behaviour and drug use into a community garden. Vikkie has also just completed her Forest School Leader training to expand the passion she has with working with children and young people in our parks.

Bradlaugh Fields Wildlife Park

In March, the Park Ranger and Community Payback made a clearing amongst overgrown brambles to create a fruit tree orchard and they planted ten different varieties.

Racecourse

The newly formed Community Garden is progressing at pace with a fruit tree orchard also being created within the grounds. The volunteers planted four different varieties with others on the way.

Round Spinney Football Field

There have been issues with quad and motorcycles driving onto the football pitches and causing damage to them. We have installed safety railings at two locations in an attempt to dissuade them from accessing the football field from the neighbouring estates.

Borough Hill, Daventry

50 trees were donated and planted in Borough Hill by volunteers from Cummins and our Park Rangers.

Daventry Country Park

The Parks Community Projects Officer and Park Rangers have been working with volunteers from the Canal & River Trust to clear a new pathway from Daventry Country Park to the new Monksmoor Country Park extension, which is nearing completion.

There were 3 commemorative trees planted in Daventry Country Park that were donated by longstanding visitors to the park

Brampton Valley Way Linear Park – Kelmarsh & Oxendon Tunnels

The volunteers have repaired step risers at Kelmarsh Car Park, as well as filling in some smaller potholes. At Kelmarsh Tunnel they have uncovered the original Victorian rainwater drains that collect & redirect water from the top of the tunnels to culverts at ground level. This is an important development as we should be able to minimise further water damage to the interior and exterior brick work.

At Oxendon, the Volunteers have begun work on establishing steps along the diversionary route for the tunnel. Initially the path was only grass without steps, which quickly became a mud slide after prolific use throughout the pandemic and poor weather conditions. The steps have been made longer & wider to allow horses to traverse them safely and maintain a suitable surface for pedestrians.

Brixworth Country Park

Our Green Flag judging day has taken place with two judges attending the park to assess it against their eight criteria. We are looking forward to flying our 2023/24 flag on our new flagpole in a few months' time.

The Park Rangers and volunteers continue to make improvements to the orchard and have created a new pathway through it. This will make it easier for those that we want to encourage to forage naturally available fruits from the trees in the autumn.

The Mound, Long Buckby

In February, over a few days, Rangers from Brixworth and Daventry along with qualified volunteers thinned out an area of woodland that had been neglected for many years. They were able to chip the brush on site. There is still work to be carried out onsite, so they will return outside of nesting season. The Mount is the site of a Norman motte and baily castle and is a scheduled ancient monument.

Jacks Wood, Brixworth

Park Rangers and Volunteers have started to use lengths of sycamores, that were coppiced from Brixworth Country Park, as fence posts to help create a living hedge around a new Forest School area that will be used by the Educational Rangers.

ANPR At Brixworth & Daventry Country Parks

The ANPR parking payment system will be introduced later in the year. The equipment is ready for installation, but new broadband lines are awaited from Openreach. This will help give our customers a better experience when visiting the parks.

Urban Tree Challenge Fund

Last year the Council was successful in its bid for a grant to purchase and plant trees at the Racecourse, Eastfield Park and Bradlaugh Fields, as part of a two-year tree canopy planting plan. In March, 64 trees were planted between those locations and with another 63 trees to be planted by the end of the year.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

DEFRA has appointed West Northamptonshire Council as the responsible authority to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for West Northamptonshire.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies were introduced in the Environment Act 2021. The Government has now published LNRS regulations and statutory guidance which work together to establish the 'rules' to enable high quality and consistent LNRSs to be prepared across England. The statutory guidance explains what information Responsible Authorities should include within their strategy.

It is estimated that the strategy could take up to two years to develop with implementation ongoing thereafter.

The job description for a Nature Recovery Co-ordinator has been produced and grading is underway prior to recruitment commencing. The Co-ordinator will be responsible for leading work to produce an ambitious strategy, which reflects the shared ambitions of WNC and stakeholders. Working with the Wildlife Trust and Nene Rivers Trust, work has already begun

to engage landowners and farmers and the initial preparation of the mapping required for the Strategy.

Outdoor Learning Centre, Everdon

The Centre is proving very popular, with bookings now being taken for residential courses for 2025. The Centre will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary next year, so events to celebrate are being arranged.

The service will be offering monthly home educator and preschool outdoor learning sessions across Brixworth and Daventry country parks from April 2023. Also starting in April, it will be running weekly sessions for The Cube disability centre in Daventry Country Park and will continue until July 2023.

It is proposed to create an outdoor classroom within their grounds, which will give more flexibility with day groups and other seasonal events.

The Centre had fantastic feedback from Silverstone University Technical College (UTC) after running a GCSE river study for some year 11 students. This was the first time the Centre had run that type of session. UTC was very happy and expects to use the facility again later in the year. This is something the service will be looking to develop and offer to other secondary schools.

Climate Strategies

Three strategies are in various stages of progress to support the Council's achievement of net zero by 2030:

- Estate Climate Strategy: Work is well underway; with an understanding of emissions the Council is responsible for being established and a range of measures to address these being explored. In the light of the Council's financial challenges, assessment of potential for photovoltaic (solar cell) production of electricity is being accelerated. This is likely to involve working with a commercial partner or partners. Arrangements are being made to use the Clear Futures framework to support this work.
- Construction & Maintenance Climate Strategy: Work on this is approaching completion. The strategy will propose a staged approach to achieving net zero by 2030, with key milestones being the implementation of carbon measurement, first in larger projects and then in smaller ones, followed by pricing carbon in tenders, so that the optimal balance of carbon reduction and offsetting can be achieved.
- Fleet Climate Strategy: The fleet review by the Energy Saving Trust was delayed by the number of projects they received. However, it is hoped to secure a place in the next round of their work. The Council will also explore means of reducing the energy intensity of trips, seeking to use the lowest practical carbon mode for each personal or goods movement.

All three Strategies seek to address scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions relevant to their functional scope. The Estate Climate Strategy will be expected to resolve any emissions which cannot be mitigated within the other Strategies. Where possible such offsetting will also secure other benefits, such as enhanced biodiversity and flood risk mitigation.

Flood & Water Service

The Council has a vital role as lead local flood authority and land drainage authority. The service responds to large number of formal consultations and investigates flooding incidents.

Strategically it works to identify and secure measures to reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses.

Approval to recruit has been provided and subject to pay grading the flood team and managers posts will be advertised. We are working with internal HR support to ensure that the advertisement reaches a wide audience. In the meantime, the Council does not have adequate competency or resource to manage flood and water incidences. We have appointed an external consultancy whilst the team are recruited to deliver statutory planning consultation obligations. The historic backlog is now cleared.

With a team in place, the Council would have better control over delivery of statutory duties, and work would be able to commence on updating the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which will define how we plan to manage local sources of flood risk in the district.

Parking

The new parking charges approved as part of the budget became active on Saturday 1st April 2023. The ANPR roll out has continued with St Johns, St Michaels, Grosvenor, Commercial Street, Upper Mounts and The Ridings car park all now live.

Councillor Phil Larratt

Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport, Waste & Environment

Community Safety

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and Hate Crime

Our Social behaviour team continue to offer a comprehensive service to the residents of West Northants, together with our Police colleagues and external partners.

We managed to obtain an amendment to a Criminal Behaviour Order, through the Magistrates Court, on an individual who has been causing issues in both Northampton Town and Daventry. The area where he is excluded from certain behaviours is now County wide for Northamptonshire.

Since March the ASB Team have issued 3 Community Protection Warning Letters, 6 Community Protection Notices 4 Criminal Behaviour Orders, an extension to an Interim Criminal Behaviour Order and a Cuckooing Injunction.

The ASB team are leading on the Multi Agency response to the ASB week of action 3 July-9 July, targeting specific areas and delivering targeted interventions to educate and reduce ASB. The week will include engagement activity and a communications plan working with 'Resolve' ASB charity and partners, using all our available social media channels.

Domestic Abuse (DA) and Sexual Violence

Through the delivery of our Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy we continue to develop a holistic and strategic response to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, together with the subsequent DA duty funding which is now confirmed up to 2025.

Training to support staff in identifying domestic abuse victims, assess risks and refer appropriately continues with housing teams.

Work is being undertaken to allow true partnership working; with domestic abuse being recognised as one of Northamptonshire Children's Trust's priorities, there is collaboration to ensure the Domestic Abuse Strategy supports the Trust and vice versa within the action plan. Partners are meeting regularly to focus on specific issues that create barriers to victim survivors accessing support and safe accommodation. Schemes designed to specifically remove or reduce barriers are in progress, including the issue of insecure immigration status and emergency funds. The recent introduction of the Serious Violence Duty allows further scope for the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence strategy and relevant crossover is being recognised.

We continue to explore new ways to improve the service we offer to victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence within West Northamptonshire. We are having regular discussions with DLUHC, the Domestic Abuse Commissioners Office, other Local Authorities, and service

providers to share and support ideas and change. Ideas and proposals are shared with the domestic abuse and sexual violence board which continues to meet bi-monthly and has oversight of progress and ensures accountability.

Planning for this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign will start in June, aiming to reach further and have even greater impact in 2023.

Knife Crime

We have worked closely with police and other partners to support the community during the critical response period. 12 months since the Knife Angel visited the county was marked with a social media campaign and a Knife Angel Legacy Service followed by candlelight vigil. Father Coss was joined by Cheri Curran, mother of a teenager fatally stabbed in St David's in 2018 who gave a very moving speech. Youth providers supported the Legacy event with the Free2Talk bus on Abington Street the Friday and Saturday 19 & 20 May supported by The Lowdown, Clubs for Young People and Aquarius resulting in some very good conversations with young people and parents. The Team supported police colleagues during Op Sceptre Week of Action with community engagement, Neighbourhood Alert sign-ups and knife amnesties. A knife Amnesty bin has been installed in St David's and arrangements are being made for another in Northampton and one in Daventry. Off the Streets have also installed 2 on the East (Thorplands and Blackthorn). The bins are emptied by the local Neighbourhood Police team. Another critical bleed training session has been arranged for the end of July

Safer Roads

The Roads Joint Action Group is a multi-agency tasking meeting which includes partners from the Neighbourhood Policing Teams, Police Safer Roads Team, West Northamptonshire Highways, Highways England, Kier and Fire and Rescue.

The group addresses issues on the roads throughout West Northamptonshire. Some items are long-term (the application for an injunction against car cruising, the review of at-grade junctions along the A43) while others are adopted and discharged at the same meeting, often being resolved between referral and the meeting taking place.

During 2022 JAG considered 31 new items

- Of these 8 were not adopted
- During the year 27 items were discharged
- At the close of the December meeting, there were 15 items ongoing

Neighbourhood Working

Safer Streets Bellinge & Blackthorn - Awaiting installation date for the upgraded LED lighting in 7 underpasses in and around Blackthorn. Six CCTV cameras have been purchased for Bellinge & Blackthorn awaiting the end of the BT embargo for the fibre upgrade. Youth provision has started in Bellinge targeting those not in education and includes a parent drop-in session.

Safer Streets 4 – Town Centre; A Public Spaces Protection Order was approved, and gates installed to restrict access to Francis Jetty. 26 new lanterns, have been installed across an estate adjacent to the busy evening economy, alongside the removal of shrubbery to improve visibility. These works were identified and prioritised following partnership working with Northampton Partnership Homes and Northants Police. Works to improve lighting around the town centre taxi ranks are now scheduled, and orders have been placed for two new CCTV columns in St Giles and Newlands Car Park. An evening audit of lighting in the town centre was completed in May to provide recommendations for remaining funding.

The Northampton Town Centre Task Group was re-established in April and is meeting on a six weekly basis to discuss and resolve Town Centre issues. Two task and Finish Groups have been set up from this to explore ways to address historic issues in 'Emporium Way' and an area by Greyfriars known as 'Rat Island' as well as providing a place to review the town wide PSPO and discuss other projects.

Working with regulatory services on a pilot project to tackle bins on highways and associated litter/fly tipping. Feedback on areas and issues captured through Castle multi-agency meeting and pilot area identified.

Electrical works begun for 4 CCTV cameras being installed to the exterior of NIA school building funded by Safer Streets Lite. Cameras due to be fully installed early June.

On the 26th May, the first St George Neighbourhood Partnership group was held in the Guildhall; this will look to continue to grow and build over the coming months until it is fully established with agreed aims and objectives, that benefits the residents within the St George area.

Community Engagement

West Northamptonshire Council has been supporting the newly formed trustee board for Southbrook Community Centre, Daventry with advice and guidance to help set them up with the Charity Commission and become fully constituted to open the centre back up from closing since the pandemic. In partnership with Food for Thought Charity they opened their first Community Larder in July. Every week the centre sees over 70 residents. The community larder continues to increase its membership and now opens in the evening. Working in partnership with Futures Housing they also now have a clothes swap shop open to everyone in the community.

West Northamptonshire Council has been working in partnership with Northamptonshire General Practice Alliance in helping to set up Happy Cafés in Daventry and Moulton. Focussing on low level mental health and wellbeing and based on scientific research the Ten Keys to Happier Living are explored through the Action for Happiness social movement. Talks have also been held with multiple partners and faith groups in Towcester to identify gaps and opportunities for service provision.

Support given to Police colleagues during week of activities for Operation Sceptre (knife crime) including Beat Bus in Kingsthorpe, engagement on the University Campus where 56 meaningful engagements were recorded over the morning and hundreds of free personal safety items and information leaflets were given out to students and staff. In Kings Heath, working with NPH and other services we have been offering dropping sessions around financial advice. These sessions have allowed us to engage further to understand the wants and needs of the community, which will help us structure our summer engagement plans

We now have almost 100 Warm Welcoming Spaces that are making a difference to vulnerable residents in West Northamptonshire. January seen a high-level analysis in

reporting from those who had been successful in applying for the grant funding, and case studies with key themes of vulnerable families using libraries to keep warm especially after school, and positive outcomes with children becoming involved with library activities. Vulnerable elderly people were not only using the spaces but opening up to volunteers regarding areas of need, signposting and more is provided. Engaging with the community also seen Councillors using spaces to speak to hard-to-reach residents to listen to their concerns and act accordingly. Mental Health has had many referrals and is prevalent at most spaces.

Community Development

Well Northants

The aim of Well Northants is to bring people together, to empower communities to become more resilient and connected which we know, can make a huge difference to a person's wellbeing. Community Development workers are active in Kings Heath, St David's (Kingsthorpe), Blackthorn and Southbrook in Daventry. The focus of work in these communities continues to be engagement about "what makes you well" and delivering actions and activities in local action plans, based on locally identified priorities. In early May we worked together with partners to deliver a culture mapping Kiosk in Kingsheath, this community engagement event saw the local community mapping out current and aspirational cultural activities.

We have a series of engagement events scheduled for May - August in Southbrook this will take is through a process of engagement, prioritising and asset building with the community. There has been lots of engagement and community activity in Southbrook over the last few years and the Well Northants projects will build upon and add value to that work.

In March 2023 the team successfully delivered community grant funding supporting over 20 projects using a participatory budgeting approach. Communities were invited to come along and hear about projects, voting for which ones they would like to see delivered in their local community.

Quoted from the evaluation:

"Amazing to see the community coming together to support each other – THANK YOU!!"

"I feel more part of community and curious about all the things that are happening. I now have information to share with people who complain that nothing happens/no-one cares!"

We also have a community development worker that works with specific communities who experience significant health inequalities. They are Sex Workers and Gypsy, Romany, Traveller (GRT) communities. To reach out, engage with sex workers and understand health and wellbeing needs we have been trialling a "safe space". This space gives people the opportunity to come along and be valued for who they are, not judged for what they do. The community are helping with the development of a harm reduction toolkit and have developed a survey which will be used to gather insight.

Engagement with the GRT community is slow to progress but continuing, focus is now on delivering a health needs assessment and coproduction of an awareness raising initiative (of GRT culture, challenging discrimination etc.)

School Engagement

Planning has begun for our Young Citizens Scheme in 2023/24; the scheme promotes healthy, safe and strong individuals and communities. Participants become better citizens, are

safer in their schools and communities, online and on the roads; are better equipped to make choices and understand the consequences of their actions; better informed of how to react in an emergency and have a better understanding of and relationship with the range of agencies which operate in West Northants.

Not all schools are able to attend Young Citizens, so we commissioned Amplitude Media to produce a series of animations which cover this range of subjects. The project has been launched to schools, youth groups and professionals working with young people. Feedback from partners has resulted in additional modules being considered.

Community Forums

The Diverse forum has been working to support the police and fire recruitment by helping them connect better with the diverse community across West Northants. Recently, the forum has helped connect further community groups across the west, allowing groups to support each other and event develop events and projects together. The forum is also being used to discuss issues around the rising trend of Knife crime; highlighting what community leaders can do to help support public services that are looking to tackle this issue.

Youth Forum - 13 new young people signed up to join the Youth Forum; 7 of these are from schools in Daventry or South Northants. The Youth Forum induction took place on 5 April where they got to know each other and long-term members, received some training and discussed and voted on their 'youth priorities' for this year's action plan; Sexual Health and Sex Education, and Substance Misuse (drugs/alcohol/vaping). The group then created some actions around these. At the May meeting the young people took part in a public health consultation giving their feedback on the Local Plan. They also worked with Delapre Abbey to look at their engagement plans and how they can best include and provide spaces for young people to enjoy.

LGBTQ & Allies Forum - Northampton Pride - Over 75 stall applications received for Northampton Pride, on Saturday 8 July, and a full programme of stage and street entertainment is now organised. Promotional materials being released for 1st June to coincide with Pride Month.

We have also delivered two virtual LGBTQ inclusive education learning sessions under the LGBTQ Partnership; The first on 23 February with a focus on SEND young people, and the second delivered by Lowdown with a focus on LGBTQ young people's mental health and wellbeing on 25 April. One final session is now being promoted to education staff for Trans-inclusion in June.

Community Events

International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia held on 17 May, at the Guildhall with speakers and a minute of noise, followed by information stands and refreshments.

International Women's Day – Biggest IWD event to date with the maximum number of stands and 2 free workshops – one for women starting their own business and the second to encourage young girls into STEM subjects – both were well received. Kier supported the day

by sponsoring the Special Recognition Inspirational Woman Award and are keen to encourage more women to consider careers with them.

Resettlement Schemes

Homes for Ukraine

We have now seen closer to 800 Ukrainians arriving across West Northants, and still maintain around 500 residing in West Northants, although some of these have now moved on from sponsor accommodation and into the Private Rented accommodation.

The hubs continue to support hosts and guests in local communities, and we are finding that engagement is generally increasing. The team use the hubs as a point of contact to help people meet with each other and also to engage with other services and with prospective hosts.

Day	Time	Location
Monday	2pm – 4pm	Moulton Community Centre NN3 7AX – 5 th June <i>Russian speaking Support Worker normally available at this Hub</i>
Tuesday	2pm – 4pm	East Hunsbury Library NN4 0RZ – 6 th June
		Brackley Library NN13 6AJ <i>English lessons available every week 1pm -3pm</i>
Wednesday	10am – 12 noon	Daventry Methodist Church, NN11 4FB – 31 st May
		Woodford Halse Library, NN11 3RL – 7 th June
Thursday	2pm – 4pm	Towcester Library NN12 6AD <i>Russian speaking Support Worker normally available at this Hub</i>
Friday	1pm – 3pm	Brixworth Library NN6 9DS
	10.am – 12 noon	Emmanuel Church, Weston Favell N3 8JR <i>Russian speaking Support Worker normally available at this Hub</i>

We continue to visit every household at the six and twelve-month mark, to ensure that the guests are still resident, there are no safeguarding concerns, and any issues can be addressed.

Afghan Bridging Hotels and Resettlement

Since the announcement in Parliament that all bridging accommodation would be closing, the residents have received Notice to Quit by the end of August. There are currently 178 Afghans across our two bridging hotels.

We continue to assist families to secure their own accommodation.

We now have fulfilled 5 of our pledged properties, with another 2-3 underway currently.

Asylum Contingency Hotels

We continue to regularly engage with the organisations that are providing the support for those in both hotels currently in West Northants. Regular review meetings are taking place with our partners around emerging issues and concerns.

Community Funding

A single website has been set up following the approval of our new Grants Framework by Cabinet in April - [Community Funding Grants | West Northamptonshire Council \(westnorthants.gov.uk\)](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk) detailing the grants available across West Northants.

The funding round opening dates for the community grant include:

- Round 1: 30 May 2023 – Community Funding Panel: 8 August 2023
- Round 2: 23 August 2023 – Community Funding Panel: 24 October 2023
- Round 3: 8 November 2023 – Community Funding Panel: 24 January 2024

The first Public Health & Wellbeing grant: respiratory disease and other long-term conditions in Local Area Partnership N4, has opened.

CCTV

The CCTV system has continued its valuable work deterring and detecting criminal activity. The tender for the CCTV Monitoring contract resulted in the incumbent provider, Enigma, being successful.

The West Northamptonshire team recently won Enigma's national team of the year award, recognising the excellent work it does. Recent contributions from the monitoring team have been supporting emergency services with the evacuations and pedestrian and vehicle controls following reports of an unexploded bomb on a Horsemarket development site and the gathering of evidence and data after the fatal stabbing in Kingsthorpe.

Councillor David Smith

Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services

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Date 29 June 2023

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION & GROWTH

Sponne Arcade Car Park

Following seven months of extensive redevelopment works to transform two former derelict supermarkets in Towcester into a new parking facility for the town, Sponne Arcade Car Park officially opened to the public on Saturday, 10 June.

The former Co-op and Poundstretcher building in the Sponne Arcade located in the heart of the town stood empty for four years prior to regeneration.

Over the last year the Council has worked with Jeakins Weir to remove the derelict store, level out the area to provide a high-quality central parking facility and expand the site from 70 to 150 formal spaces, with the project being completed within budget. This will more than double the parking space in the town centre and provide improved lighting and safety features for visitors to the area.

78 Derrigate

Visitors to Northampton's iconic and historic 78 Derrigate can now visit the heritage house and its expanded visitor centre, spend time in the rejuvenated secluded garden and enjoy the revitalised visitor shop following the completion of the extensive £950,000 refurbishment. This project marks the first of those funded through the Government Towns Fund to be completed within Northampton.

As the only building located outside Scotland designed by renowned artist, Charles Rennie Mackintosh this local gem and former home is now a museum. Following funding from West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) of £400,000 through the Town Funds, £200,000 match funding from WNC and generous donations from a multitude of individuals and organisations the expansion to this cultural facility reached completion in May this year, following more than 12 months of regeneration work.

The site now boasts an extension to the main buildings and enhanced gardens, allowing larger groups to visit and enjoy the museum, as well as benefit from an enriched visitor experience at one of Northampton's most popular attractions.

Vulcan Works

April saw the official opening of the Vulcan Works creative hub Vulcan Works, which was created through transforming a Grade II listed former ironworks factory in Northampton.

The brand-new, purpose-built hub is managed by Oxford Innovation Space and provides lettable office space, workshops, meeting rooms and coworking spaces for start-up businesses in creative and digital industries. The space mixes the old with the new by retaining some quirky original features and naming its rooms in honour of its shoe-making history.

Following the completion of the extensive redevelopment, the centre opened its books and doors to interested businesses in February, generating a lot of interest from start-up and growing businesses in the creative and digital sector, with 12 businesses taking up office space and others taking advantage of the hot desking and co-working options. The team has also received 180 enquiries for further information. Since opening Barclays Eagle Labs have now confirmed that they will also run support from the facility in a further boost to the business support on offer at the centre,

Old Black Lion

Also in April saw the work commence to rescue the Old Black Lion public house in Marefair, Northampton.

The works are part of the Churches Conservation Trust's ambitious project to regenerate the Old Black Lion, which is a Grade II listed building, next door to St Peter's Church. The church dates to the 12th century and is listed at Grade I, but closed for worship in 1995 and was vested in CCT in 1998. Despite periods of use by the community and an active Friends group of volunteers, in recent years St Peter's has struggled to function as a heritage landmark and venue due to a lack of hospitality facilities or WCs.

The project will cost £3.5m. CCT was awarded a National Lottery Heritage Fund Enterprise Grant of £2.6m with other funding including £315k that WNC have allocated from the Towns Fund, funds from the Architectural Heritage and other funding from developer contributions.

The Old Black Lion site was acquired by the council in 2020 to enable the project to place and ensure that the funding that had been secured could be used on the project and not returned to the funders.

Northampton Market Square

Following the start of works in February works have been picking up pace on Northampton Market Square.

Prior to construction works starting, investigations have had to take place to identify any potential risks and define clear strategies to address them. WNC and Stepnell have completed ground investigations using Danaher Walsh and a leading geotechnical firm. This involved digging 15 trial holes and 12 boreholes in locations identified by the project team over a four-week period. The area must be carefully excavated, taking, and investigating samples that will inform how the market square is transformed. This is in addition to the ground investigations completed during the design development stage.

During May the focus of the groundworks have been in the central area of the market with works to excavate to the level required for the new subbase. The works continue in line with the programme.

Four Waterside

Work to procure a development partner on Four Waterside continues with a number of bidders due to submit their tender returns to the council in July ahead of evaluation and the preferred development partner being announced in the Autumn. Four Waterside site will see the development of Grade A office space, a new Hotel and residential on a key gateway site to the town centre.

ADULT LEARNING SERVICE

This quarter saw the submission of the delivery data for the last Financial year. The breakdown of delivery of all provision for 22/23 indicated that 55% of the Adult Learning Service delivery took place in the West. This equated to 4,326 registrations within West Northants attributed to 2,529 individual students. This shows a slight decrease from 21/22 largely attributed to a shift in strategy and funding methodology targeting provision at those area most in need. However, whilst there has been a slight decrease in the percentage, the number of individual learners reached has increased from 1,951 up to 2,012. Registrations are also significantly improved, 3,905 for 21/22 against 4,326 for 22/23. This demonstrates that the service is delivering more efficiently and starting to recover from the previous impact of the Covid pandemic. It is currently too early to fully report on the achievement data due to the exams currently in progress however taking retention as a measure of likely achievement the service is on target to increase overall achievement. Current retention is currently up by 1% for West Northants.

Key milestones for the last quarter include the formation and submission of the draft 'Funding and Accountability statement to the DfE. The draft has been sent to members of the Performance Review Board for feedback and approval before final submission in July 23. The purpose of the Statement is to clearly map out how the ESFA funding will be used within the service for the coming academic year. Alongside this statement a new four-year strategy has been developed for the Adult Learning Service, again sent to board members for feedback. This maps out the strategic direction of the service which needs to adapt from a largely community learning led provision to one that has a clear focus on outcome and economic activity. The strategy aims to map out how this change will take place over the coming years.

A new Curriculum Manager has been appointed to specifically develop a suite of courses linked to local economic opportunities and these are now in the final stages of development with audits from awarding bodies currently in progress. Over the next term this will go live with the offer for fully accredited courses in Childcare, Education, Health and Social Care. A new suite of accredited short courses will be launched aimed key sectors in direct response to the Local Skills Improvement Plan. Other key areas such as Business Administration, Management will be targeted for expansion of the service later in 23/24.

The adult learning service also recently underwent an interim inspection of our Matrix accreditation, and I am pleased to report we were awarded continued status and are on track to meet the requirements of the next full inspection. The feedback was positive and the strategic plans in place for the service were well received.

The service has fully implemented a new curriculum planning process over the past quarter. This will help the service to plan more efficiently and ensure the provision is targeted to those most in need demonstrating a positive impact on the local and regional economy.

MULTIPLY FUNDING

Quarter 1 has seen the full deployment of resources for our Multiply grant funding with all appointed providers now offering and delivering free courses to those aged 19 and over without a GCSE grade C or equivalent qualification in mathematics. Time scales for the year 1 allocation has made reaching target for the year extremely difficult. DfE payment was made to WNC at the end of October, procurement took place in December & January, contracts were issued in February, and grant payments made in March which left little time for delivery before year end. Although timescales have significantly affected some interventions (particularly those with a focus on planning events and working with employers) interventions where partners were already working with the target groups have seen good output. The provider for lot 10 pulled out and the contract for this lot was awarded to NNC Adult Learning Service who began delivery immediately. Providers offering online only delivery have really struggled to engage learners, this has been seen nationally and feedback has shown that more marketing support is needed. A press release and social media campaign saw good levels of engagement in May and procurement for additional marketing to increase awareness and encourage engagement will be in place in quarter 2. In year 1 a total of 363 active learners were recorded for the programme.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Internal services have had proposals for this funding approved which include the following:

- Abington Active Travel Scheme
- Partnership with British Cycling
- Grants Scheme for VCSE's
- Funding to deliver transport solutions in rural areas
- Energy saving measures in Households
- Local Area Partnership Feasibility Study
- Business Support and Start-Up Grants
- Enhancement of Sustainable West Northants website and webinars for businesses

More projects will be announced as external tenders are completed in the near future to utilise the rest of the UKSPF funding, which will include further support and grants for businesses and largescale investment in supporting local skill levels and employability of residents.

A new funding co-ordinator has been recruited to oversee the management of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the Multiply Fund who starts in June.

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

The Economy Team successfully submitted a UKSPF Addendum to allocate the £1.3m Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). Following consultation and data analysis this funding has been divided into two areas:

- Capital grant funding for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas
- Capital grant funding for impactful volunteering and social action projects to develop social and human capital in local places

The fund is intended to support businesses in eligible rural areas and address rural transport challenges by providing grants to employers and for local transport solutions to charities/social enterprises.

The REPF Addendum has been approved by DEFRA and the Memorandum of Understanding has been returned to draw down the REPF Year 1 allocation, along with the UKSPF Year 2 allocation.

Supporting Local Businesses

The Economy Team continue to proactively deliver innovative and creative interventions to support employers, attract inward investment, upskill the local workforce and nurture the local economy. In order to create an effective narrative to demonstrate the strengths of West Northamptonshire and the ambition for economic prosperity, the Team are developing a Place Vision with input from internal services, Members and are now engaging with the wider community. This will ensure that the Vision is dynamic, ambitious and achievable, as well as has community buy-in and endorsement of this place-making overarching vision which futures strategies will align to. The draft Vision was recently reviewed by the Northampton Forward board which was very beneficial and well received.

The Team have sponsored two categories in the Northamptonshire Chamber Business Awards, which launched on 24 May – *West Northamptonshire Business of the Year* and *West Northants Sustainable Business Award*. To show the Council's dedication to supporting employers and to ensure they're in the spotlight at every opportunity, the Economy Team are actively working to support all local businesses. This includes the Team exhibiting the free business support service at the largescale Chamber Business Expo in Kettering and attending the new International Trade Forum to support employers to utilise international markets.

To ensure engagement with local employers and stakeholders is pro-active and impactful, the Team have rebranded the monthly business e-newsletter, which includes information on funding, procurement, events and more; it is an essential tool to ensure local employers have the necessary information and support they need to overcome challenges and realise opportunities. The Team also continue to be extremely active on social media, managing their own Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

Supporting Local Employment

In order to best support residents to become employment-ready and secure sustainable, local employment the Economy Team have continued to deliver the West Northants Employment Support Service (WNESS). The WNESS is a free service to all residents and employers, combining the offer of over 25 organisations across the County that are delivering initiatives. A partner meeting was held recently to reinvigorate the level of support, identify challenges, opportunities and confirm eligibility to best signpost residents to the relevant support available. The Team are also exploring the support employers need to recruit in a post-pandemic climate and the need for flexibility, a culture shift and innovative approaches to promoting vacancies, as well as growing their workforce involving young people and schools. In addition to delivering the WNESS, the Team partnered with Jobs 22 to help their 1,200 participants of the DWP Restart Programme (people who have been unemployed in excess of 9 months). This event gave local people the opportunity to discuss available support, meet with employers and identify potential jobs to apply for. This event was about personal engagement and speaking to people on a 1-2-1 basis in order to provide a bespoke service to address their needs on a case-by-case basis. The Economy Team also exhibited at a Hospitality and Careers Fair hosted by the University of Northampton to champion employment support, engage with local students and showcase the vast range of employment options in the visitor economy industry. This also provided an opportunity to promote the *Explore West Northants App*, which was very well received.

Supporting the Local Visitor Economy

Continuing to work collaboratively with North Northamptonshire Council, the Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy is approaching completion following additional roundtable sessions with relevant stakeholders to secure endorsement, buy-in and appetite for future plans in terms of developing the visitor economy further. It is anticipated the

strategy will be adopted in September with plans to progress actions at pace to capitalise on the fast-paced work completed to date and to maintain momentum.

There have been numerous successful campaigns to attract visitors, support local attractions and showcase West Northants as a prime destination. These include the highly successful Animal Paradise Trail in Northampton which resulted in over 25,000 trail interactions, English Tourism Week, Love Your Local Market and the King's Coronation.

The Team are actively preparing for Heritage Open Days taking place in September, which are a once-a-year opportunity to showcase some of the area's unique historic buildings and sites, many of which are usually restricted access or charge for entry, allowing visitors and also residents to find out about West Northamptonshire's vibrant culture and heritage like never before. This includes engaging directly with attractions and businesses to participate, working with Comms to showcase the vast wealth of historical and heritage assets within this area to be promoted far and wide ahead of a consumer-focused marketing campaign later in the year for residents and visitors.

The *Explore West Northants* App has grown to over 1,000 users and over 250 organisations operating to showcase everything West Northants has to offer. There will be future rebrands for different holidays with custom offers pages for each, such as Halloween and Christmas. A new poster promoting the *Explore West Northants* App is now on display around the Market Square hoarding in Northampton right outside the Grosvenor Centre.

Councillor Dan Lister

Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth

ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Service Managers are working across their areas to progress the priorities and actions outlined in their service plans. This includes:

- Reviewing the current front door processes to identify improvements that can be made for both the people who access our services and staff.
- Reviewing the business support function across the service
- Designing a clear progression pathway for Adult Services staff that links to a clear learning and development offer
- Alignment and closer working of the Adult Social Care teams to the Local Area Partnerships.
- Improvements to staff communications and feedback mechanisms across the service
- Progressing initiatives with HR to improve recruitment.

Work continues to ensure reporting mechanisms are in place to support the collection of the new statutory returns (Client Level Data Return) and that the data quality across the system is improved.

We continue to work with system partners to progress the ambitions of the Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism collaborative. With particular focus on our LD inpatients, the Dynamic risk register and community LD teams.

The Supported Living Review Team is continuing to work with commissioning, providers and individuals to complete reviews to ensure people are achieving the outcomes they desire and have the correct support in place

Work continues with the Integrated Care Board and NHFT Mental Health services to review current joint funding protocols to ensure they remain current, agreed across partners and known by front line staff.

SAFEGUARDING AND WELLBEING SERVICES

This quarter there has been a heavy focus on preparations for the implementation of the new CQC Local Assurance Framework. As part of the Health and Care Act 2022 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) was given additional responsibilities and powers to review, assess and report on council regulated adult social care functions under Part One of the 2014 Care Act, such as prevention, information and advice, market shaping and support services.

The new Local Authority assessment framework went live in April 2023 and will be the first time since 2007 that Adult Social Care functions are assessed. Between April 2023 – September 2023 CQC will be testing their inspection approach with 5 pilot authorities.

In readiness Adult Social Care have been working with East Midlands ADASS colleagues to carry out a self-assessment of our current position and understand the areas in which we need to improve. This has involved completing an in-depth review of processes and performance against the key areas CQC will assess us on along with the production of a narrative report and action plan. The self-assessment report produced by Adult Social Care has been highlighted by ADASS colleagues and recognised as an example of best practice.

Our Assistive Technology Team have been shortlisted for a number of awards for their partnership work with NHFT colleagues implementing remote monitoring in a number of care homes across Northamptonshire. Remote monitoring uses state of the art technology to monitor the health of residents and creates an alert if it is identified that a person's condition is deteriorating. This alert is then responded to by a clinical hub who can provide advice, support or intervention which aims to stop the persons condition worsening and the need from them to need more acute support from local health and care services.

We continue to see increasing numbers of people seeking support from services in this area, most notably Safeguarding and Therapy, and are continually reviewing our approach, as well as working with partners, to ensure that we are able to respond as efficiently as possible.

Finally, in May our care homes pulled out all the stops to make sure that our care home residents were able to enjoy celebrating the coronation of King Charles. Homes were decorated and special events were set up so our residents, along with their families, could enjoy the occasion as we all did.

COMMISSIONING AND PERFORMANCE

West Northamptonshire Council and the Integrated Care Board have been working together in a series of workshops to explore what a joint brokerage function would look like and how this could benefit our care providers and the residents of West Northamptonshire. An agreement has been made to pilot a joint brokerage service that focusses on hospital discharge and this will be hosted by West Northamptonshire Council. The pilot starts on 1st September 2023. The aim of the pilot is to evidence that by having a single brokerage function, we can provide a more streamlined service for people ready to leave hospital but require support, reduce competition between WNC and Health with our care market and to utilise existing contractual arrangements to provide additional contractual protection regarding care quality.

Work is also starting to look at a joint quality monitoring function with WNC and Health which could create some good efficiencies. Further updates will be provided as this project develops.

We are also at the final stages of our tender process for home care services and are approaching the end of our stand still period following notification of the intention to award. The tender attracted significant interest and the team has worked really hard to evaluate bids within tight deadlines. It is still the aim that the new framework contract will go live in August 2023 and this will mean that our market will be aligned to our Local Area Partnerships which brings new opportunities for us as we develop our community offer. Further updates will be provided following the closure of the stand still period, and subject to outcome.

We launched our new Care Home Framework from 1st May 2023 where I am pleased to say that we have had 43 care homes signed up to our framework. This means we have been able to reduce our reliance on off-contract placements and start to form strong working relationships with our new contracted providers under renewed service specifications and fee structures.

Following a small technical issue which resulted in the delay of the launch of our online financial assessment tool, we are pleased to say that this is now live and was launched on 1st May 2023. The tool allows people and their families to tell us about their income and capital, as well as their expenses, so that we can calculate how much they need to contribute towards the cost of their care. The tool is really easy to use and has demonstration videos throughout which explains how to complete the form or where to find information. Of course, not all people feel comfortable using this, so our Financial Assessment Officers are still happy to conduct home visits where required. The feedback so far has been really positive, and we will continue to monitor usage as year progresses.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Public Health team has been undergoing a restructure since disaggregation in 2022 which is now finally coming to an end, with the transformation almost complete. New portfolio areas have been established: People and Wellbeing; Health Protection and Healthcare Public Health; Wider Determinants; and Health Improvement and Communities. Nearly all new positions have been recruited to and our Registrar training status has also been re-established with Registrars due to join us in the summer.

People and Wellbeing

Work is progressing on developing an integrated approach to prevention across WNC which takes a phased transformational approach to aligning activities and investments focused on prevention. The intention is that the various strands of prevention activity will be better linked together to meet local needs and be informed by the learning emerging from Local Area Partnerships.

Work on a Prevention and Early intervention project, with a particular focus on aligning Public Health Wellbeing Services, Community Development initiatives, and ASC “Conversation One and Two”, has been reviewed. Further, dedicated project management capacity has been identified to enable us to progress various workstreams in a timely fashion. Details of progress will be reported more fully in the next update.

The aim is to align this work with the wider prevention agenda across the Northamptonshire system. This work is timely and aligns with the Hewitt Report which is asking the integrated care systems to prioritise preventative services and investment in prevention.

Mental Health

At the MHLDA Population Health and Prevention Pillar meeting in May, the Pillar agreed a business case focused on system-wide alignment of communications in relation to the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing. This work is aligned with WNC corporate communications work led by Megan Denny. The next step is the development of an action plan to support the implementation of this work which will be taken forward by the Pillar Communications Alignment Task and Finish Group, made up of relevant representatives from

across the system including WNC Comms, NHFT Comms, NNC Comms, Adult Learning, WNC Public Health, Primary Care and Healthy Schools.

Falls Management Service

The Falls Management Service works very hard to support individuals to regain or retain their confidence and independence with their mobility to support with reintegrating back into the community and previous routines that were affected during and since the Covid pandemic. The service has worked hard to get the waiting lists down so people can be seen a lot sooner. There had been an approx.7-12 month wait in 2022 and this has now been reduced to an approx.1 month wait.

In the last few months lots of positive feedback from clients and their family members has been received, thanking the team for the service provided and explaining how the service has had such a significant impact in their lives.

Health Protection and Healthcare Public Health

A significant amount of work has been underway within the team including the following:

- The Covid Impact Assessment is being finalised.
- An evaluation of the NHS Health Checks programme service is underway.
- Delivery of Health Check training completed for outreach providers.
- Sexual Health Working Group established to improve relationship and sexuality education and service delivery across the county.
- A data sharing agreement has been finalised for outbreak management between WNC Public Health and NNC Public Health Teams.
- A Heat Health page and social media messages have been produced, providing information and support for the public following the recent hot weather. A letter for parents is being provided for distribution via schools and nurseries to provide information to support child health in the heat.
- A review of processes and stock is being undertaken on the equipment provided under the national Covid Personal Protective Equipment Scheme.
- Press releases have been circulated on Pneumococcal, Cervical Screening, Shingles, Bowel Cancer, and MMR, encouraging groups who are eligible to engage with screening and immunisation services.
- The Outreach Mobile Service is continuing to operate, offering Covid-19 vaccination to eligible people across the West Northants area. The team have been visiting community settings and events across the area. Planning for delivery of the Autumn campaign, which should be starting in September is also underway, this will be offering Flu vaccination alongside Covid-19.
- The local community IPC Team is being established, within the Health Protection team and will be reaching out to community settings across the West Northants area, offering IPC advice and training, auditing health check compliance and managing responses to outbreaks.
- As part of the team's Safety Advisory function, work with partners to support the emergency preparation and planning for events across the area has been taking place, including: the British F1 Grand Prix at Silverstone, Rod Stewart concert at the Saints, and the Northampton Town Show.
- Supporting with planning for the local Flu vaccination programme that will commence in September 2023.

- Support also continues to be given to the Asylum Hotels in the authority area, working with partners to address health and IPC issues.
- A local response to a small number of outbreaks that have occurred in West Northants has also been co-ordinated, most recently involving gastroenteritis infection in educational settings.
- The team is also working with the ICB, NNC, NHSE and UKHSA to develop a Northamptonshire Measles Elimination Plan, to help increase the take-up of the MMR immunisation across the county.
- Establishing links with the NHS Organ and Blood Donation Service based at Northampton General Hospital, to support their service.

Wider Determinants

Built and Natural Environment

The workshops for the health impact assessment of the West Northants Local Plan are due to take place from 19th – 30th of June, the output of these will be policy recommendations to inform the iteration of the plan for consultation later in the year. The team is also in the process of drafting a health impact assessment template and guidance for developers to complete as required by the Northampton Local Plan.

Consultations on various strategies that will support this agenda are also taking place, including, the Local Transport Plan, the Place Strategy, the Libraries Strategy, the Parks and Green Spaces and Playing Pitches Strategy.

Social and Economic

The Director of Public Health Annual Report, which outlines the health impact of the cost of living crisis via a report and a series of video clips, has been agreed for publication through the Health & Wellbeing Board and is due to be published w/c 19th June.

The year 1 Anti-Poverty Report is due to be shared with Cabinet with the focus now moving on year 2 priorities.

The Anchor Institutions Network is due to launch on the 27th June highlighting our potential as anchors and the opportunity for a press release to formalise the commitment to the agreed ambitions.

The Gypsy Roma and Traveller Health Needs Assessment is underway starting with data collection and engagement and full report with recommendations due at the end of August.

We are preparing for the second workshop on homelessness prevention on the 1st August which will highlight gaps and recommendations identified from the homelessness needs assessment.

Household Support Fund (Tranche 4)

Free School Meal vouchers were issued for the May half term holiday and redemption rates will be analysed w/c 19th June. Preparation is underway for the issuing of the vouchers to cover the school summer holidays which will include both food vouchers and school uniform vouchers. Work is ongoing with the design of the online application scheme for HSF4 ahead of opening for applicants.

Drug and Alcohol Services

The Drug and Alcohol service currently manages six contracts with external providers and one internal Service Level Agreement. The contracts are all due to expire in 2024, with the exception of one that will be expiring in 2026. Three of the contracts have no further extension periods, and for one contract, the Commissioners are working with Procurement to explore options to extend it. As the drug and alcohol contracts are not aligned, work is being carried out to align them in 2026 so that all contracts can be recommissioned at the same time.

Health Improvement and Communities

The Health Improvement Team have been developing a number of work programmes as follows:

- Grow, Cook, Eat! programme implementation has been going well and 15 people have now been trained in running community food programmes.
- Continued provision of healthy weight services and review of these to inform the re-procurement of services to start in April 2024.
- Review of physical activity pathways and working in partnership with NSport and Communities and Opportunities team to plan the WNC active lives strategy.
- Review of the stop smoking service to develop West Northants model. WNC have taken the lead on the sector led improvement programme for tobacco control.
- Development of the N4 LAP respiratory health inequalities programme.
- Successful expression of interest to NIHR to bid for funding to set up a Health Determinants Research Collaboration at WNC and development of phase 2 application.
- Ongoing engagement on the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Development of the workplace wellbeing programme, supporting WNC to implement the Wellbeing Strategy alongside resources to support local businesses to improve the health and wellbeing of employees.

West Northamptonshire Stop Smoking Service

The start of 2023 was an exceptionally busy one for the West Northamptonshire Stop Smoking Service. Between January and March, the service set 369 quit dates with local residents who sought support to help them stop smoking. The service is pleased to report that 228 of these individuals have now successfully stopped smoking. Quarter 4 of 22/23 also saw the continued partnership with Bridge, who provide support to those with substance abuse issues. This a great example of the service's desire to meet people where they are, and something the team wishes to pursue further in the future. Public Health are now looking to build upon the success seen in recent months and make the service as impactful, equitable, and cost effective as possible.

Local Area Partnerships (LAPs)

All Local Area Partnerships are now live and meeting regularly. The Partnerships are having rich discussions and members of the LAPs are making valuable connections. Most LAPs have now decided on their main priorities, and they have been mapped to the Live Your Best Life ambitions to demonstrate their contribution to delivery. There are some exciting opportunities being explored for example:

- Multi agency education subgroup to undertake a deep dive into why young people are suspended or excluded from school and working with their families to understand what additional support is needed. This methodology will be reproduced for another area experiencing high levels of pupil suspensions and exclusions.
- Feasibility of aligning services for vulnerable woman to help reduce inequalities.
- Chatty Cafés in areas where social isolation is a priority to provide spaces for people to congregate, have tea and cake and make friends. Further exploration of how transport services can also support.
- COPD Programme is now underway with our VCSE colleagues being invited to engage with hard-to-reach groups. Training on information gathering and report writing will be provided to promote consistency.
- Second round of the Public Health research project in partnership with City University and University of Northampton is underway. The research is exploring how access to art, leisure and culture can improve wellbeing.
- Engagement with all LAPs to seek their views on the emerging West Northants Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- West Place Executive Delivery Board workshop in September to design the evaluation framework for the new Operating Model.

Councillor Matt Golby

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Public Health

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Date: 29 June 2023

FINANCE

Provisional Outturn 2022-23

Members will be well aware of the financial challenges we have had in this financial year. At the start of the year we were looking at a £26.9m overspend against a net budget of £342.3m representing an 8% variance against budget.

The main service pressures related to key demand led services such as:

- Children's services
- Adult Social Care; and
- Home to school transport

However, we acted quickly and decisively to bring in a range of actions to seek to balance the budget before year end.

The action primarily consisted of four elements:

- Raising the profile of the issue early within the organisation so that staff across the organisation could contribute to owning and helping to resolve the issue by generating ideas and ensuring spend is minimised wherever possible
- Directors and their management teams formulating and delivering a series of mitigating actions to help reduce financial pressures
- Spending restrictions being implemented to seek to control expenditure even further
- Business rates being greater than anticipated allowing additional funding to be brought in to offset the position

This approach has worked as the provisional outturn position shows an overspend of just £302,000 against the net budget which represent a variance of less than 0.1% which is well within acceptable tolerances. Within this figure are budget carry forwards totalling £237,000.

A full report on the provisional outturn will be considered by Cabinet at the meeting to be held on 11 July 2023.

Budget 2023-24

Whilst we were addressing the in-year pressures described above we were also dealing with the full year impact of those pressures on the formulation of the Budget for 2023-24.

The budget was set in February 2023 and included £77m of base budget growth to correct the issues identified above and to also deal with increases in costs resulting from the downturn in the economy such as significant inflationary impacts on service delivery costs.

The early financial monitoring that has taken place for 2023-24 shows that most services are not, at this stage, highlighting any significant pressures. However, we are aware that the Children's Trust are highlighting significant pressure which will have a major impact on the Council's finances in 2023-24.

Officers are working closely with senior staff from the trust to understand what is driving this variance so early in the year and to determine what steps can be taken to minimise it.

Members will be updated as matters develop in this area.

Statement of Accounts

I am now able to announce that since the last update another set of accounts have been formally approved and signed off by the external auditors. The Northampton Borough Council accounts for 2020-21 were signed off in April.

Members may recall that the week before vesting day there were 10 (!) sets of accounts outstanding for the predecessor authorities. There is now just one set of accounts remaining for auditor approval which are the accounts relating to the County Council for 2020-21.

I would like to thank the Audit and Governance Committee, who approve the accounts, for their work in this area and the accountancy team who have worked tirelessly to get us into this position.

ASSETS & ENVIRONMENT

Councillor Malcolm Longley
Cabinet Member for Finance

14th June 2023

Human Resources

Pay Award 2023/2024

Local pay bargaining concluded with the recognised Trade Unions who balloted on our final pay offer for 2023/24 and voted to accept. This will be paid in July and backdated to 1st April 2023.

Increments for staff who qualified were paid in April. In late April 2023 the pay and grading outcomes were delivered to c1150 colleagues and the outcomes will be implemented in the June payroll. To have carried out this activity and to have updated the ERP system to enable payment to be made is a sizeable activity involving the Pay and Grading team, HR Business Partnering, Payroll and Business Systems (DTI) colleagues.

All those impacted by the pay and grading project have been given a right to appeal, and June to August will be spent hearing those appeals, albeit the overall number of appeals is low (c.65).

Business Partnering, Advisory and HR Policy and Strategy:

The BP team remain extremely busy both with job matching for pay and grading and advising on a number of restructures including Legal Services, BIPI, Planning, Regulatory Services and Audit & Risk. The HR policy team have been re-writing a significant number of policies to ensure they reflect the pay and grading terms and conditions and are available on the intranet for June.

Resourcing

The team are currently supporting a large number of campaigns covering 156 vacancies in total (86 of which are in Adults) including

- Planning – c34 vacancies due to go out to recruit in July inc Head of DM
- Assets – 7 roles about to go live (senior / qualified posts)
- Education – Educational Psychologists x 6, Senior EP x 1 live + Principal EP due to go live
- DTI – 3 managers in Cyber team + 1 Data Analyst about to go live

- Legal – Tier 1 - 12 senior roles filled, tier 2 – 11 vacancies just closed, tier 3 – 8 vacancies to go out in final batch
- Finance - Revs & Bens 3 new roles to go live. Procurement Manager campaign live.
- Business Intelligence campaign - 5 new vacancies
- Adults – total care delivery x 62 (Nursing, Care, RSO & Shift Leaders), ancillary roles x 8
- Social Workers x 16 (with a campaign once content creation completed, working on 5 year resourcing plan, benchmarking report completed)
- Adults – Gina supporting with all recruitment marketing for volume & hard to fill roles

Learning & Development: Following its disaggregation from NNC we are currently planning a restructure of the service which will launch later in the summer. In addition we are reviewing opportunities to procure learning from new providers including LinkedIn Learning and KPMG.

People Strategy: Activity under all workstream is progressing. Of particular note is the development of the workforce Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy which will be launched in late June 2023. Also the team are working on a pilot succession planning and talent management approach with Place Directorate and the HR Director has commenced work on our internal mobility strategy.

Health Safety and Wellbeing: The Health, Safety and Wellbeing team have been fully engaged dealing with many and varied issues arising from both the building optimisation project and Daventry moves, and from our Schools estate. There is still much to do in this service around stabilisation, to ensure that our policies and procedures cover best practice and to look at the procurement of better IT systems to record our incidents and enable better reporting.

Payroll:

Payroll have had significant system downtime due to the implementation of the pay and grading outcomes, meaning there is a shortened processing window to ensure that all checks and reconciliations are completed. Nevertheless their accuracy rates across all partners remains excellent.

Customer Services

Over the first two months of the financial year, the team have handled 56,776 calls (an average of 83% of all calls offered) in addition to more than 20,600 emails and 2,735 face-to-face interactions.

Following the introduction of Direct Debt payments and an online payment supplier which can handle high volumes, we have seen a reduction in customer contact regarding Garden Waste

Subscriptions (7.1%prog via CSC vs 12% during 2022-23). This has enabled the teams to better manage the contacts for Annual Billing letters related to Council Tax, which are sent out at the same time. In addition, the complexity and depth of Revenues and Benefits queries being handled by Customers Services in the Daventry area has been increased, so that fewer contacts need to go through to officers in the back office.

Connected Customers

The Connected Customers programme, which is supporting the delivery of phase 2 of our Customer Experience Strategy is now covering work across a wide portfolio of projects, from standardising the Customer Records Management solution onto one platform across all hubs, to reviewing and simplifying online content and deepening the level of service offered at the first point of contact across a range of services.

We are working with colleagues across the organisation to maximise the use of the department so that we add value when people interact with us, and to make every contact count.

The department were finalists in the Local Government Chronicle Awards as Large Team of the Year, and our Northampton One Stop Shop Team Leader received a commendation as Rising Star.

The roll-out of outreach surgeries which allow us to support the most vulnerable customers in their own community and deal with complex cases face to face, saw three new additions in the last quarter, as a consequence of working closely with our colleagues at South Northants Volunteer Bureau (SNVB):

- Towcester Food Larder
- Roade Food Larder
- All Saints Project, Brackley Football Club

We are continuing to provide a wide range of outreach support across Daventry and Northampton areas, including working with other food larders and community outlets.

On 01 April, the Revenues and Benefits team based in Northampton formally came into the Corporate Services structure following staff consultation. Work is now underway to map customer pathways, identify opportunities for improvement and how we can align processes to offer a more consistent service model.

The former Lodge Road hub is now based at The Abbey, along with the new One Stop Shop offer. Following the unfortunate flooding incident, the council is working hard to repair the damage and the key priority is to get current tenants back into the building. Business continuity plans have been enacted to ensure customer demands can be met. This will result in a short delay to enable staff to move into the new working areas on the upper floors.

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

Following a national electricity outage exercise, the Emergency Planning team are developing a local WNC internal widespread electricity outage plan and supporting the wider multi agency plan with colleagues in the Local Resilience Forum, Northamptonshire Prepared. The team are also looking at ways to encourage staff to volunteer in an emergency planning response role and working with L&D to develop a new on-line training package and to promote emergency planning training courses online.

Work with communities continues to improve their flood resilience and preparedness. This scheme, funded by the Environment Agency, has seen the team work with communities on not just improving their flood resilience but also on how they can support one another in any emergency that may occur by having a community emergency and flood plan.

In terms of Business Continuity, we are working with colleagues across the organisation to ensure their contingency and mitigation plans are adequate and up to date, with a specific focus on cyber-security.

Legal and Democratic Services

Democratic Services

Democratic Services have supported the Democracy and Standards Committee to bring forward proposals to Council that put into practice the recommendations made by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny and the Planning Advisory Service. These proposals, once embedded, will support Scrutiny to better hold the Executive to account and to contribute to the Council's policy development. The changes to planning will help to support an integrated planning decision making across the Council area.

Elections

The elections team continue to embed the requirements of the Elections Act, benefitting from taking part in elections in neighbouring authorities when they took place last month. While final proposals from the Local Government Boundary Commission concerning this Council's electoral arrangements are awaited, preparations are being made for a Community Governance Review in West Northamptonshire. The annual canvas is also underway.

Legal Services

Development and creation of the new legal service has got off to a strong start with over 60 applicants in the first recruitment drive and only 5 posts within the 35 strong new team left unfilled. The second recruitment drive is underway to fill the remaining posts. Plans are being

created to support the new team so that they are up and running as soon as possible and work is already underway to explore potential income generation opportunities within legal services over the course of the next 18 months. Overall, the new arrangements are on course to deliver the £0.5m saving identified by the review as well as providing a comprehensive and responsive service to clients.

A Governance Group has been established to support effective governance arrangements across the council. Led by the Director of Legal and Democratic the group is engaging with officers across the Council and aims to demystify governance for all officers and provide access to information to help effectively support good governance making it everyone's responsibility. Legal Services are also supporting the Audit and Governance Committee at their meetings.

The legal team successfully supported regulatory services to prosecute multiple unlawful HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation). Ongoing support and guidance is being provided in respect of the Council's Regeneration projects including the Bike Park, Market Square and Four Waterside.

In relation to Information Governance, the number of data breach reports has risen by 20% from 156 in 2021/22 to 191 in 2022/23. However, this is because the team has been effective in raising awareness and therefore the increase is largely due to improvements in reporting/escalating to the Data Protection team rather than an increase in data breaches. In addition, the team is putting in place a new tool to help reduce data breaches which is likely to be ready to launch late summer to early autumn.

The records management team have now been recruited to the Council and are beginning to work with our storage provider to identify and destroy out of date files relating to predecessor Councils.

2022/23 saw a total of 1670 requests (1252 FOI's 418 EIR's). Of these just 41 responses were challenged and just 8 escalated to the Information Commissioners Office. This means that 97.5% of all requests were responded to positively and satisfactorily.

Registration

Wedding and other Ceremonies continued to be busy, the service has enhanced the Registration Service website in its totality and updated content and transferred all information to the new unitary site ensuring it meets all accessibility requirements. The service has re-introduced the customer choice of private citizenship ceremonies and is also introducing a lower cost (simple ceremonies) at Towcester office to support those who wish to get married during the cost-of-living crisis from June 1st 2023. The service increased statutory marriage registrations from 4 per week to 6 per week, to meet rising demand and respond to customer need.

Both Registration and Coroners continue to work closely with the County Medical Examiners for the implementation of the new Statutory Medical Examiner system. The go-live date has been pushed back nationally from April 2023 to April 2024.

Coroners

The team have successfully recruited three additional Assistant Coroners for the service to address the backlog of Jury Inquests and trained Casual Coroners Officers, for Service resilience. Work has continued in collaboration with Northants Police and Fire and Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital. The volumes in the summer months are now akin to those experienced in the height of winter in pre-pandemic years resulting in increased pressures across the service.

Coroners have added to the Court provision and put in place the necessary digital support to be able to carry out Jury Inquests in The Great Hall, at the Guildhall. The service has ensured that it has implemented new legislative changes into its working processes across the service.

Digital, Technology and Innovation

Hardware refresh

We have commenced the four-year programmed rollout of new refreshed staff computer hardware and desk kit. This new provision all staff with modern computers and simple, powerful kit at office desks to work with. For the first time, staff devices will work seamlessly across all former council locations and staff will be able to visit their most convenient office location for any necessary changes or repairs. This will be a rarity: our new computers can be repaired remotely even when software is critically broken. Our turnaround times for shipping new devices are planned to fall from a lead time of up to three months, to five working days. Computers have now arrived to most staff based at Lodge Road, prioritising these individuals as we relocate them to other locations. Directors are meeting this month to decide the new few waves of rollout which will bring all our staff up to these new standards.

Innovation Hub

Our new Innovation Hub is up and running and starting to work on key projects both within the organisation and in partnership with the wider community that harness new, innovative technology. Early work includes:

- A VR learning course for SEN children, that helps them gain confidence to use home-to-school transport. This has been trialled with community volunteers to great early success
- A digital brokerage system for adult social care, helping those in need and providers to get matched with each other

- A deep data exercise partnering with the University of Northampton, to investigate patterns in flytipping with a view to preventing it earlier and more quickly identifying those involved

In addition, we have brought formal backing for Merged Future 5, the popular Northampton grassroots tech conference, in house and this seminal event will take place all day at the University of Northampton on Friday June 30th. It's a great event for even the techphobic to learn how innovation can empower our residents: I'd encourage you all to attend!

System updates

Our DTI division is currently handling several lengthy strategic projects and I will update more on these as they approach completion:

- Our new income management system, which will streamline and enhance our banking reconciliation and payment receipting processes.
- A replacement case management system for the Children's Trust to modernise and improve methods of managing cases (early work has already started on reviewing its Adult Social Care counterpart).
- Replacement of our main housing management system.

Councillor Mike Hallam

Cabinet Member for HR & Corporate Services

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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CHILDREN'S TRUST

Northampton Children's Trust continues their improvement Journey. The children in care celebration was held on 31st May. It was attended by over 160 children and in all over 5,550 children received certificates and letters to say well done on their achievements. All children were nominated by those who work with them and those who care for them. It was a very positive event and a good chance to meet the children we care for as corporate parents.

We have had a monitoring visit on the Fostering Service following its Inadequate Judgement. Ofsted reported in this visit they could see changes and it was evident that the service had worked hard to start to turn things around which is promising. Ofsted will return in a couple of months to ensure progress has continued.

There continues to be high demand going into the service, and several challenges continue such as finding homes and families for children when they come in to care. The Trust continues to find ways to manage this, but the demand and the complexities are impacting on the overall budgets. There are a number of initiatives underway to consider this further, such as Impower who are working in the Trust to review and reduce children in care numbers. The focus is to improve practice and outcomes for children, such as stepping them down from residential to fostering, or supporting their return home, and this in turn should impact on the financial position.

Some of the challenges we face are national challenges, such as homes for children and recruitment and retention, and ongoing work around all challenges continues. We are working alongside NCT to address these complex challenges.

A review of the front door is being planned via the support of a partner in practice to further develop multi-agency working to support children, we will be expecting Ofsted in the autumn for a focussed visit which will be on the front door arrangements.

Finally, we have our YOS inspection, this has commenced, and inspectors will be on site from the 10th July

EDUCATION

I have visited a number of early years setting, schools and alternative providers with officers to meet with children and the dedicated, skilled adults that support them. It has been empowering to see children benefitting from the creativity of the staff and council officers, along with the many volunteers that support our schools.

Through my school visits, I recognise the financial challenges that many settings and schools currently face, especially in areas where there are falling school rolls. I am working with officers,

and school leaders to look for options to support schools to use funding and their resources as effectively as possible.

I have highlighted the challenges that we face to meet the increasing demand for specialist services for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. I have also outlined our commitment to working with partners, especially children with SEND and their families to improve our services.

Since March, I have been leading a programme of co-production events that have enabled the Council to engage over 800 people to develop a new strategic approach to improving outcomes for children with SEND. This is captured in the new SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy, which I will present to you in detail later.

The Council has recently agreed a new commissioning approach with a leading national provider to deliver additional Educational Psychology assessments. We are confident that this additional capacity and expertise will help us quickly improve our performance in this area.

Best Start in Life

On the 3rd May, a Best Start in Life workshop was held with senior Directors across WNC to discuss the development work for Ambition 1 – Best Start in Life, the progress on Family hubs approach in the West including completing the Early Childhood Maturity matrix framework.

The Maturity matrix is a self-assessment tool that enables local authority to take a system-wide approach to improve the outcomes for children and young people. It looks at the level position of local areas for early childhood interventions, identify areas for improvement, and work together with system partners to deliver positive change. Following the workshop, the team worked with colleagues to complete the workbook looking at the four key dimensions:

- Plan
- Lead
- Deliver
- Evaluation

Within each of these dimensions key elements were looked at, such as strategy, commissioning plans, workforce, leadership, partnership, community ownership, and outcomes. The barriers and challenges to improvement were discussed along with the key actions to prioritise to make a positive change.

The key actions identified were to develop a full commissioning forward plan to reflect the recommendations agreed within the maturity matrix assessment and an Early Help (Intervention and prevention) Model. The recommendations will also form part of a new target operating model for the West Northamptonshire council and an Early Childhood Strategy/ Children and Young people Plan, to align with the Best Start in Life section of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the wider Children Services Improvement Plan including Education and SEND.

Next steps will be to hold a follow-up Best Start in Life workshop on the 7th July to agree on priorities. Also set to be held is the first Best Start in Life Strategic Board at the end of July.

Councillor Fiona Baker

Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education)

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Summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 11 April 2023

1. Date of publication of this summary: 11 April 2023
2. Deadline for requests for call-in (detailing reasons for doing so): 18 April 2023
3. Earliest date for implementation of decisions: 19 April 2023
4. Urgent decisions taken and not subject to the call-in procedure: 11 April 2023

Agenda Item and Recommendations	Decision
<p>Agenda Item 2 Minutes</p> <p>To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 March 2023.</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6 Planning Advisory Service - Planning Peer Review</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Noted the finding and recommendations of the PAS Peer Review (Appendix A) b) Endorsed the Action Plan and the next steps for the Planning Service (Appendix B) and; c) Agreed the proposed mechanism for monitoring and reporting progress on the Action Plan and transformation programme. <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To align with the recommendations proposed by the PAS Peer Review. • To ensure corporate support to drive positive change and will ensure the proposed measures are embedded within the Planning Service in the short, medium and long term. • To ensure accountability and ownership for the implementation of the Action Plan and transformation programme and; • It represents a positive opportunity to

	<p>shape a new, fit for purpose unitary planning service for West Northamptonshire.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>Should the Council not progress the areas identified by the Planning Advisory Service, the Council will not benefits to improvements set out within the report.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 7 Community Grants Framework</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet</p> <p>a) Approved the proposed Community Funding Grants Framework for West Northamptonshire Council for implementation from 2023/24.</p> <p>b) Approved the composition of the Community Funding Panel and the role of the Cross-party Advisory Group.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Vesting Day, the Council has had in place an interim Community Funding Grants Policy approved by Cabinet for use until March 2023. This Policy was for the operation of a single grant scheme that combined the district and borough councils' legacy community funding grants and budgets into a single WNC Community Funding Grant Scheme. • Over the past two years, it has become apparent that our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) have had different expectations and understandings of the use and purpose of this now single grant. There has also been other funding made available to these voluntary and community organisations, which while a welcome investment in prevention, has been aligned to the interim Community Funding Grant Policy without a clear remit from Cabinet. • There is now the opportunity to align all community funding into a single framework that will embrace current and future community funding grant awards. This will standardise the approach across the Council and ensure a fair, accessible, open and transparent process. Therefore,

Cabinet approval is sought to enable Officers to launch the Community Funding Grants Framework and for this to be applied to community funding that voluntary and community organisations can apply for going forward.

- The recommendation to implement a Community Funding Grants Framework will provide a consistent approach to the grant awards made by the Council and make it clear what the expectations of the Council are for projects to be considered for funding via a set of principles and standards. These principles and standards apply to both the VCS and to any Officers considering funding requests.
- The Community Funding Grants Framework will enable the Council to take a more strategic and targeted approach to grant funding investment into the VCS, ensuring that all awards are aligned to meet identified needs and the Council's corporate priorities.
- The level of grants to a voluntary or community organisation under this proposal will fall below the Council's Scheme of Delegation limits for Officers. No grant award will therefore be classified as a Key Decision of the Council.
- The Cabinet, on approval of the Community Funding Grants Framework, will have determined the strategic direction of all community funding to the VCS which will be tracked and reported to members periodically to ensure transparency for all stakeholders.
- The recommendation to approve the composition and ongoing role of the Cross-party Advisory Group extends their advisory role into all future Community Funding Grant Schemes.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Continuing without a Community Funding Grants Framework. This model would see decision making and awarding of community funding implemented on a Directorate / Departmental basis across

	<p>the Council with little coordination. This option is not recommended for reasons including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there will be different funding policies, principles and standards applied to these grants; • there will be an increased risk of challenge due to inconsistencies of officer decision making without a framework being in place; • risk of duplicating funding to organisations and/or projects; and • inconsistency for ensuring these grants address the Council's corporate plan, strategic aims, objectives and priorities. <p>Not to approve the proposed Community Funding Grants Framework. This would lead to the Council having no mechanism to guide community funding grant awards, therefore having a detrimental effect on the consistency and quality of our decision making which is likely to be detrimental to the VCS and residents of West Northamptonshire.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 8 Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approved the Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy v2 (attached to the report as Appendix A) b) Delegated to the Head of Private Sector Housing, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Culture and Leisure; the responsibility to maintain the policy and make any minor amendments in light of legislative changes, Court or Tribunal decision, or identified typographic error. <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective • To support compliance with legislation and Council policy. • To support consistency with previous decisions of the Council in adopting the Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy v1 in April 2021, as part of the vesting day activities of West Northamptonshire

	<p>Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the Council maintains its policies in line with legislative, Court or Tribunal decisions <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>Cabinet can choose not to approve the updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalties Policy (Appendix A). This option is not recommended because the existing Policy was approved in April 2020 and requires updating as a result of changes to the Council's approach to fees and charges, updated legislation, case law and government guidance.</p> <p>The absence of an up to date Policy will hamper the Council's efforts to improve everyone's understanding of its housing enforcement process and what action the Council will take and when.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9 Replacement of existing contract for WNC's main Housing Management System 'OpenHousing'</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet authorised the Chief Information Officer to award a contract to Capita for the use of the OpenHousing housing management system, via the KCS framework (Y20023), for three years with the option of extension for a single year.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure continuity of service to the delivery of the Council's housing service To enable the Council to conduct a comprehensive contracting process for a replacement system within the life of the proposed contract. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>The alternative is to end the contract with Capita or extend it for a shorter period and immediately procure an alternative system. This option will mean that the Council is unable to deliver its core statutory functions. Capita has made it clear that it will not agree to a shorter contract. This means that the Council has no option at this stage but to accept the terms and</p>

	<p>conditions available which requires to enter into a contract with Capita.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10 A43 Northampton - Kettering Improvements Phase 3</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <p>a) Noted the progress made to date in undertaking improvements to the A43 between Northampton and Kettering.</p> <p>b) Agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Place and Economy to agree the joint working arrangements with North Northamptonshire Council, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, the S151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Finance.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED: The proposed option for a Memorandum of Understanding ensures that the two Councils share the governance of the scheme and a fair distribution of the costs of developing this cross-border highway scheme.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: Alternative options which have been considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For one Council to construct the project completely at its cost. It is unlikely that either Council would wish to spend its funds on an improvement in the other Council's area in this way. • For each Council to construct its section of the road separately. This would not be efficient and would create a risk that the timescales did not align at the point where the road crossed the boundary. Such lack of co-operation would also be unlikely to secure funding from the Department for Transport. • To construct the road only in one Council's area or to not progress the scheme at all. Neither of these options would address the dual problems of increasing road capacity to accommodate development in West Northamptonshire and existing capacity problem at the Holcot/Sywell roundabout in North Northamptonshire. <p>None of these options is recommended.</p>

<p>Agenda Item 11 2023/24 Bus Subsidy Budget</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agreed the use of £215k from the contingency fund in 2023/24 to provide continuing support for non-commercially viable bus services. b) Noted that this will be used to continue to support the services currently receiving financial support. <p>REASONS RESOLVED: To ensure the Council is fulfilling its statutory duty to secure provision of appropriate services to meet public transport requirements, and to enable the council to take more time to evaluate these requirements in advance of a longer term recommendation being made.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: Alternative options which have been considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining just the base budget and cutting the subsidised services to fit the available budget. It is important that the Council assesses the impact of any withdrawal of funding support on service levels, as this could leave some communities with an established public transport requirement without any service at all. • Agreeing a permanent uplift to the base budget. Any decision on the longer term budget allocation should be informed by bus service review currently underway, with a decision taken on a budget allocation to deliver the preferred service delivery option guided by a fuller impact assessment. Furthermore, continuing to simply support existing bus services which are in financial difficulty only provides a short-term solution and it is difficult to identify which services to prioritise for support
<p>Agenda Item 12 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet noted the findings of the report and considered the public interest that may be generated by the publication of the report.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is required to consider the

report and confirm within three months the action it has taken to respond to the findings and recommendations.

- Under the Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended, the Council is required to share the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and evidence this to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- In addition, Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 5 requires that the Monitoring Officer of a Local Authority prepares a report to the Authority with respect to any cases where maladministration or failure has been found.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Where fault has resulted in a loss of educational provision, the Ombudsman's guidance recommends a remedy payment of between £200 and £600 a month to acknowledge the impact of that loss. The figure should be based on the impact on the child and take account of factors such as:

- the severity of the child's SEN;
- any educational provision – full-time or part-time, without some or all of the specified support – that was made during the period;
- whether additional provision now can remedy some or all of the loss;
- whether the period affected was a significant one in a child's school career – for example, the first year of compulsory education, the transfer to secondary school, or the period preparing for public exams

A further 8 complaints have been identified as qualifying for the above, and the Education service are currently working through assessing the financial impact of remedying these.

**Agenda Item 13
SACRE Annual Report**

RESOLVED: That Cabinet received and approved the SACRE annual report.

REASONS RESOLVED:

	<p>After being accepted by the Council the report will be published to schools. Schools will take note of the advice given in the report and act on it in order to improve the quality of provision for RE and collective worship.</p> <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: The report is for information only.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 14 Consolidating printers into a single contract</p>	<p>RESOLVED: That Cabinet delegated authority to the Executive Director – Corporate Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for Corporate Services to progress and enter into a single contract for the provision of multi functional devices.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts inherited by WNC from its predecessor councils are expiring and so need to be renewed to enable continued provision and support of MFDs in its offices. • Current providers will ultimately cease support for our existing MFD machines, so replacements must be sought and in-place before this support ceases to ensure service continuity. • Re-procuring as a single contract will be key to enabling printing to be made seamless across any location in the Council area, creating the ability for any worker to print anywhere at any machine. • A framework contract is proposed for the contract re-procurement as it offers a more efficient and cost-effective process. • New MFDs typically have a six-month lead time and so awarding the contract promptly will provide the council with maximum flexibility in transitioning from current contract arrangements. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: The most common method for organisations is to Lease-Hire the machines. This would mean a tie-in to pay the awarded company the value of the machines over a typical five-year period. The only draw-back here is that this approach raises demand on the revenue</p>

	<p>cost and the organisation will not own the machines at the end of the contract.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 15 Consolidating phone lines into a single contract</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agreed to the Chief Information Officer carrying out a procurement process to select a new provider; and b) Authorised the Chief Information Officer to award the contract for a period of up to 5 years to the successful bidder on completion of the procurement process. <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidation of the Council’s landline infrastructure into a single contract will lead to budget savings as we leverage economies of scale. • The UK is shutting down analogue phone services by 2025, known as the “Big Analogue Switch Off”. The Council currently has many analogue telephone lines that will need to be migrated to a digital service to maintain business requirements, rendering existing contracts inappropriate. • Consolidation of contracts simplifies administration and account management, reducing staff time and overheads in managing our telephony and is also expected to lead to a reduction in the number of landlines. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>There are multiple telecoms suppliers providing landline services to the Council which is inefficient from a cost perspective and adds an administrative overhead for staff in terms of management as well as processing invoices and purchase orders.</p> <p>A project to consolidate all the landlines with one supplier would drive cost savings through economies of scale, significantly reduce the administrative burden and ensure full alignment of contract dates. It is also expected that through the consolidation work a rationalisation, resulting in the number of landlines, would take place. For the reasons above, the option to consolidate landlines is the preferred choice.</p>

Existing running costs are a combined cost (rental and call charges) of £150k per year and it is expected that this will reduce by 15% to a cost of £127.5k per year following migration.

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**Summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the
Cabinet held on Tuesday 13 June 2023**

1. Date of publication of this summary: Insertdate
2. Deadline for requests for call-in (detailing reasons for doing so): Insertdate
3. Earliest date for implementation of decisions: Insertdate
4. Urgent decisions taken and not subject to the call-in procedure: Insertdate

Agenda Item and Recommendations	Decision
<p>Agenda Item 6 Corporate Plan - Quarterly Performance Report</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet noted the content of the appendix covering the final quarter of 2022-23.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report was for information purposes and discussion only, there were no direct decisions to be made following the report. • The council is required as part of Local Government Act 1972 to report performance of the council to members. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: This is a report for information and discussion and therefore there are no alternative actions.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 7 Household Support Fund 4</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Approved the recommended plan for distribution of the allocated £5,199,257 HSF4, as set out in section 6 of the report. b) Agreed that any under-spend and/or unclaimed support vouchers in a particular category of spend may be re-allocated to other categories based on need and demand as agreed by the Director of Public Health and Cabinet Member. c) Noted the proposed consultation period and pilot to explore use of support

	<p>vouchers to access Food Clubs/Larders.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The options proposed align with the Department for Work and Pensions guidance and with the Council’s Anti-poverty Strategy. • The recommended allocations are based on learning from previous HSF schemes including demand for different types of support. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS: Authorities have discretion on exactly how this funding is used within the scope set out in the DWP Guidance. Key requirements of The Fund are that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is used to meet immediate needs and help those who are struggling to afford energy and water bills, food, and other related essentials. • is allocated to vulnerable households in most need of support, giving particular consideration to households ineligible for other government support with cost of living and ensuring needs of different household types are considered (e.g. children of all ages, pensioners, unpaid carers, care leavers and disabled people).
<p>Agenda Item 8 Proposal to extend the age-range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet approved the proposal to lower the admissions age range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School, from 4 years to 3 years, to enable the school to offer FEEE to three-year-olds from September 2023.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To comply with the statutory process to lower the age range by 1 year. • To ensure the council can provide sufficient 3-year-old funded early entitlement places, for universal entitlement in the Croughton area. • For children to benefit from high quality teaching and learning experience and a provision led by the Head (QTS). • To support younger children with a smooth transition and integrated

	<p>approach to school readiness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maximise on numbers of children and support the sustainability of a small village school, impacted by reduced admissions numbers. <p>ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS</p> <p>Doing nothing would result in a decrease in three-year-old FEEE places in the Croughton village area, due to closure of Croughton Pre-school. Supporting the proposal would bridge a sufficiency gap and also give parents access to term time / school day provision. It would also help to stabilise the school as a result of their declining number of children on roll in years reception to 6.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 9 Decision taken by the Leader of the Council under urgency: LAHF programme</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet noted the decisions taken by the Leader of the Council set out in the Appendix.</p> <p>REASONS RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To publish and note the decisions taken for urgency by the Leader of the Council without Cabinet. In the interests of transparency, the decision is reported to Cabinet for awareness. The decision taken provided the authority for the Council to enter into an agreement with DLUHC to draw down allocated funding and progress with the acquisition of 30 homes during 2023-24 through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) programme within the necessary timescales. <p>ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:</p> <p>The decision taken was necessary to meet the tight DLUHC deadlines for LAHF and not lose the opportunity to secure this capital funding.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 10 Procurement and implementation of Adult Social Care Case Management System</p>	<p>RESOLVED: that Cabinet:</p> <p>a) Agreed to proceed with the replacement of the Adult Social Case Management, at an estimated contract cost, including supplier implementation (£300,000), hosting, and annual fee costs, of up to £2,500,000 as outlined in section 7.</p>

- b) Noted that in addition to the above costs a further £1.018m of costs would be incurred to implement the new system.
- c) Subject to consideration at the transformation board, supported the use of Transformation Funds, at an estimated cost of £1,318,000 to fund the total implementation costs.
- d) Noted that the ongoing costs of £367,000 per year were anticipated to be met from existing budgets and savings associated with the new system but if, following procurement, there was a shortfall the difference would be built into the 2025-26 budget.
- e) Approved the use of the Crown Commercial Services RM (6259) Vertical Application Solutions (VAS) Framework Lot 2c to purchase the system to ensure compliance with the relevant procurement requirements.
- f) Delegated authority to the Executive Director of People Services in liaison with the Lead Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to take any further decisions and actions required to award the contract and implement the Case Management System.

REASONS RESOLVED:

- To implement a new Case Management System that is fit for purpose and enables the council to meet its statutory obligations for delivering Adult Social Care across West Northamptonshire.
- There are several key business drivers to move from the existing case management system to a new system include the following:
 - Efficiency –to deliver efficiencies through improving processes, removing unnecessary bureaucracy, and enabling greater staff self-sufficiency through mobile digital self-serve for day-to-day transactional services, releasing time for staff to spend on direct client contact.

- Residents & Market Providers – to enable Residents and Market Providers to self-serve and self-access services.
- Accurate and timely data –To provide accurate data that is simple to extract, enabled by seamless integration between systems.
- Integrated access to information –to data to be accessed through a single reporting and business intelligence solution which will be integrated across all platforms, keeping data consistent, accurate, and unique. This will enable WNC to know our customer, their needs, and our service performance, all in one place.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Other alternatives considered include:

- To have no case management system, this would not be a viable option that could be considered.
- To extend current contract. There is no provision for the current contract to be extended beyond March 2025
- To explore alternative existing systems, there are no other case management software applications in use within the Council that could be utilised to meet the requirements of an ASC case management system.
- The associated finance module remains outstanding resulting in Adult Social Care having to retain the legacy system (CareFirst).

The scope of the programme is to procure and implement a new integrated Case and Financial Management contract to provide services to Adults across West Northants

Agenda Item 11
Reablement Commissioning Intentions

RESOLVED: that Cabinet
a) Approved the procurement and implementation of a framework for the purchasing of additional capacity of reablement home care services, to be introduced from 18 October 2023.

- b) Approved the duration of the framework to be 2 years with an optional break at the end of year 1 and an inclusive option to extend for a further period of up to 12 months; resulting in a framework for a maximum duration of 3 years.
- c) Approved the commencement of a competitive procurement process.
- d) Approved the delegation of authority to the Executive Director for People Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above resolutions.

REASONS RESOLVED:

- The Care Act 2014 places a statutory duty on WNC to provide care and support to people that have assessed and eligible social care needs
- The Council's strategic objective, through the existing Adult Social Care Transformation Programme, is to support people to live independently within the community for a long as possible.
- The primary aim of the new arrangements will be to improve the customer experience of commissioned reablement home care by ensuring the timely availability of quality care throughout the West Northamptonshire area.
- The competitive procurement process will ensure the Council is compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 015 and WNC's Contract Procedure Rules.
- It provides the Council with the ability to surge and flex its capacity as required in a way that is harder to do with an employed internal service.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

An entirely in-house solution for the provision of reablement home care; this is not recommended due to the continuing inability to recruit to full staffing in Reablement West, despite several campaigns, one off incentive and changes to terms. This option would also diminish

WNC's aspiration for a risk sharing around periods of demand and surge and allow a more mixed approach to delivery.

Partially insourcing the provision of reablement home care for rural packages. While this could address the challenge of providing commissioned care in rural areas it would also require the addition of travel time and expenses to be sustainable. This is not recommended; insourcing rural packages would increase the cost of reablement home care. It would also reduce the amount of commissioned reablement home care by around 25% as care providers based in rural areas generally employ care workers who live in the geographic area of the service thus reducing travel time and increasing productive contact time. Insourcing the rural packages would fragment the overall activity and could undermine the operational and financial viability of the appointed provider and make the tender less attractive to the market.

An open approved "call off" list could be introduced as an alternative to a single contract. This is not recommended because this could increase the likelihood of a high number of very small providers of reablement home care packages with each having the overhead, management and other costs (as see in the home/domiciliary care market) and which would further erode provider's operational and financial viability for the council as this in seen often to increase the hourly rate needed to sustain the business.

**Agenda Item 12
Disposal of London Road, Daventry**

RESOLVED: that Cabinet authorised the Assistant Director Assets & Environment in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder to agree terms for the disposal of land off the A45 London Road, Daventry and complete any documentation required to implement this, in accordance with the constitution and the following:

- a) A hybrid promotion agreement with GC No. 19 Limited or another company associated with Godwin Developments should be entered into to promote and

facilitate the disposal of the Site via the open market.

- b) Should the agreement not be achieved for any reason or elapse, disposal would be directly via the open market.
- c) The consideration should not be less than the pro-rata minimum purchase price or such a figure that reasonably represents market value.

REASONS RESOLVED:

- The land is surplus to requirements and was being held with longer term development aspirations in mind. The site has been actively marketed jointly with the other associated landowners. The disposal would fulfil the objectives of good estate management.
- The redevelopment of the Site would see a key strategic area of Daventry developed which would align with the proposed West Northamptonshire Spatial Vision, Strategic Plan Objective 13: Economic Advantage.
- To generate a capital receipt for the Council in the short term, which would be difficult to obtain if it were not included as part of the larger development opportunity.
- To comply with the obligations on the Council to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable in a freehold land disposal.
- As a hybrid promotion agreement, all costs associated with promotion of the site, such as planning fees, agents, and legal fees are paid by the promoter.
- The Council has a degree of security knowing that it can expect a minimum consideration when the site is disposed and therefore there is a minimum degree of risk to the local authority.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

The Council has a number of choices:

(1) Do nothing at this time – At present the Council's land offers little benefit either from a financial or economic perspective to the Council. It is currently held on a tenancy at will to an adjoining landowner (one of the other landowners in the consortium) at a peppercorn fee for

storage. Therefore, its future even for this use is limited should development proceed.

(2) Agree to the proposed promotion agreement – If the Council’s interest was included as part of the larger development, its disposal would assist in the realisation of a capital receipt likely to be more than what could be realised if the land was disposed in isolation. This is likely to remain the case even if the proposed hybrid promotion agreement was not to deliver a disposal. In addition to obtaining a significant capital receipt the inclusion of the Council’s land would assist and facilitate the development of one of strategic sites in area which would align with one of the objectives of the Council as set out in the Settlements & Countryside Local Plan. The development would also result in inward investment, job creation and economic growth.

(3) Seek a separate disposal – For the reasons given above, this is considered unlikely to maximise financial returns. It is also likely to frustrate the development of this allocated development site, contrary to the Council’s planning policy intentions.

None of the options has a material adverse impact on people with different protected characteristics or otherwise adversely affects the Council’s equality duties. It is therefore concluded that proceeding with a disposal alongside the landowner consortium (option 2) represents the best option for the Council.

**Agenda Item 13
Update to the Northampton Railway
Station Multi Story Car Park Proposal**

DECISION TAKEN

That Cabinet:

- a) Noted the work undertaken since the cabinet report of December 2021.
- b) Approved the terms as set out in the private Appendix A for entering into an Agreement for Headlease and subsequent Headlease, Agreement for Underlease and subsequent Underlease and an Agreement for Sub-Underlease and subsequent

Sub-underlease of the new MSCP at Northampton Railway Station.

- c) Delegated authority to the Director of communities and Opportunities in consultation with Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth and Economy to take the final decision, take all necessary steps and complete the necessary documentation related to the new MSCP at Northampton Railway Station subject to (d) below
- d) Agree that the Council should only proceed with the proposed lease arrangements subject to the overall business case continuing to show a profit for the council. This will be assessed prior to entering into the agreements by the Head of Major Project and Regeneration.

REASONS

The proposal would help to achieve a number of key objectives including helping to meet an identified undersupply of car parking and providing a new income stream for the council. Meeting an undersupply of car parking at this site will support economic growth and the prosperity of the town and make significant enhancements to the overall environmental and pedestrian connectivity of the surrounding area. The recommendations enable the scheme to proceed, whilst there remain outstanding risks and interdependencies, without these approvals, the project could not continue at this stage

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

It was considered to no longer proceed with the project given the change in the yield that is required to still be financially worthwhile for the council to proceed. This was discounted as the current yield still achieves a return that would generate a profit rent for the council over the life of the lease in most scenarios tested as well as enabling the wider regeneration of the

	station area.
Agenda Item 15 Minutes To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 April 2023.	RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL COUNCIL

29 June 2023

Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Strategy – Cllr Jonathan Nunn

West Northamptonshire Council Chief Executive – Anna Earnshaw

Report Title	Annual Report and Summary of performance 2022/23
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Report Author	Becky Hutson, Head of Communications becky.hutson@westnorthants.gov.uk
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List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	14/06/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	14/06/2023
Other Director	Anna Earnshaw	13/06/2023
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	14/06/2023

List of Appendices

Appendix A – West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) Annual Report 2022/23 (note: printed copies will be provided at the meeting)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To present the West Northamptonshire Council Annual Report for 2022/23 to members for consideration. The report provides:

- A review of each Directorate's work,
- achievements and challenges during year two as a unitary authority,
- A summary of our performance against the Corporate Plan and other key strategies and policies.

- 1.2. The annual report also sets out the Council's direction of travel for the year ahead by summarising key priorities for 2023/24.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Annual Report 2022/23 attached in Appendix A provides an opportunity for Members, the public and other stakeholders to reflect on the progress West Northamptonshire Council has made towards its vision to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive. It also sets out how the authority aims to develop further and what activities and priorities it plans to embark on during its third year as a Council.
- 2.2 It is a public-facing document setting out to all stakeholders the Council's corporate objectives, organisational values and the design principles for shaping future service delivery to meet resident needs. It also provides a comprehensive review of each Directorate's work over the past 12 months and their key priorities for the year ahead.
- 2.3 Directorate sections within the report highlight the many achievements and successes of each service area alongside information about the operational and financial challenges we have faced in 2022/23 and may face in the year ahead.
- 2.4 Also included within the report is an overview of performance indicators measuring the Council's progress against its corporate priorities during 2022/23. These metrics summarise the year-end position taken from our corporate scorecard and are also provided to Members on a quarterly basis. The metrics have been subject to ongoing review and challenge in order to ensure they are relevant, meaningful and allow us to be benchmarked against other Councils.
- 2.5 The report reflects the significant scale of both the changes and challenges faced by the Council during its second year as it continued to bring together, modernise and improve services, processes and functions inherited from the predecessor councils. This has all had to be done while prioritising crucial work to support communities and protect the most vulnerable during the ongoing cost of living challenges. It also recognises the continued good progress in 2022/23 around developing and embedding fresh strategies, more sustainable places and better outcomes for residents. Despite this, we acknowledge there is more work to be done in the council's third year and we will also always face possible changes in the wider environment and in meeting our customers' needs that may mean we need to adapt and change our plans. But we are well equipped now with robust processes and strong leadership which will help us to respond as required.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members:
 - 3.1.1 note the detailed content of the WNC Annual Report 2022/23 in Appendix A and the progress directorates have made against plans, objectives, and commitments during the Council's second year; and

3.1.2 note the key priorities for 2023/24 and potential challenges ahead.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The 2022/23 Annual Report is for information but provides an opportunity for members and residents to reflect on progress against the priorities the council set out for 2022-23 in last year's report and what can be expected in 2023-24.
- The Council is required as part of Local Government legislation to report performance of the Council to Members, with the Annual Report providing a 12-month summary of its progress.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 It is important the Council is clear, transparent and accountable about how it is performing against its priorities and objectives, providing services and delivering improved outcomes for its local communities.
- 5.2 The Annual Report 2022/23 (in Appendix A) plays an important role in this process by setting out the progress of the work and activities undertaken by the Council's directorates and providing the public, elected members, partners and other stakeholders with a summary review of WNC's operational performance over the past 12 months.
- 5.3 It is also an opportunity to provide a backwards look at how the year progressed in terms of the priorities we set out in last year's plan and to explain any instances where and why that did not happen. This learning also feeds into the plans we have set for the year ahead and our risk mitigation plans.
- 5.4 2022-23 was a challenging year in many respects with the economic challenges, the war in Ukraine and the effect on global markets and the cost-of-living issues that emerged. All these things affected our plans and our demand, and they were not things that we could plan for. But we adapted our plans as the effects became clearer and we responded to the knock-on impacts. We faced severe financial challenges, but we responded accordingly to mitigate the financial consequences putting in place controls; prioritising what we did and ensuring that at all times, we were compliant with statutory requirements. As we look to our third year this experience will also be useful in providing early warning signs of emerging future pressures.
- 5.5 Lastly the plan provides a forward look on what we expect to deliver in 2023-24, the priorities for each service area as we look ahead and insight on where we expect to find challenge.
- 5.6 While our service disaggregation from the North continues, there are very few services still left to disaggregate and during 2023-24 we will have a focus on finalising the aggregation of services inherited from predecessor councils with key systems being implemented, the remaining restructures finalised and common policies and processes applied across some of largest and most complex and critical services including Housing, Revenues and Benefits and Economic Development. We also have key consultations and strategies progressing including Resource and Waste, Home to School Transport and SEND.

- 5.7 The report provides a checkpoint for all these activities, plans, opportunities and risks and sets out the roadmap for our next year.

4 Issues and Choices

- 5.8 During its second year (2022/23) WNC, like all other authorities, has faced some substantial challenges as a result of factors beyond our control in an uncertain global and national economic climate, so soon after the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to significant cost of living rises and financial pressures no-one could have predicted in 2021/22. Supporting communities and protecting vulnerable residents through these difficulties has been the Council's top priority during 2022/23, and it has also found itself dealing with many other major issues, including helping to resettle families fleeing the war in Ukraine, leading the county's response to the death of the Queen and tackling increased demand for services and emerging financial pressures in future budgets.
- 5.9 The Council responded quickly in addressing these challenges by adjusting and adapting its plans and priorities enabling it to continue to make good progress towards its corporate objectives in 2022/23. All key strategic changes were supported by clear published strategies and set under the direction of the Corporate Plan, which set out for staff and stakeholders the direction of travel and priorities for change. The content of the 2022/23 annual report reflects how Directorates adapted their plans and approach over the past year in the face of these challenges to ensure the Council continued to progress its ambitions, and continued to report a broad range of operational achievements and service improvements.
- 5.10 Over the past 12 months, WNC also made a strong start working with partners on the new Integrated Health and Care Partnership, attracting national interest and moving forward with plans to create new Local Area Partnerships to deliver better health and wellbeing outcomes at neighbourhood level.
- 5.11 From a financial perspective 2022-23 has been a challenging year for WNC along with many other Councils. There have been significant challenges from high service demand, especially in Adults, children's and temporary housing and unexpected cost of living and inflation challenges from the war in Ukraine and global economic effects. However all Directorates worked hard to deliver a balanced in year budget, which included taking urgent action to reduce unnecessary expenditure.

5 Implications

5.1 Resources and Financial

- 5.1.1 There are no direct implications arising from the publication of the Annual Report however the document provides an overview of the Council's performance and challenges during 2022/23 relating to its finances and resources, including information on budget expenditure and general overview of how the Council received and spent its funding.

5.2 Legal

5.2.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report or recommendations.

5.3 Risk

5.3.1 There are no risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The 2022/23 Annual Report includes information on perceived service risks and challenges for each Directorate as part of their performance updates.

5.4 Consultation and Communications

5.4.1 The performance information included in the Annual Report is based upon the priorities identified within the Corporate Plan and in consultation with Cabinet and the Executive Leadership Team. The Corporate Plan priorities and wider service objectives underpin the council's communications and consultation activities to keep the public, staff and stakeholders informed and engaged on what the council is doing and how it is performing.

5.4.2 The Council will publish the 2022/23 Annual Report on its website and promote its publication across its communications channels to encourage residents, businesses and other stakeholders to find out more about how the Council has performed during the past year and the key priorities for the year ahead.

5.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

5.5.1 Relevant performance data will be provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committees as required to support their agreed work plans.

5.6 Climate Impact

5.6.1 There are no direct implications on climate/environmental impact from this report, it does however provide an update on the Council's performance against the corporate plan objectives, which include a commitment to be Net Zero by 2030.

5.6.2 Within this report, the work and achievements outlined in the Directorates' reports highlight the effort and commitment WNC is making in delivering against its Sustainability and action to address climate change commitments.

5.7 Community Impact

5.7.1 Managing and highlighting our performance is key to ensuring we are making a positive impact on our communities, celebrating our successes and addressing our challenges. The Annual Report sets out a broad range of activities and services that have and will continue to support positive outcomes for communities.

This report provides a high level of public transparency to all our customers and stakeholders, on the progress and achievements we have made in our second year as

unitary authority and to the work being undertaken by the Council to deliver effective services and our corporate plan.

6 Background Papers

None



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Annual Report

2022/23

**Delivering services
that make a difference**



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Welcome to our Annual Report

2022/23

We are pleased to introduce you to our annual report, reflecting upon our second year as a new unitary council and the many services and activities we have delivered to communities across West Northamptonshire.

The past 12 months have not been without challenges for all of us, as we found ourselves dealing with significant cost of living rises in an uncertain international and economic climate. However we are so proud to see the great spirit, generosity and determined resilience shown by residents and businesses who have continued to pull together during tough times and so soon after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supporting our communities through these cost of living difficulties has been our top priority during 2022/23 and we have worked hard with our partners to do everything we can to provide the vital support they need.

In addition to this our Council also found itself dealing with many other major issues, including helping to resettle families fleeing the war in Ukraine, leading our county's emergency response to the death of our beloved Queen and then taking steps to tackle emerging significant financial challenges in our future budgets which we could not have predicted this time last year.

Yet despite these challenges we have also continued to make good progress towards our ambitions and a lot has been achieved throughout 2022/23.

In our second year we've continued to progress our transformation plans and make improvements to the services we inherited from the legacy councils, developing and embedding new strategies with more sustainable places and better outcomes for local people. We know there is more work to be done and our priorities for the year ahead recognise our ongoing mission to provide even better services that will help residents to live their best lives.

This report is not only an opportunity to reflect on the past year but to set out how we will embark on the next stage of our journey of improvement during our third year as a new unitary authority.

Thank you to all residents, businesses, partners and colleagues for their support over the past year and the fundamental role you continue to play as we continue on our journey towards making West Northants a great place to live, visit, work and thrive.



Anna Earnshaw

Chief Executive of
West Northamptonshire
Council

Cllr Jonathan Nunn

Leader of West
Northamptonshire
Council

Designs on a better future

1. We will empower our communities to be more resilient, working collaboratively with them to find solutions in their locality.

This means:

- ⇒ We will work with stakeholders to decide how we deliver services.
- ⇒ We will use local data about local areas to see where we can improve local outcomes.
- ⇒ Where appropriate we let communities deliver their own services supported by the resources to do that.
- ⇒ We will make our information clear and easy to understand for everyone with an emphasis on local information.

2. We will put in place digital solutions and systems for the majority of customers to self serve and monitor progress of their requests.

This means:

- ⇒ Transactions should be available digitally using a smaller number of systems.
- ⇒ Where customers use a lot of the same transactions we will use technology to make it simpler and faster and use Artificial Intelligence if that makes sense and is safe.
- ⇒ We will always try to let customers know how long something will take and tell them if it's going to take longer than that.

3. We will adopt a deep front door across our services to be proactive and resolve customers' needs at first point of contact.

This means:

- ⇒ We will make sure we offer a consistent standard of service, responding quickly to simple requests and processing things in a timely way.
- ⇒ We will try to answer more questions at the first point of contact and only refer people to experts behind the scenes where more technical knowledge is required.
- ⇒ We will join up our information so we understand our customers better and try to use this information to help people get the help they need.

4. Our Local Area Partnerships will be our primary way of organising our locality working and delivering our community services.

This means:

- ⇒ Our Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) will provide face to face services that reflect local need.
- ⇒ Our services will increasingly be aligned to local area need where that makes sense.
- ⇒ Our back office staff and service delivery teams will work out of four main offices but customers will be able to make contact closer to home.

Our drive to thrive

Everything we want to achieve for West Northants depends on having the right people in place and doing the right things. We need to retain, recruit, and develop talented and committed staff to provide the best services for our residents and businesses.

By making the most of people's skills and experience, and with everyone performing at their best, we can take full advantage of the opportunities created by our new council.

To support this, West Northamptonshire Council has developed a set of values in consultation with our staff, members, and stakeholders. These values underpin how we work and what partners and customers can expect from us. We want to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses and for our staff – we want everyone to THRIVE.

Similarly, where services are provided through partners or external organisations, we will work with them to make sure these values are carried through in delivering services on our behalf.

Our organisational culture will continue to develop as we carry on improving our services and ways of working as the new West Northamptonshire Council.

THRIVE

Our Core Values

TRUST

We are honest, fair, transparent and accountable. We can be trusted to do what we say we will.



HIGH PERFORMANCE

We get the basics right and what we do, we do well. We manage our business efficiently.



RESPECT

We respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.



INNOVATE

We encourage curiosity, we are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.



VALUE

We continually strive for best practice and ways of improving existing procedures, practices and systems and thereby promoting efficiency and cost effectiveness.



EMPOWER

We believe in people, will listen, learn and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.



Our priorities for West Northamptonshire

We want our Council to reflect the times we live in. We believe our future is bright and are taking this opportunity to create a fresh start for us, our area, our residents and our businesses.

We are focused on harnessing the strengths of our diverse West Northants people, businesses and places, to create an inclusive and productive area where everyone and every place can thrive.

We will use partnerships and collaboration within our communities and with both public and private partners.

We aim to use all infrastructure funding that connects people and places across our region, and

we will bring to life the plans we have for the regeneration of our towns and for building more affordable housing.

We aim to make a real difference to the lives of real people and will consider our whole area and whole population in our strategy and work to address climate change, education, health and well-being, work, economic development, and our rural and urban gems, simultaneously.

By doing this, everyone across West Northamptonshire can have the opportunity to reach their potential, whether they're growing up, getting on or growing old.

Green and Clean Environment & Wellbeing **1**

- Net Zero by 2030
- Climate summit in first few months
- Increased wildlife species & more trees
- Increased electric charging & energy efficiency
- Vibrant towns & villages
- High quality parks
- Accessible green space for all

Improved Life Chances Health, Social Care & Families **2**

- Healthy, safe and protected children
- Increased aspirations in young people
- Investment in new schools & provision
- Adults supported to live independently
- Care provided for those that need it
- Reduced hospital stays and delays
- Joined up and local services with health
- Safe and secure accommodation for all

Connected Communities Transport & Connectivity **3**

- Improved road, rail and bus networks
- Completion of major roads projects
- Improved road quality
- Increased use of electric vehicles & charging points
- Enhanced broadband and mobile connectivity

Thriving Villages & Towns Place Shaping & Homes **4**

- Regeneration of our core town centres
- Safer communities with less anti social behaviour
- Flourishing and supported small business
- Sustainable planning for growth
- Increased affordable housing & Council homes
- Raised standards of privately rented homes

Economic Development Growth & Prosperity **5**

- Published west strategic infrastructure plan
- Framework for long term economic growth
- Increased inward investment
- Building on our rich heritage
- Increased visitors to our attractions
- Infrastructure benefits and investment through our role in regional forums and plans

Robust Resource Management Transparency & Financial Probity **6**

- Stable finances and rainy day reserves
- Robust scrutiny of spending
- Open and transparent decision making
- Financial prudence underpinning long term decisions and plans
- Optimised debt management

Progress against our priorities

It is important that the Council is clear and transparent on its performance and there are clear action plans where our performance falls below target or that of other benchmark authorities.

The Council monitors performance across all services areas and against hundreds of national and contract metrics (ie what we measure) to ensure that services are performing well and identified priorities are monitored and delivered against. These are monitored within services and reported in line with national

cycles or as required to Overview and Scrutiny, and other committees.

We have included a summary of our corporate scorecard which sets out our end of year progress on the delivery of our priorities against the targets we set for 2022/23 as part of delivering our West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan.

These metrics are set out by the Directorates that primarily contribute to the delivery of each priority.

Green and Clean

What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Amount of residual waste treated	Place & Economy	75.0%	tbc
Number of flytips cleared	Place & Economy	Trend	17,301
Fixed Penalty Notices for Environmental Crime	Place & Economy	Trend	3,092
Queen's Green Canopy - Trees planted or pledged in West Northamptonshire	Place & Economy	Trend	5,661
Trees planted by WNC this year	Place & Economy	-	115
Number of visitors to our leisure centres	Communities & Opportunities	1,900,000	2,158,761
Number of charging points - WN area West Northants	Place & Economy	Trend	177
Number of charging points on council land	Place & Economy	-	31
Charging Points per 100,000 population in our area	Place & Economy	Trend	41.5

Progress against our priorities

Improved Life Chances

What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Percentage of all referrals with a decision within 2 working days	People	85%	68%
Percentage of referrals with a previous referral within 12 months	People	29.0%	29.5%
Percentage of Single Assessments authorised within 45 days	People	85.0%	93.9%
Percentage of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent time	People	20.0%	29.7%
Percentage of Children in care who were placed for adoption within 12 months of an agency decision that they should be adopted	People	72.0%	86.7%
Proportion of young people (age 16-18) not in employment, education or training (NEET) or Not Known	People	5.5%	2.0%
Proportion of people using social care who receive self-directed support	People	91.9%	100.0%
Percentage of people that return to their normal place of residence after discharge from hospital	People	94.7%	94.7%
Proportion of older people (65+) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation services.	People	79.2%	65.0%
New requests for services where route of access was discharge from hospital that had a reablement service	People	29.8%	25.1%
Number of homeless preventions	Communities & Opportunities	400	436
Number of cases where homelessness was successfully relieved	Communities & Opportunities	400	484
How much money spent on Disabled Facilities Grants	Communities & Opportunities	2,558,938	4,750,175
Percentage smoking quit rate at 4 weeks	People	60.0%	tbc
Breastfeeding rate at 6-8 weeks	People	55.0%	59.8%
Number of school age children who receive weight management advice and support	People	5,000	5,765
Percentage of mothers known to be smokers at the time of delivery	People	11.0%	11.1%
Infants due a new birth visit who received a new birth visit within 14 days of birth	People	90.0%	96.4%
Infants who received a 6-8 week review by the time they were 8 weeks	People	90.0%	93.3%
Covid Spring Booster - % of Eligible Population Vaccinated (age 75+)	People	Trend	90.8%
Covid Autumn Booster - % of Eligible Population Vaccinated (age 50+)	People	Trend	73.5%

Progress against our priorities

Connected Communities

What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Percentage of highway defects responded to within the timeframes specified (Priority 1 & 2)	Place & Economy	97.5%	98.8%
Percentage of highway defects responded to within the timeframes specified (Priority 3 & 4)	Place & Economy	90.0%	98
Percentage of customers who are quite satisfied and extremely satisfied with the service received from the Customer Service Centre	Corporate Services	90.0%	90.7%
Percentage of contacts received within Customer Services for the first time (unavoidable contacts)	Corporate Services	Trend	84.8%
Proportion of complaints escalated	Corporate Services	-	5.7%
Number of visitors to our leisure centres	Communities & Opportunities	1,900,000	2,158,761
Number of charging points - WN area West Northants	Place & Economy	Trend	177
Number of charging points on council land	Place & Economy	-	31
Charging Points per 100,000 population in our area	Place & Economy	Trend	41.5

Thriving Villages and Towns

What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Number of new council homes built	Communities & Opportunities	126	77
Number of affordable homes completed	Communities & Opportunities	404	441
Planning applications approved by Committee as recommended	Place & Economy	Trend	90.00%
Number of visitors to libraries	Communities & Opportunities	500,000	854,390
Number of people resettled	Communities & Opportunities	300	746
Number of people currently supported through wrap around care	Communities & Opportunities	300	723

Progress against our priorities

Economic Development


What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Visitors to Museums	Communities & Opportunities	137,000	138,114
Total number of people on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Finance	Trend	18,470
Pensioners on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Finance	Trend	7,712
Working age people on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Finance	Trend	10,758
Number of apprentices employed in substantive roles	Corporate Services	Higher	87
Number of apprenticeships starts in West Northants	Corporate Services	Trend	3,100

Robust Resource Management

What we measured	Lead Directorate	2022/23 Target	2022/23 Outturn
Number of Employee's - Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	Corporate Services	Trend	2,400.72
Number of Employee's - Headcount	Corporate Services	Trend	2,667
Average number of days lost due to sickness	Corporate Services	10.70	11.88
Projected sickness	Corporate Services	10.70	11.88
Rolling Annual Staff Turnover	Corporate Services	1360.0%	15.1%
Net Revenue budget delivery - Projected surplus/ deficit (£m)	Finance	0.0	tbc
Council Tax collection rate	Finance	98.00%	96.97%
Business Rates collection rate	Finance	98.00%	98.02%
Amount of debt owed to the council that is overdue by at least 90 days (£m)	Finance	Trend	25.0
Percentage of invoices that are paid within 30 days of receipt	Finance	95.0%	96.7%
Housing Benefit - time to determine new applications	Finance	20.00	36.45
Housing Benefit - time to determine change in circumstances	Finance	8.00	7.68

Our year in review

£1.25m funding secured to make over **100** council homes more energy efficient



£1.55 weekly average council tax rise for a band D property to crucially generate an extra £12m to protect essential services

£34m additional taxpayer savings to be made by transforming and improving services inherited from the old legacy councils



436 homelessness cases prevented



441 affordable homes delivered, with **77** new council homes built



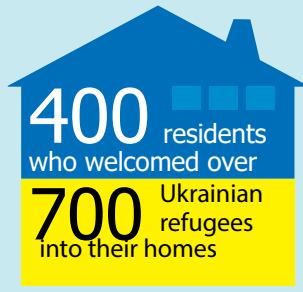
17,711 repairs to potholes, roads and footpaths



23,500 free school meal vouchers distributed



400 residents who welcomed over **700** Ukrainian refugees into their homes



40 extra school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities – with progress towards a purpose-built school to provide a further 230



97 Welcoming warm spaces set up across West Northants

2,158,761 visitors to our leisure centres

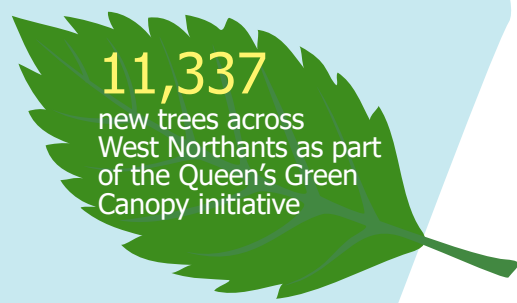


£5.4m secured from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve people's life chances, increase skills, and support local businesses over the next three years



17,301 fly tips cleared across West Northants

11,337 new trees across West Northants as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative



3,092 FIXED PENALTY NOTICES issued for environmental crimes



21m bins and caddies emptied over the year



21m bins and caddies emptied over the year



Green and Clean

Environment & Wellbeing

Over the past 12 months we have prioritised the environment and considered the carbon cost of our decision-making, working hard towards our sustainability goals – from improving energy efficiency, reducing waste and achieving net zero emissions by 2030, to making our streets, parks and open spaces cleaner and greener. Here are some of the many highlights:

- Establishing a new dedicated sustainability service was key to steering and developing our response to climate change and as a result more communities, partners and businesses have been engaged over the past year.
- We published a robust set of baseline CO2 emissions data for our Council's first year, giving us a baseline against which to progress a detailed action plan to monitor and reduce these.
- Government funding of £1.25m was secured to make over 100 council-owned homes more energy efficient and a further £7m towards decarbonising our leisure centres.
- Working with partners, we have pledged to plant over 11,300 new trees across West Northants as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.



- We retained international Green Flag Award status for the high quality of Daventry Country Park, Abington Park, Bradlaugh Fields and Delapre Park, with plans to work towards achieving similar accolades for Towcester's Water Meadows and Hunsbury Country Park.
- We expanded the success of the Northampton e-scooters scheme with the rollout of new e-bikes for hire across the town centre.



- We received nearly £300,000 government funding to roll-out new initiatives aimed at researching and improving air quality in Northampton.
- Our Cleaner Communities campaign was launched with partners to crackdown on flytipping and littering and change public behaviour.
- Our new garden waste service was successfully rolled out to include South Northants residents and with increased take up for 2023-24 and we introduced kerbside recycling for small electrical items and batteries in the Daventry area.
- We introduced a Public Spaces Protection Order across the Daventry and South Northants areas to promote responsible pet ownership and ban smoking in more public spaces, with consultation now taking place on similar proposals for Northampton.



Improved Life Chances

Health, Social Care & Families

2

Helping our residents through the ongoing cost of living crisis has been our top priority over the past 12 months and we've worked with a range of partners to provide a broad range of practical and financial packages.

- We developed and approved a new Anti-Poverty Strategy, setting out how we will support people struggling financially or with food security, what we will do to help people avoid falling into poverty and how we will work to influence the Government and other national organisations to get the best deal for the people of West Northants. This crucial strategy has brought support to many families, as a collaboration between the Council and all the relevant voluntary organisations.



- Over the past 12 months we have distributed approximately £5million of the Government's Household Support Fund (HSF) to support thousands of vulnerable households in West Northants, including 23,500 free school meal vouchers, Over 7,000 pension credits to the elderly and nearly 10,500 food vouchers via a network of around 20 local voluntary and community groups.
- We worked with our partners and local communities to set up a network of 97 welcoming warm spaces across West Northants and set up a dedicated Cost of Living hub online and by phone to offer residents a range of tailored advice and information.



- Our Reablement West service, which provides vital care and support to people upon discharge from hospital to enable them to continue to live confidently and independently in their own homes – received a Good rating in the latest inspection from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).



- We prioritised work to create more school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including progressing plans for a new 230-place special school in Tiffield near Towcester, with the budget approved and detailed design work under way.
- This year a further 20 places were also created at Hardingstone and Castle Academies and new 'SEND Ranges' have also been introduced which provide a set standard for each child or young person in an education setting to better outline what support is needed based on children's individual needs or behaviours.

Improved Life Chances

Health, Social Care & Families

2



- A new integrated care system for the whole of Northamptonshire was established in July 2022 which sees the Council working more closely in partnership with all local health and care partners to deliver better joined-up services under a new 10-year strategy to help residents to 'Live Your Best Life'. This has

subsequently led to the establishment of Local Area Partnerships across West Northants, a pioneering approach that has for the first time brought together council, health, police, the voluntary and community sector and other services to identify and meet the specific needs of local communities.

- Our Shared Lives Service, where carers share their lives and homes to support others was rated 'outstanding' by CQC which found that "people received exceptional care and support from dedicated carers.
- We made encouraging progress in our work towards protecting vulnerable children across West Northants, with Ofsted lifting its rating of Northamptonshire's children's services from 'inadequate' to 'improvement to be good'.
- We received almost £575,000 to help improve adult numeracy in the area - the first tranche of funding approved from a £1.9m bid submitted to the Government's Multiply Fund. Money will be allocated



over a three-year period and could benefit more than 3,000 people in the area during that time.

- More than 300 primary school students from across West Northants took part in this year's Young Citizen's Scheme organised by WNC, Northamptonshire Police and Northamptonshire Children's Trust, where they learned about online safety, fire and water safety, and anti-social



behaviour.

- Our School Attendance Support Service arranged virtual sessions for parents and carers who home school children aimed at helping young people to stay safe online.
- Services helping domestic abuse victims find safer accommodation across West Northamptonshire received extra funding of over £273,000 under plans to boost the funding provided to the Northamptonshire Domestic Abuse Service (NDAS) and eve, Domestic Violence & Abuse support services.
- We also staged our annual campaign to bring comfort and joy to those staying in West Northamptonshire refuges, with donations of Christmas hampers.
- Less than a year after achieving bronze status in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme we were awarded Silver status for our work in supporting our armed forces community, also setting up community hubs and resigning the Armed Forces Covenant for the year ahead.





- The launch of our new highways service in autumn saw our appointed contractors Kier set out their commitment to working with WNC on sustainability goals to achieve net zero emissions by 2030, as well as increasing social value to benefit the wider West Northants community and economy, such as supporting local disadvantaged groups and working with local sub-contractors.

Within weeks Kier embarked on a Community Enhancement Plan, this work has reached over 161 parishes, clearing nearly 4km of vegetation and cleaning more than 1,500 road signs. Alongside this,



Kier has also rectified over 1,688 road and footpath defects, and 6,771 carriageway repairs. This took the total number of repairs to potholes, roads and footpaths in 22/23 to 17,711. We then set out further plans in our budget for the year ahead to invest an extra £1m towards

repairing local roads and potholes, particularly following harsh winter conditions.

- Car parking charges have also been reviewed to introduce two hours' free parking on Saturdays and Sundays in Northampton's town centre off street car

parks plus a set weekend all-day charge of £2.20.

- Introducing free parking up to 10.30am on Saturdays at Daventry and Brixworth country parks and reducing the proposed maximum daily charge at the two sites by a third to £8.
- Investing £215,000 in the year ahead towards bus services while the Council shapes a new bus strategy and considers the most viable options for supporting and delivering the services in the future.
- Progressing proposals for the Abington Park Area Active Travel scheme which would introduce segregated cycleways and footways to provide better alternatives to driving, reduce traffic and



increase safety for walkers and cyclists

- Starting preparatory work on the new Northampton North-West Relief Road which will link the A428 Harlestone Road to the A5199 Welford Road. Over the past 12 months, WNC has worked with partners to acquire the land for the £54m development, working with experts to scope and begin the relevant archaeological field work – while protecting our environment and manage the careful construction of the rail and river bridges
- Continuing to work with partners to future-proof the digital connectivity of West Northants through the Superfast Broadband scheme and with partners. CityFibre, the UK's largest independent full fibre platform, has now laid a staggering 840km of full fibre internet cables through Northampton as part of its £40m initiative for the area.

Thriving Villages & Towns

Place Shaping & Homes

- We embarked on a comprehensive review of how the Council deals with Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to thoroughly investigate concerns raised by residents. The review will include a robust analysis of current policies concerning HMOs in Northampton, alongside looking at ways we can use best practice from elsewhere in the country.
- A fresh three-year strategy was developed and approved for improving housing for residents across West Northamptonshire whilst tackling issues including homelessness and the cost-of-living crisis.
- We organised a packed summer weekend of bank holiday events and activities for thousands of residents to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Commemorative beacons were lit across our area, including a virtual beacon at the Northampton Lift Tower, followed by a spectacular countywide pageant through Northampton centre involving military and emergency services personnel, youth and community groups and businesses and a Big Lunch community event for residents at Delapre Abbey.



- Our Council also supported The Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay which visited Northampton in July in the run-up to the Commonwealth Games, providing an opportunity for local communities to experience the excitement in the run-up to the big event.
- We supported over 400 West Northants residents who welcomed over 700 people fleeing conflict as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, arranging support, welfare and safety checks on their arrival and staging workshops for parish councils. We also continued to provide resettlement support for Afghan refugees and liaised with Home Office officials over future proposals around bridging accommodation to ensure our local communities were represented and their needs met.
- We worked with partners to construct and open the award-winning Northampton Bike Park to provide new



sustainable leisure facilities in the town, linking to existing cycle networks and improving the wellbeing of residents.

- Northampton Museum and Arts Gallery received full accreditation from the Arts Council England after nearly a decade, recognising its ongoing commitment to providing an outstanding facility that helps visitors to engage with collections and protect them for the future.
- We worked with our partners to stage over 30 community events and activities to bring our communities together, celebrate diversity, foster good relationships including Srebrenica, International Youth Day, International Women's Day, Northampton Pride, Diwali, Holocaust Memorial Day, Refugee Week, the Male Role model awards.
- West Northamptonshire joined the rest of the country and people around the world in mourning the loss of Queen Elizabeth II, with memorial services taking place across West Northants. Our Council supported the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire in leading Operation London Bridge, the countywide response to death of the late Queen and proclamation of King Charles III, co-ordinating arrangements for official events, ceremonies and services.
- We continued our work in bringing together and improve planning services across West Northants, welcoming an independent review of the service and shaping an action plan for development.



Growth & Prosperity

Attracting inward investment, breathing new life into our urban areas, and supporting businesses across West Northamptonshire have underpinned our work to drive economic development during our second year as a Council, with a broad range of activities moving forward



- Vulcan works – a brand new £14 million hub of revitalised office space supporting start-up businesses in creative industries opened in the heart of Northampton's Cultural Quarter.
- We supported the launch of the new Social Enterprise Development Fund aimed at growing and developing social enterprises in Northampton that are making a positive impact on the community and the environment, while also generating income and creating jobs.
- The final stages of developing Daventry's Mulberry Place leisure complex were completed with the opening of two new restaurants alongside The Arc multiplex cinema.
- We were successfully granted more than £5.4m from the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund to boost our local economy over the next three years. This is the largest allocation in the Southeast Midlands and will be used to improve people's life chances, increase skills, create stronger communities, and support local businesses.
- Our partners at NN Contemporary Art unveiled plans for a major new cultural centre at 24 Guildhall Road – a £4.7 million project supported by the Government's Towns Fund and part of the Town Centre Masterplan.
- We encouraged residents across West Northants to

shop local and support our independent traders as part of activities for Small Business Saturday.

- Work started to demolish the old derelict Co-op supermarket in Towcester's Sponne Arcade to make way for additional parking spaces in the heart of the town centre.



- Our Council received a prestigious Federation of Small Business Local Government Award for supporting the local small business community, beating off competition from around 250 other councils to achieve the 'All round Small Business Friendly' regional category.
- We exchanged contracts on the former BHS and M&S stores in Abington Street to progress plans for modern new residential, retail and leisure units in the town centre.
- We worked with partners to progress plans to restore the Old Black Lion public house in Marefair, Northampton, with conservation repair work starting recently to bring the derelict premises back into use for our local community.
- Work started on the multi-million-pound redevelopment of Northampton's historic Market Square, which will include a flexible event space, bespoke fixed stalls, more trees, tiered seating and an interactive water feature.



Robust Resource Management

6

Transparency & Financial Probity

- Our work on transforming and improving public services inherited from the old legacy councils continued at pace throughout our second year, with the new unitary council's efficiencies on course to save taxpayers a further £34million than originally anticipated by the end of 2025/26.



- This year we worked hard to set a balanced budget for 2023/24, despite facing severe financial pressures like other councils due in the current economic climate, with high inflation rates driving up running costs and an increase in demand for services, particularly around supporting children in care and vulnerable adults.
- We made tough choices to set a Council Tax increase of 4.99% for 23/24, which remains well below current inflation levels but crucially generating an extra £12m to protect essential frontline services – with 2% of the increase going towards adult social care. This represents an average increase on a Band D property of £80.50 a year, the equivalent of £1.55 a week.
- We gave our feedback and recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of its review of our Council's electoral boundaries which are due to be introduced at our next elections in May 2025.

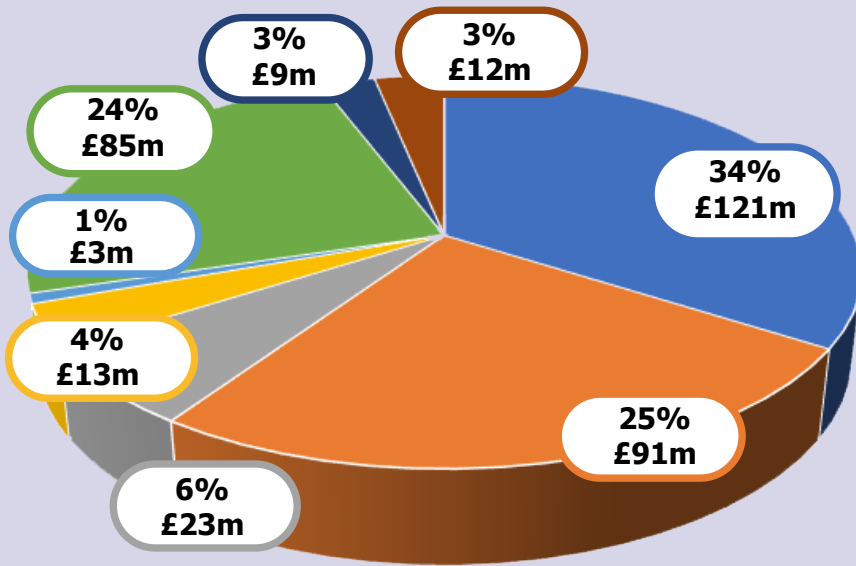


- We restructured a range of service areas to improve efficiency, including bringing our community-focussed services together with a place-making collaborative focus, including libraries, economic regeneration, ports and cultural services.
- The previous countywide approach to public health services changed as we established our own service focused on the wellbeing and needs of West Northamptonshire residents
- Our Revenues and Benefits colleagues worked around the clock to distribute a range of benefits and payments to residents struggling during the cost-of-living difficulties, including the government's £150 Council Tax energy rebates to households.



- We reviewed our buildings as part of ongoing work to bring our services together more economically and efficiently for residents and pursued plans to relocate from our current Daventry offices at Lodge Road to a new locality hub at the nearby Abbey Centre.
- We continued to develop the way we inform, engage and interact with residents, including key improvements to our website, the launch of our residents e-newsletter, regular briefings for town and parish councils, and increased audiences on our social media channels.
- Our efforts to improve outcomes for residents this year have resulted in widespread recognition, with key projects and activities being shortlisted for six national awards. WNC is among only a small number of finalists out of hundreds of entries from councils across the country for two leading local government sector awards ceremonies, the LGC (Local Government Chronicle) Awards and MJ (Municipal Journal) Awards.

How we spent our money in 2022/23

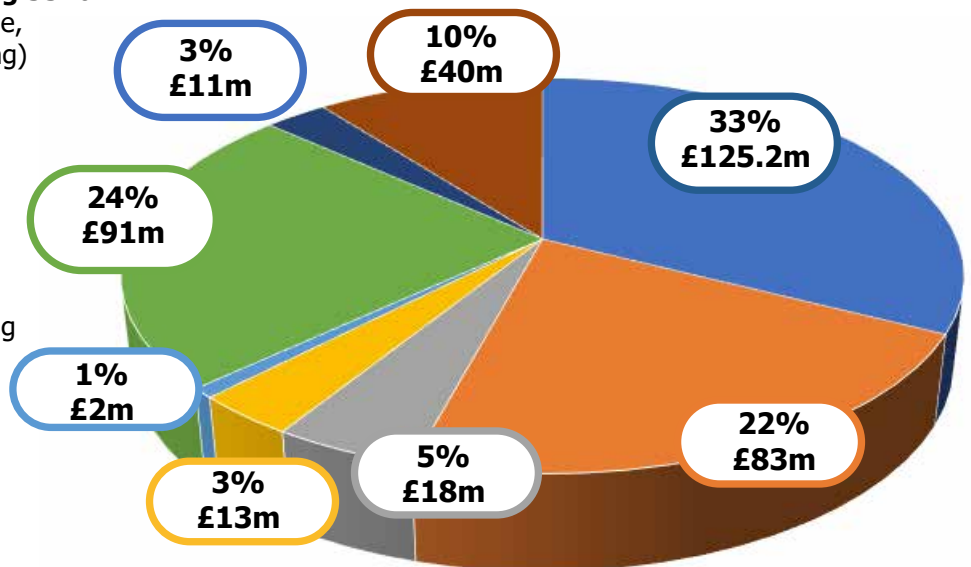


Further detail is provided in the 2022-23 Provisional Outturn Report

- ▶ **Adults, Communities & Wellbeing 34%**
(Looking after the elderly and vulnerable, supporting people's health and wellbeing)
- ▶ **Children's Services 25%**
(Caring for our young people)
- ▶ **Corporate Services 6%**
(Organisational support such as HR, technology and governance)
- ▶ **Chief Executive Services 1%**
(Setting strategy and priorities, informing and engaging on what we do)
- ▶ **Place and Economy 24%**
(From bin collections and highways to planning and assets)
- ▶ **Finance Services 3%**
(Managing your money and resources, administering benefits to those in need)
- ▶ **Communities and Opportunities 4%**
(From housing, libraries and community services to economic development and regeneration)
- ▶ **Central Resources & Financing 3%**
(Other budgets such as external audit fees, costs of servicing inherited borrowing,

Our spending plans for 2023/24

- ▶ **Adults, Communities & Wellbeing 33%**
(Looking after the elderly and vulnerable, supporting people's health and wellbeing)
- ▶ **Children's Services 22%**
(Caring for our young people)
- ▶ **Corporate Services 5%**
(Organisational support such as HR, technology and governance)
- ▶ **Chief Executive Services 1%**
(Setting strategy and priorities, informing and engaging on what we do)
- ▶ **Place and Economy 24%**
(From bin collections and highways to planning and assets)
- ▶ **Finance Services 3%**
(Managing your money and resources, administering benefits to those in need)
- ▶ **Communities and Opportunities 3%**
(From housing, libraries and community services to economic development and regeneration)
- ▶ **Central Resources & Financing 10%**
(Other budgets such as external audit fees, costs of servicing inherited borrowing, pension fund deficits and contingencies)



In 2023/24 West Northamptonshire Council will receive £383.5m to deliver the day-to-day running of our services. The money from your Council Tax makes up around two-thirds of this total income, with the remainder coming from sources including government grants and part of the national business rates.

Place Services

Portfolio Holder Forewords

Investing in our frontline services

All of our residents will come in to contact with our waste services at least once a week, as a vital part of our Council we are delighted to continue to be making strides in this area, collecting on 400,000 bins each week and reuse, recycling and composting nearly 50% of all waste collected. We are embarking on an exciting new chapter as we launch our new waste strategy this year to ensure our services meets the needs of our residents.

Furthermore, we are investing into our road network to ensure that we're doing all we can to improve the overall conditions for road users. We're investing an additional £2.86 million for 2023/24 into our roads and since the launch of our new Highways contract in September 2022, we've made improvements in 161 parishes, clearing nearly 4km of vegetation, cleaning more than 1,500 road signs to date and carried out 6,771 carriageway repairs. We will continue to enhance our facilities and services for local residents, as we look to purchase new equipment to provide a more efficient and improved service.

Cllr Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste



Planning ahead for improving services

The last 12 months have been a significant period of improvement and change for our planning services as we continued our work in bringing together and improve planning services across West Northants, welcoming an independent review of the service and shaping an action plan for development.

Colleagues across the service have been working hard to process an exceptional number of planning applications, by taking part in planning focus weeks to concentrate on determining these as quickly as possible. As part of our planned improvements we're delighted to continue to invest in planning services to roll out a new planning portal for Daventry and South Northants areas, with Northampton area due to follow this summer. We are focusing on processing section 106 agreements and delivering payments to local organisations in a timelier fashion.

Cllr Rebecca Breese, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment and Rural Affairs



Planning ahead for improving services

There have been a number of developments across our regulatory services over the last year, we're delighted to have brought in-house our building control services in Daventry. After a lot of hard work, we're pleased to be offering local services for residents in the Daventry area and now host all building control services for West Northamptonshire. Environmental crime is something we will all be impacted by at some point. We have taken a proactive approach to work with our residents, businesses and partners to improve our communities by reducing fly-tipping and take action on those who blight our spaces

Cllr David Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services



What we do in Place, Economy and Environment

The Place, Economy and Environment directorate consists of a diverse range of service areas that deliver frontline and internal services across the Council:

Our Services



**Assets &
Environment**



**Highways and
Transport**



Planning



**Regulatory
Services**



**Waste
Services**

Our Vision

Place, Economy and Environment is enabling residents and visitors of West Northants to live their best lives:

We are working together with our partners in developing a Place Vision that aligns to and articulates the Place role in delivering the Corporate Plan and alignment to the Local Area Partnerships and the Live your Best Life Strategy and, of course, the Council's Sustainability Strategy. This Vision will be the starting point and thread that runs through all future Place Strategies ensuring consistency and read across. Our vision for West Northamptonshire focuses on five key themes:

- Thriving Towns and Villages
- Empowering People
- Enterprising West Northants
- Sporting, Heritage and Culture
- Connected West Northants

Thriving Towns and Villages

With the attractive environment of its town and villages, including their heritage assets, combined with opportunities for regeneration, it presents an attractive prospect for growth and investment. This enables West Northamptonshire to develop clean, safe, strong and more resilient communities that are well looked after and where people are proud to live.

By adopting policies that protect and enhance its thriving towns and villages, it can effectively absorb this future growth, whilst both protecting and promoting the unique character of its settlements.

Empowering People

Empowering People is about providing opportunities, support and ability to thrive. By having the necessary

support infrastructure in place, residents will be able to make choices and live a life of their choosing.

Enterprising West Northamptonshire

West Northamptonshire has a vibrant and resilient economy.

Enterprising West Northamptonshire is about investing and enhancing the economic potential of this area, capitalising on its unique strengths and building on the potential within this area.

Sport, Heritage, Tourism and Culture

Everyone in West Northamptonshire is extremely proud of this area's strengths in sporting excellence, historic heritage and culture. Both as a place to visit its many attractions, beautiful countryside and villages is often overlooked.

It's about enhancing West Northamptonshire's position as a centre of excellence, increasing participation in sport, ensuring that we celebrate our culture and develop our arts as a way of supporting our residents, creating a positive perception of west Northants as a place to live work or visit.

Connected West Northamptonshire

West Northamptonshire is one of the most connected areas in the country.

Connected West Northamptonshire is about ensuring that all areas within West Northants have the necessary infrastructure and connections for our residents to succeed and thrive, whilst ensuring that our communities can still retain their unique identity.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Assets & Environment

- Continued to provide high quality parks, including retaining six green flags, and providing many activities and amenities to keep visitors of all ages active and engaged with their natural surroundings.
- Developed and implemented policies:
 - Adoption of Assets
 - Voluntary & Community Sector use of property
 - Water hygiene including Legionella
- Delivered ongoing programme of works to ensure schools are warm, safe, and dry.
- Delivered new SEND units at three schools.
- Implementing Office Optimisation Stage 1 (new Daventry hub).
- Putting the foundations in place for major transformational projects:
 - Large scale solar generation (PV).
 - New Towcester Care Home.
 - New SEND school, St John's Tiffield.
- Delivered £1.153m budget savings, including in year mitigations.
- Proposed budget savings for 23-24 medium term financial plan to help WNC achieve balanced budget.
- Managed extreme pressure on energy costs, including delivering £1.8m of cost avoidance through smart procurement.
- Made significant inroads into inherited backlog estate management issues such as rent reviews.
- Procured a new valuation service and established a five-year valuation programme.
- Centralised property data and procured new integrated property records and computer aided facilities management system, critical for assurance on property condition and compliance.
- Implemented new parking payment system for multi-storey car parks, improving ease of use and efficiency of operation.
- Work underway on Climate Strategies for Estate, Construction & Maintenance, and Fleet.
- Secured funding:
 - £7m for decarbonising heating at four leisure centres.
 - £172k for feasibility for a sustainable heat network for Northampton and Rothersthorpe.
 - Delivering electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure.
 - Delapre Park active travel scheme.
- Secured approval for the business case for the Resilience and Innovation in Northamptonshire (RAIN) project, unlocking £7m of Environment Agency funding to help manage flood risk in Wootton Brook (WNC) and Harper's Brook (NNC) catchments, with wider benefits.
- Secured lead authority status for preparing the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Northamptonshire.
- Delivered integrated postal service for WNC including the roll-out of hybrid mail.
- Began integration of Property Response services, integrating the former NCC, DDC, and SNC services.
- New websites:
 - Estates.
 - County Archives.
- Procured new integrated service contracts including:
 - Building works.
 - Electrical works.
 - Cleaning.
- Put new long-term management structure in place.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Waste Services

- Delivered efficient Waste Services and street cleansing to all residents, resolving any issues that arise. This involves collecting more than 400,000 bins each week, which is more than 21 million bin lifts per year!
- Delivered £1.8m budget savings, including in-year mitigations.
- Proposed budget savings for 2023-24 to help WNC achieve balanced budget.
- In association with IT and Customer Services, developed a new on-line Direct Debit system for garden waste subscription payments.
- Commenced development of the West Northants Waste and Resources Strategy, including holding 4 member workshops.
- Secured funding from Public Health to fund a food waste campaign.
- Secured funding from Keep Britain Tidy for chewing gum removal equipment and programme of works.
- Development new systems for managing the disposal of upholstered furniture containing POPs to minimise any increased costs.
- Recruited new Health and Safety Officer within waste team to help manage and mitigate risks of operational service.
- Review of website information for Waste Services & migrated to WNC site.
- Extended use of the Waste App across whole of West Northants.
- Awarded new contacts for Supply of Fuel, Maintenance of Vehicles at South.

Regulatory Services

- Delivered efficient and effective regulatory services to all residents, businesses, and visitors to West Northants.
- Completed over 95% of the food safety interventions required in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Recovery Roadmap.
- Completed planned programme of test purchasing in respect of illicit tobacco products and dealt with an unprecedented increase in complaints about the sale of illegal vapes, seizing over 1500 units with a total value of over £12k.
- Worked with Highways colleagues to progress the DEFRA (Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) Air Quality Grant Funded project to install air quality monitoring equipment which will be linked to the traffic management system at key junctions in Northampton.
- Secured a DEFRA Grant of £292k for work to develop a comprehensive evidence base around the potential for implementation of smoke control measures in West Northants.
- Updated the Council's Statement of Policy in respect of the Gambling Act 2005.
- Completed the consultation and implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order to deal with dog control matters and smoking in certain public places within the former South and Daventry areas.
- Held a successful Health Safety and Wellbeing Forum focused on the warehousing and logistics industry.
- Completed the preparation to bring the Building Control Service for the Daventry area in house from 1 April 2023.
- Worked with partners in the Event Safety Partnership to finalise and implement a process for sharing information about events, provide support to event organisers and streamline the operation of Safety Advisory Groups.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Regulatory Services

- Worked with colleagues in the Communications team to develop the Cleaner Communities Campaign and used this to share details of the work being carried out to address environmental crime which included submission of 71 Prosecutions and the service of over 3090 fixed penalty notices along with significant engagement with business communities 130 section 34 notices issued. The Campaign has published successful court outcomes and appealed to local residents to support our work and provide us with evidence of environmental crimes.
- Developed a draft taxi licensing policy and commenced the consultation process on this policy.
- Put plans in place with Emergency Planning to deal with any outbreaks of Avian Influenza within the area and supported colleagues in NNC in dealing with two outbreaks; this was a good learning exercise for WNC officers. Worked with partners to provide a coordinated emergency response to a major farm animal welfare case which involved over 24 days of officer time over a ten day period.
- Began the process of restructuring teams to progress the aggregation of services.
- Progressed the installation of replacement back office systems in Building Control and Trading Standards and began the process of identifying suitable IT solutions for the remainder of the service.

Highways and Transport

- Mobilised new Contracts for Highways and Specialised Home to School Transport whilst maintaining business as usual including TUPE of staff from one provider to another.
- Disaggregated service and implemented new structure
- Recruited to 2 of the 3 new vacant senior leadership roles.
- Carried out consultation regarding Moving Traffic Enforcement and applied to DfT for the powers to implement.

- Continued to deliver Northampton North West Relief Road Phase 2 on programme and within the budget envelope.
- Transported approx 9500 children to school on behalf of WNC and NNC.
- Secured £825k funding for Active Travel for capability and schemes.

Planning Service

- Recruitment of new Assistant Director following review of the service.
- New restructure developed with implementation set for end of June.
- The amalgamation of the rural area teams into one location at Towcester.
- Development of one IT system with rural area adoption already complete.
- Development of single enforcement team bringing capacity across West Northants.
- Improvement in stats across all areas now consistently above Government targets.
- Validation in Northampton now less than 2 days.
- Re-introduction of Pre application advice for major enquiries.
- Decision to change local plan from a 2 stage to 1 stage process speeding up the overall timescale for the plan production.
- Reduction in number of planning application following peer review.
- Establishment of single Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 team which will ensure more transparency and rigour in ensuring funding for communities is released quickly enabling investment in infrastructure.
- Setting up a developers forum to assist in the future process improvements moving forward.

Our Challenges

The Place Directorate faced many financial pressures and risk to service; the issues in the Ukraine caused huge pressures on building energy and fleet fuel costs as well as provider costs within home to school transport, leisure, and other services. Increases in material costs, and lack of material availability, also impacted construction, development, and maintenance works.

Some changes in legislation related to the use of red diesel and new requirements for the collection and disposal of upholstered furniture also placed additional financial pressures on the waste service.

Vacancies and difficulties in recruitment were also faced, putting pressure on staffing costs to deliver our frontline services, which had an impact on service delivery at times. Achieving recruitment was challenging during the year due to the stability of the Council during restructuring and in regard to the uncertainty around pay and conditions. As a result, the directorate has had to utilise a higher level of contractors and agency workers than would have normally expected but even securing these in the desired quantity and quality has been difficult.

Throughout the year, the management team has focussed on identifying and delivering savings across the service areas to mitigate the pressures; this resulted in a significant reduction in overall overspend. Reducing the overall pressure of over £10m to just over £1m. Work has continued to finalise remaining disaggregation projects as well as restructures to improve efficiencies and service provision.

Assets & Environment

- Recruitment to vacant posts, notably estates, flood & water, and construction, and retaining staff in the face of competition from other employers.
- Construction cost inflation.
- Managing the Northampton markets whilst they are away from Market Square.

Regulatory services

- Martyn's Law - changes resulting from the experiences of the Manchester bombing.
- Air Quality Strategy requirements with increased focus on particulate matter.
- Implications of the Gambling White Paper, changes in Licensing Act Guidance and more stringent requirements around taxi licensing.

- Building Safety Act implications
- Impact of EU (European Union) exit for legislation across Reg Services [Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill]
- New Foods Standards delivery model.
- The Serious Violence Duty policy has come into effect, placing a new legal requirement on a range of public sector organisations to share information locally to reduce incidents of violence, like knife and gun crime, and prevent loss of life.
- Experienced ongoing problems with recruitment of appropriately qualified staff especially in Trading Standards and Building Control which resulted in significant pressure on existing team members.

Highways and Transport

- Managing the expectation of services delivery within available budget envelope
- HS2 delivery impact on network.

Waste Services

- Expecting long awaited statutory guidance from DEFRA regarding 'consistency of waste collections'. The guidance is likely to require local authorities to adjust their waste collection services, for example the frequency of collection, the materials that are collected, or any charges that are applied.
- Number of complex waste contracts require re-procurement, but the adoption of the waste strategy must come first. Therefore, timescales will be challenging.

Planning

- Future review of Planning and significant change to the Local Plan process has been mooted.

Assets & Environment

- Continuing to provide high quality parks, including retaining six green flags, and providing many activities and amenities to keep visitors of all ages active and engaged with their natural surroundings.
- Develop WNC's Tree Policy and Strategy, and commence implementation.
- Publication and consultation on the Parks Development Strategy.
- Proceeding with the next stages of the RAIN project.
- Development of first draft of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for West Northamptonshire.
- Selected sites and moved towards implementation of large-scale solar generation (PV).
- Substantial development of asset strategy / asset management plan (AMP).
- Develop and implement policies for:
 - Asbestos management.
 - Driving at work.
 - Use of use spaces.
- Delivering ongoing programme of works to ensure schools are warm, safe, and dry.
- Implementing Office Optimisation Stage 2.
- Achieving business plan and budget approval for the New Towcester Care Home.
- Start of construction for the New SEND school, St John's Tiffield.
- Delivery of budgeted savings/income generation targets.
- Ready for full implementation of the new integrated property records and computer aided facilities management (CAFM) system on 1st April 2024.
- New parking payment system for Brixworth and Daventry Country Parks, improving ease of use and efficiency of operation.
- Publication of Climate Strategies for Estate, and Construction & Maintenance, and substantial progress on Fleet.
- Completion of decarbonising heating at four leisure centres.
- Completion of feasibility for a sustainable heat network for Northampton and Rothersthorpe and if appropriate seeking funding for the next stage of work.
- Procuring a commercial partner for delivering EV charging infrastructure and securing the capital grant for this work.
- Implementing the Delapre Park active travel scheme.
- Complete integration of Property Response services, integrating the former NBC services.
- Awarding new integrated service contracts including:
 - Security.
 - Fleet.
- Completing recruitment to long-term structure, especially in Property Strategy & Estates.

Our priorities for 2023/24

Waste Services

- Deliver efficient Waste Services and street cleansing to all West Northants residents, resolving any issues that arise.
- Deliver budget savings as per proposals in the medium term financial plan.
- Progress comprehensive review of waste health and safety processes and implement improvements.
- Deliver communications and education programme including:
 - Food Waste Project
 - Contamination Campaign
 - Don't bin batteries Campaign.
- Collaborative working with other teams to achieve corporate outcomes, including:
 - With Regulatory Services to help delivery cleaner communities
 - With Planning to help secure money from developers for waste services
 - With Regeneration to ensure waste is considered in the town centre improvement projects
 - With Sustainability to plan reduction in carbon emissions from waste service.
- Complete Procurement of waste contracts required by end of March 2024 including:
 - New Dry Mixed Recyclables Contract for Daventry & South
 - Garden Waste Permit provider
 - Bin Provider
 - New Food Waste Collection vehicle
 - Vehicle Grounds Maintenance Contractor for Closed Landfills
 - Closed Landfill Technical Support
- Agree and adopt waste resources strategy for West Northamptonshire.
- Prepare for and commence procurement of:
 - Residual waste treatment contract(s)
 - Household Waste Recycling Centre Contract.
- Implement new Direct Debit system for garden waste, including ensuring a smooth renewals process in March 2024.
- Review bulky waste collections (including cross-area collection, rebrand / name, reuse)
- Review Highways Cleansing Plan (including 'pooling' resource, consistent approach & coordination with WNC Highways and National Highways)
- Review of South area collection rounds & route planning.

Regulatory Services

- Completion and implementation of service restructure to deliver benefits of aggregation.
- Development of Business Support and Charged-for service including Primary Authority Partnerships, Training and Business Advice and scoping the potential for development of further services across the full range of Regulatory Services.
- Consultation and implementation of a varied Public Spaces Protection Order to cover the Northampton area. This will address dog control and smoking in key public locations.
- Progress the adoption of a single taxi licensing policy for West Northants.
- Implementation of a new Street Trading Policy for West Northants.
- Working with funding from Public Health to deliver a targeted programme of work on illicit tobacco sales.
- Progressing the DEFRA Air Quality Grant funded projects. These focus on the monitoring of traffic pollution in the Northampton area, integration with traffic management systems and provision of public information on air pollution levels and on the development of a full evidence base to assess the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits of implementing further smoke control measures across West Northants.
- Ongoing focus on environmental crime to include work with University of Northampton on projects to probe root causes of fly tipping and ongoing deployment of CCTV cameras.
- Progress the declaration of a revised Air Quality Management Area for the Northampton area and work with partners to develop an action plan to improve air quality in the area.
- Complete procurement of contracts to deliver:
 - Littering and other environmental crime enforcement
 - Stray dog collection and kennelling
 - Local Authority funerals (working in partnership with the Coroner's Office)
- Progress the procurement of a suitable back office system for Environmental Health and Licensing, ensuring appropriate linkage with the Trading Standards system.
- Finalise and progress the adoption of a Contaminated Land Strategy.
- Collaborative work with other teams to develop corporate outcomes:
 - Working to secure the delivery of Cleaner Communities (working with colleagues in Waste, Highways, Community Safety and Engagement)
 - Working with colleagues in Housing, Planning and Public Health to address the needs of the Travelling Community.
- Working with Regeneration to ensure that Licensing, waste, and Health Protection factors are considered in the planning of town centre improvement projects.
- Working with system wide partners to assist in the delivery of public health outcomes across the LAPs.
- Progressing effective communications campaigns dealing with:
 - Cleaner Communities
 - Food Safety and Health and Safety
 - Consumer Protection
 - Building Regulation

Highways and Transport

- Stabilisation following disaggregation.
- Embed new Highways contract changes.
- Recruit to vacant roles across the service to enable full delivery.
- Complete work on Bus Service Review and implement outputs.
- Complete review of Community Transport and implement outputs.
- Complete roll out of new Home to School Transport CRM and Route Planning System.
- Complete Under 16 Home to School policy consultation and publish new policy in time for choices relating to 24/25 intake.
- Complete Post 16 Home to School policy consultation and publish new policy in time for choices relating to 24/25 intake.
- Deliver further efficiencies within Home to School transport operations.
- Deliver efficiencies within Highways maintenance operations using innovative technology and techniques to deliver better outcomes within the budget envelope.
- Assuming that permission is granted by DfT, implement first phase of Moving Traffic Enforcement roll out.
- Begin work on new WNC Local Transport Plan.
- Begin review of Highways Asset Management Strategy.
- Commence work on a new Strategic Transport Model.
- Delivery of ATF4 Delapre Park scheme and Active Travel Capability Funded activity.
- A43 Phase 3 business case and funding progression.

Planning Service

- Completion and implementation of service restructure to deliver benefits of aggregation, including ensuring we recruit good quality people to our remaining vacant position. This will also add to our commitment to improving our customer journey and experience with efficient communications to all users of the service.
- The bringing together of all staff in one location at Towcester as our main base whilst adopting a hub and spoke model of ensuring that we have touch down and meeting facilities in all of our main towns.
- That we embed new ways of working and drive efficient and effective outcomes meeting all targets on a consistent basis.
- Further consultation on the Local Plan which will bring it one step closer to adoption in 2024.
- Develop and clarify changes in legislation such as the requirement in the Environment Act for Planning to introduce conditions within planning approvals to implement Biodiversity net gain (BNG) This is a way to contribute to the recovery of nature while developing land and will apply from November 2023.
- Develop and implement a programme of training for Committee members, Members of Council more generally and to include our town and parish councils.
- To make available pre-application planning advice to all types of applications before the end of 2023.
- To improve collaborative working across all statutory consultees and internal representatives of the Council.
- Working with legal to improve the quality and consistency of legal agreements.
- To improve the opportunities for members involvement in the planning process including the development of S106 discussions required to mitigate the impact of development within their wards.

Our Transformation Priorities

- **System aggregation** to improve the effectiveness of the service, creating greater efficiencies and team working:
 - Assets and Environment
 - Regulatory Services
 - Planning
- **Policy change** and review of service provision within Home to School transport including a review of potential walking routes and independent travel training
- **Service improvements** within Planning to ensure a robust performance framework, aligned processes and a Local Plan to support WNC growth
- **Service restructures:**
 - Planning
 - Regulatory Services
- **Post Room centralisation** – decommissioning of the following major sites:
 - Lodge Road
 - The Forum
 - One Angel Square
- **Strategy co-ordination** – creation of the programme plan to co-ordinate and monitor the development of the strategies to be developed this year and next.
- **Management development days** – focusing on culture and behaviours, enabling services to work collaboratively to maximise benefits for our residents, and supporting managers to remove barriers to achieve better outcomes.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead we will focus on 6 key elements:

- Changing the perception of West Northants as a place to live, work, invest and do business.
- We will continue investing in services and work with our communities and partners in ensuring that residents are proud of where they live and that they feel part of and have ownership in their place.
- That we continue develop the key strategies and action plans that ensure we deliver against our priorities and that we provide all of our residents the opportunity to live their best life.
- That we continue to develop strong partnerships with our businesses and investors in ensuring we create a strong, resilient economy and are seen as a place where things get done.
- That we continue to improve on the basics but also identify the innovation and best practice that maximise efficiency and delivery.
- Improved communications and customer service, ensuring that our services are easy to contact and that we resolve issues quickly and keep people informed.

Portfolio Holder Forewords

Our ambitions to help you live your best life

The health and care system in Northamptonshire has recently undergone huge transformational change into a unitary model at Local Government level and with the development of Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN) within health.

These changes have enabled and created more focus on how services are delivered through the system to help residents 'Live Your Best Life' with improved quality and life chances. Helping residents to live their best life is a priority for us and 10 joint ambitions have been developed to make this happen. These are:

- The best start in life
- Access to the best available education and learning
- Opportunity to be fit, well and independent
- Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty
- Good housing in places which are clean and green
- Safety in their homes and when out and about

- Feel connected to their families and friends
- The chance for a fresh start when things go wrong
- Access to health and social care when they need it
- To be accepted and valued simply for who they are.

These ambitions set a clear direction of travel for us and together with the development of the place agenda and Local Area Partnerships we can shape more joined-up delivery of services to prevent duplication, as well as support residents to fulfil a happy, healthier life with access to the services they need. Within our Local Area Partnerships we are increasingly focused on delivering these joined up services designed to meet local needs and reduce health and wellbeing inequalities.

Cllr Matt Golby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health



Working towards a better start for our young people

The last year has seen an increase in demand on our services and one that looks likely to continue in an upward trajectory in areas such as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) places, where we expect to see growth of 25% by 2025 as an example. This sets a context for positive change that we are driving. We know that we are not yet meeting all the ambitions, but we are clear what needs to be done and we are well underway with our improvement journey across our service areas. Our plans will make a difference for our children and young people now, as well as in the future.

We have already created an additional 40 new special school places in the last year and have launched our new SEND Ranges which provide a detailed guide for all education staff working with children with SEND to help identify the right support and improve outcomes.

The demand on Children's Social Care has also continued to rise as we see the latent effects of Covid, the cost of living challenge and as we progress our improvement journey. Combined with the national challenge around

placement demand and supply and reliance on agency staff this has caused significant pressure on budgets and led to significant overspend in meeting our duties. But we have seen service and practice improvements noted by Ofsted and we are working closely with the Children's Trust to develop ways of reducing cost, increasing early intervention and transforming in line with best practice.

We know we cannot offer the best possible education, care and support for our children and young people without listening to our families, carers and partners to hear their voices, learn from their experiences and agree our priorities for the future. We are committed to continuing the positive progress made so far and building on the engagement work and consultations we have started about future service design.

Cllr Fiona Baker, Cabinet Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills



What we do in People Directorate

The People Directorate is made up of the following services:-



Our Vision

The People Directorate encompasses a huge range of services, many of which deliver statutory services and are designed to be a safety net for our most vulnerable residents or those facing a crisis. We know however that prevention and maintaining independence is key to managing demand and cost and we are working to help people to live well, stay well and age well. Our vision is to work with partners and colleagues, using a strengths-based approach, to ensure customers are able to access good quality services, appropriate to their needs, which promote and enable independence wherever possible. With the Live your Best Life ambitions at the heart of what we do, it is our aim to use these ambitions as a focal point when designing or shaping the services we deliver.

We are in the midst of developing Local Area Partnerships in West Northants, which, once

established, will give our services the ability to understand the specific needs of the demographic that an area serves and will enable us to work with our partners to address those needs and tailor service provision accordingly. In addition, LAPs will enable us to strive to reduce the health inequalities that are experienced by some cohorts and communities and help us to make links with other agencies that will ultimately give us the opportunity to improve the lives and experiences of the residents of West Northamptonshire.

In 3-5 years, the ambition is that we will have made essential strides for the wider system to work in synergy, through a newly revised Health & Wellbeing Strategy. Ultimately, we aim for people living in West Northamptonshire to live independently, with a better quality of life and where possible, we will help more people to help themselves to do this.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Adults

Adults Services

- A review of the Target Operating Model was completed which has resulted in an action plan based on the findings from data analysis and staff feedback.
- A restructure took place to increase the Community teams by combining them with the Inclusion teams – this has improved pathways for the people we support and improved efficiencies.
- Work continues to review and make improvements to the case management system that is used.
- Have continued to use the '3 Conversations' approach to work with people
- In 2022/23 the teams received over 10,000 requests for support, resulting in 2,367 new people receiving long term support.
- In total in 2022/23 4716 people accessed long term support over the year.
- Implemented new internal governance frameworks with clear communication channels.
- Adult Services Learning and Development disaggregated and has moved back to the service.
- Worked closely with the MHLDA to reduce the number of LDA inpatients.
- Implemented a project and working group to improve data quality.
- Implemented new performance dashboards for all teams.

Discharge to Assess

- Completed a full redesign of home-based reablement service to increase number of starts to the service.
- Completed a full redesign of bed-based reablement service and opened a new dual registered unit with our community health partner to run a new "Recovering Independence Bed Unit" at our Turn Furlong Specialist Care Centre reducing lengths of stay and allowing us to step down people from hospital and receive rehabilitation and therapy that supports their return to independence.
- We have also optimised our North Specialist Care Centres in the North with Spinneyfield costs reduced and Thackley Green being transferred to North Northants to run.
- Through service re-design programme of home-based reablement service increased front line staffing model by 30%.
- Through service re-design programme of bed-based reablement service created an integrated health and social care operating model with dual registration.
- Completed a review of the roles and operating model of the Transfer of Care Hub.
- Home-based reablement service underwent CQC inspection and obtained a Good rating.
- Completed a procurement and implementation programme to replace provider applications.
- Designed and implemented a complex discharge dashboard across all partners.
- Worked with the voluntary sector, GPs and community health partners to reduce admissions to hospital by 300 a month.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Adults

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

- The Assistive Technology team has continued to explore and deliver new and innovative ways of supporting people to remain independent in their own home, this year they have been shortlisted for numerous awards in relation to their use of remote monitoring to which is reducing the need and frequency of hospital admissions for people living in care homes.
- In readiness for the introduction of the CQC Local Assurance Framework, a self-assessment of governance, strategies and service delivery has been completed and this has enabled identification of areas to develop over the coming months and years which will strengthen the overall approach to quality assurance.
- Following the disaggregation of the Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs) service work to effectively reduce the number of people awaiting assessment has been underway.
- The Single Handed Care programme has worked to support both people receiving services and care providers to reduce the number of people it requires to care for people requiring manual handling. This has reduced the pressure on care resource across the local health and care system.

Commissioning

- The recommissioning of care home services is out to tender.
- The recommissioning of home care services is out to tender.
- An ICS integrated reablement service has been put in place.
- A quality improvement project has been concluded.
- We have over performed in Direct Payments savings by circa £1.5m.
- Completed Fair Cost of Care (FCOC) exercise in line with DHSC requirements.
- Published WNC Market Sustainability Plan.

Public Health

- Successful disaggregation of the team.
- Successful restructure and realignment of portfolios with almost all roles now recruited to.
- Continuing development and progression of the Local Area Partnerships and successful pilot of two LAP areas.
- Progression of successful plan to align reserve spending to key priority areas.
- Focus around the anti-poverty agenda has led to some key projects progressing in this area such as Money and Debt Advice and Warm, Welcoming Spaces – the DPH Annual Report which is currently being signed off is also focused on the cost of living crisis.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Children's Services

Northamptonshire Children's Trust

- Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) delivers children's social care statutory services and completes its own Annual Report each year which is part of the contract.
- Children's Services following Ofsted Inspection in October 2022 moved from Inadequate judgement to one which Requires Improvement to be Good.

Children Education Services

- Children's Services have established an Improvement Board and Improvement plan in Q4 of 2022/23 to support service improvement across education to support improvement during 2023/24 and beyond.
- Positive recruitment has led to a permanent senior management structure, Director of Children's Services (DCS), Deputy DCS, Assistant Director (AD) for Education and AD for Commissioning and Partnerships all in post and all permanent. This will bring stability and enable further improvement across services.

School Improvement Service

- 2022/23 has seen some positive Ofsted inspections of schools, particularly where intensive support has been given by the Council.
- A series of successful primary heads network meetings were held.
- There have been changes made to the School Attendance Support Service to create stronger links with schools, which includes trialling targeted support meetings.
- There has been a closer working partnership with primary alternate provisions to look at earlier intervention for primary aged pupil at risk of Permanent Exclusion.
- Early years provider network meetings have been established and held termly with growing numbers of attendees.
- Safeguarding in Education Services will disaggregate from NNC enabling a stronger focus on schools, but WNC will still working closely with colleagues in NNC.

SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disabilities)

- We prioritised work to create more SEND school places for children, including progressing plans for a new 230-place special school in Tiffield near Towcester.
- A further 20 places were also created at Hardingstone and Castle Academies and new 'SEND Ranges' have also been introduced which provide a set standard for each child or young person in an education setting to better outline what support is needed based on children's individual needs or behaviours.
- SEND Improvement focus – co-production events have secured wide engagement to develop new SEND strategy.

Early Help/Best Start in Life – Youth Work Based Approaches

- A partnership board has been created to develop a youth offer for West Northants.
- A recent LGA Peer Review praised our approach and mapped the next steps.
- A voluntary sector led collaboration approach is being developed and will provide support to ensure the development of youth work services, including the qualified workforce in conjunction with our Youth Offer Board.
- WNC have supported successful bids to the Youth Investment Fund, bringing capital into the development of youth centres; and submitted a Youth Endowment Fund bid to assist the rapid development of our youth offer.



Our Challenges

Commissioning

- Attracting staff to work in the in-house provider services has been a pressure throughout the year and continues to be a challenge moving into next year, this has created an increased reliance on agency staffing to enable care provision to be delivered safely.
- There has been an increased level of demand in safeguarding which has created a pressure on all teams in maintaining response times.
- Staff turnover in finance operations, which manages financial assessments and payments, remains high.
- Difficult to improve services due to the need to replace the core systems with integrated platforms
- Adults self-funder care income has reduced.

Actions taken to manage spend and improve services

- A significant amount of time has been invested into recruitment activity to attract staff to hard to fill posts and create a stable and efficient workforce.
- Recruitment of additional staff to support and drive the quality of work that front facing teams are delivering through the review and implementation of more robust processes and procedures.
- A new approach has been piloted to deal with the increased demand on safeguarding activity through more effective triaging at the front door of the service.
- There has been intelligent use of grant funding allocation.
- An online financial assessment portal has been implemented.
- Integration of the Welfare Benefits Resource into the centralised WNC Team.
- Development of performance reports to highlight key areas of performance.

Public Health

- The disaggregation of Public Health Northamptonshire and subsequent team restructure for Public Health West Northants.
- Complex budget arrangements surrounding the disaggregation led to difficulty in budget monitoring.
- Complexity around contract arrangements post disaggregation has been a challenge.
- Ongoing Covid-19 response and recovery has contributed to delays in focusing on other areas.

Actions taken to manage spend and improve services

- In service Star Chamber budget meetings have taken place to assess and challenge spend in all areas of the Public Health budget.
- A Public Health Framework has been developed to clearly set out budgetary decision making processes and expectations on grant spending.
- A full business case and governance process has been put into place to manage requests for reserve spend and ensure approval processes are robust.
- Reserve spend is being reviewed and aligned to priority areas to ensure appropriate allocation is given.
- All spend must be in line with grant conditions so any additional budgetary spend is linked to these via the business case.



Our Priorities for 2023/24

Adults Services

- Improved outcomes for people – reduced waiting lists to access social care, improved scheduled review activity, improved national performance and improved quality of all services and support provided.
- Review of front door and duty processes.
- Implement lead worker model for people supported by Learning Disability Service.
- Deliver Supported Living review project.
- Develop/Implement clear Moving into Adulthood pathways.
- Aligning Community teams with the Local Area Partnerships.
- Continue to embed connecting conversations model and improve community and partnership links.
- Scoping of the Social Work System
- Replacement of the Sigmund access group.
- Embedding of Discharge to Assess policy/team.
- Review/Redesign Flow Capacity Team.
- Design Integrated pathway for bed based delivery.
- Pilot performance framework.
- Embed and grow the Reablement West team.
- Review the quality and delivery of Turn Furlong and work towards achieving outstanding rating.
- Ensuring we are responsive to safeguarding concerns and that enquiries deliver the outcomes people desire.
- Embracing digital and technological advances to promote and enable independence.
- Ensure council owned care homes are of good quality and meet the needs of older people.
- Developing longer term strategic plans for the future provision of directly delivered care services which meet the changing needs and expectations of service users.
- CQC Assurance Framework – supporting the delivery of a meaningful action plan to address the recommendations from the CQC self assessment exercise.
- To develop the Supported Living Strategy – review contractual arrangements – to minimise isolation and maximise independence.
- Home Care redesign – make efficiencies by redesigning how these are managed – reduce amount of individual providers and grow successful ones.
- Property – Review of properties where inhouse service delivery is present – scoping/demand analysis.
- Make provision and adaptation to the service to accommodate the Social Care Reform which is being implemented by October 2025.

Our Priorities for 2023/24

Public Health

- Development of Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), embedding them and making them sustainable, driving efficiencies and innovation within the system.
- Continue to align spend with the anti-poverty, prevention and health inequalities agenda to ensure Public Health (PH) reserve spend is maximised within the local agenda.
- Work to redesign the 3 Conversations offer with Adult Social Care/Supporting Independence Programme.
- Complete realignment of service, growing and embedding the team, including an enhanced Health Protection function and nurture the recently re-established training status for West Northants PH.
- Build and embed wider relationships, with public health at the forefront of strategic thinking and enable a 'Public Health Council'.
- Bring forward the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Children's Services

- Safeguarding in Education Service to be built in WNC following disaggregation.
- Disaggregation of the Intelligence Client Function (ICF).
- Development of Family Hubs linked closely with the LAPs work to develop a Universal EH Offer.
- Programme of recommissioning of Education contracts and Public Health contracts post disaggregation.
- Development and Implementation of Family Hubs and youth offer aligned with the 0-19 agenda.
- Joint commissioning of health, social care and education and through the ICS.
- Ensuring commissioning is based on engagement with children and young people and their families so services arranged have the best fit to need.
- Develop the Best Start in Life Strategy in partnership with the Local Area Partnership to have a family hub offer.
- Redevelop and relaunch the Local Offer for children with additional needs.
- Recruit additional resources to manage the current demand and seek solutions around the lack of EP provision to address the waiting list for EHCP and move to a position where statutory timescales are being met.
- Develop a solid youth offer which starts to ensure children living in WNC has the best start to life and the right support at the right time when its needed.
- Continue to make change across children's services and providing a service which is judged good or better.
- SEND service is anticipating a SEND inspection, and inspection readiness is key for this next year.

Communities and Opportunities

Portfolio Holder Forewords

Working collectively for our residents

The UK housing sector faces significant challenges, with cost-of-living pressures further increasing demand on our frontline services. We are responding by fundamentally changing the way we provide housing support services, improving our teams' ability to respond to national challenges at a local level, and strengthening the joint commitments with our partners to work collectively for the benefit of our residents. In addition, our enforcement specialists are tirelessly pursuing rogue landlords to the full extent of the law. We have a clear message that contempt for safety and our community will not be tolerated. Elsewhere, we continue to support the leisure sector's recovery while improving the quality of facilities available to communities. Work is underway to develop a stunning programme of cultural and musical events that will help to make West Northamptonshire a destination of choice.

Cllr Adam Brown, Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure



Investing in a vibrant future

This is an exciting chapter for West Northamptonshire as we continue to pursue an ambitious growth agenda. Our teams have secured tens of millions of pounds of funding to invest in revitalising our town centres and high streets. We have commenced regeneration programmes that will breathe new life into assets that will help us attract investment in the local economy and provide public places that are truly valued by our communities. Coupled with efforts to define a fresh approach to promoting all that the area has to offer, I'm confident West Northamptonshire reputation as a destination of choice will continue to grow through the delivery of our ambitious place shaping and tourism strategies.

I am also proud that our teams have been recognised for the support provided to local businesses, as they spearhead efforts to maintain a vibrant local economy and a prosperous West Northants.

Cllr Daniel Lister, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Town Centre Regeneration and Growth



Welcoming people for who they are

Our services form a cornerstone of partnership efforts to reduce anti-social behaviour and criminal activity to keep our communities safe and welcoming. The action days and targeted interventions coordinated by our teams tackle issues head-on, making a direct and positive impact on areas of concern, as well as raising the profile of initiatives among wider communities. Our ambition to be an area that welcomes people for who they are and create environments for people to thrive is reflected in our dedication to supporting over 500 people through refugee resettlement programmes, and the creation of almost 100 warm and welcoming spaces at the heart of communities to help people facing cost-of-living challenges.

Cllr David Smith, Cabinet Member for Community Safety & Engagement and Regulatory Services



What we do in Communities and Opportunities

Communities & Opportunities services are at the forefront of shaping local communities for future generations.

Our services are the connective tissue between 'place' related asset-focussed services and 'people' related response-led services.

By leveraging the relationships we have with strategic partners across the public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors; we are in a unique position to work holistically with our residents to provide best value for the finite resources of the council and deploy our services to areas where the greatest impact can be achieved.

Our services work against a turbulent backdrop of evolving legislative requirements, increasing demand on frontline services and a real-terms reduction in funding resulting from external factors, such as rising inflation and the cost of living, that are beyond our control. The complexity of services, along with the high number of system stakeholders and partners we have, means that working in a wholly transparent and collaborative way is essential to successful delivery. Meeting our statutory duties and coping with the increased demand will more than ever require a join up with other services (like children's, adults and public health) and a greater focus on prevention and early intervention when a crisis happens.

Housing and Communities

Place Shaping



Our Vision

We will create strong and resilient communities that provide opportunities for growth that both empower and enable residents to live safe, healthy and enriched lives.

- Our services will be resilient and sustainable, with the ability to adapt quickly to the pressures of a complex local government landscape.
- Our leadership team will be dynamic and empowering; creating environments for our employees to thrive and creative innovate people-centric solutions.
- Our partnerships will be built on strong foundations, fostering a collective responsibility to work collaboratively to achieve the best outcome possible for residents, businesses and visitors.

Our service plans will be designed to deliver against both the Corporate Plan priorities and the Live Your Best Life ambitions.

Through our contribution to the establishment of local area partnerships, we will continue to refine our approach to early intervention and prevention in tandem with our transformation programme so that our services are primed to respond to changes in need and make sound, intelligence-led decisions.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Housing and Communities

Community Safety, Engagement & Resettlement

- Established 96 warm welcoming spaces that supported nearly 35,000 residents throughout January and February and facilitated over 2,000 referrals for wrap-around support as part of delivering the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- Facilitated more than 60 community engagement events to enhance community relationships and celebrate diversity, including: Srebrenica, International Youth Day, International Women's Day, Northampton Pride and Diwali.
- Achieved 100% victim satisfaction in over 100 anti-social behaviour interventions during the process of investigating cases, including: community protection warnings, injunctions and closure orders.
- Successfully bid for more than £1.7m of Safer Streets funding to enable a range of measures, including physical improvements, to make our streets safer.
- Continued to develop a partnership-focussed approach including:
 - establishing the Community Safety Strategy as a 'live strategy' detailing our commitment to tackle crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour.
 - organising display of the Knife Angel sculpture, community safety education and awareness package for schools, and campaigns such as Hate Crime Week and 16 Days of Activism.
 - creation of the Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Board and completion of a needs assessment to identify gaps in support, and Domestic Abuse Strategy developed to meet our statutory duties.
 - participation in a multi-agency approach to respond to 39 cases of cuckooing, supporting victims and tackling offenders.
 - coordinating several night-time economy interventions in Northampton town centre: launching 'it only takes one' campaign; two Public Place Protection Orders; safer routes home initiative.

Housing Solutions

- Improved our response to 16/17-year olds who find themselves threatened with or experiencing homelessness through co-development of a joint protocol with Northamptonshire Children's Trust, supported by a full training package.
- Led a partnership approach to secure almost £320,000 to fund circa 40 tenancies to support homeless prison-leavers to access the private rented sector, reducing chances of re-offending.
- Developed a care leavers' protocol and implemented a multi-agency care leavers' transition panel to support 16/17-year-olds in danger of crisis and post-18-year-olds at risk of exploitation.
- Achieved circa 440 successful outcomes to prevent homelessness.
- Achieved circa 450 successful outcomes to relieve homelessness (where an applicant is homeless and eligible for support).



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Housing and Communities

Housing Strategy & Partnerships

- Adopted the Housing Strategy 2022-25 to achieve 14 strategic priorities under the themes of: deliver homes people need and can afford; improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services; support residents to live healthy, safe, independent and active lives; support thriving and sustainable communities.
- Secured £2.3m in government funding through Rough Sleeper Initiative 5 to support people (at risk of) sleeping rough over the period 2022-25.
- Delivered a total of 518 new affordable homes, of which 77 are council homes with the others delivered through registered providers.
- Secured over £3m to fund energy improvement works to over 100 properties as part of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, working with Northamptonshire Partnership Homes.
- Successfully delivered nine out of 10 properties to support single homeless people as part of the Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme, with the final property expected to be complete imminently.

Private Sector Housing

- The Home Adaptations team continued to support residents to live safely in their homes through the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and discretionary grant programme, spending £3.2m supporting 253 residents living in a variety of owner-occupied, private rented and social rented properties.
- The Housing Enforcement team ensured effective licensing and regulation of the local private rented sector (circa 33,000 households according to the 2021 census), including:
 - regulation of over 1400 shared houses in multiple occupation.
 - issuing financial penalties totalling £54,150 to 15 landlords operating 13 private rented properties for non-compliance with the Housing Act 2004.
 - taking enforcement action through the magistrate's court against 10 landlords operating 18 unlicensed houses in multiple occupation resulting in fines and a contribution to court costs in excess of £400,000.
 - undertaking 422 property inspections to support resettlement of refugees.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Place Shaping

Economic Growth & Inward Investment

- Submitted a partnership-developed investment plan to the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing & Communities to draw down £5.4m of capital revenue funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which aligns with the government's mission to develop 'pride in place' focussing on the priorities of: communities and place, supporting local businesses, and people and skills.
- With partners, developed an addendum to the investment plan with partners to draw down a further £1.3m of government funding through the Rural England Prosperity Fund to address rural transport challenges and grant funding for businesses.
- Developed the Explore West Northants app to showcase local businesses, attractions, events, walking paths and more, which will be a long-term tool to promote everything that area has to offer for residents and visitors alike.
- Scooped the prestigious 'best in the region' award for support provided to the local small business community at the inaugural Federation of Small Business (FSB) Local Government Awards and was successful in winning the 'All round Small Business Friendly' regional category.

Libraries, Museums & Community Hubs

Museum Service

- Regained Arts Council England accreditation.
- Gained Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations status.
- Won Best Exhibition Award in the 2022 Northamptonshire Heritage Forum Awards for 'We Are Northampton'.
- Museum design won a Council for the Protection of Rural England architectural award that recognises excellence in melding new build with historic buildings.

Library Service

- Successfully transferred St James Library to be the eighth community managed library in West Northants in July.
- Delivered welcome and support sessions in libraries as part of the Ukrainian Resettlement programme.
- Delivered warm spaces initiative from all libraries over the winter.
- The Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire delivered kickstart grants to 10 local small and medium sized enterprises via Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport funding.
- Welcomed 854,390 visitors to libraries in West Northamptonshire.

Adult Education

- Secured £1.9m Multiply funding for three years to deliver numeracy interventions.
- Procured three providers to work alongside Adult Learning to deliver against the 10 Multiply interventions.
- 3,231 unique learners enrolled with numbers returning to pre-Covid rates by year end.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Place Shaping

Regeneration & Major Projects

- A contract has been awarded and work has begun on the flagship Market Square transformation project to positively transform the heart of Northampton town centre.
- The Vulcan Works community and creative hub has been completed and been operational since early 2023, attracting some of the more innovative and creative businesses operating in West Northamptonshire.
- Towns Fund Businesses cases: The Regeneration team have worked collaboratively with the Northampton Forward Board to draft, refine and obtain approvals for all projects within its £24.9m Towns Fund and £8.4m Future High Street Fund regeneration programmes.
- Delivered the £750,000 Northampton Bike Park, featuring facilities for all abilities of rider, from a skills area for children on balance bikes, to the most demanding trails for experts in mountain and BMX biking; all free to use.
- First phase of works on 24 Guildhall Road completed to create a gallery and artist space for NN Contemporary.
- Prepared and submitted a bid to the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 for a £50m project to create a new Leisure & Community Hub.

Sports, Leisure & Culture

- Allocated £250,000 of Section 106 funding towards supporting sports and community facilities to improve access to provision and encourage healthier communities.
- Kick-started the organisation's drive to attract major events by successfully claiming Host City and Host Venue statuses for Women's Rugby World Cup 2025 through thorough curation of the bidding process.
- Improved leisure centre facilities by refreshing swimming pool changing rooms and extending the gym at Daventry Leisure Centre and refurbishing the gym at Towcester Centre for Leisure.
- Received recognition through awards:
 - Towcester Centre for Leisure won the UK Active regional and national award for Leisure Centre of the Year
 - Trilogy Active won the UK Active award for Generation Active Award for their young people's membership and programmes.
- Supported the establishment of We Make Northampton, a cultural compact engaging with the cultural and creative organisations, businesses and higher and further education partners. Secured Arts Council England funding to progress compact and develop and launch a range of creative and cultural initiatives to support the regeneration of the town.



Directorate Challenges

Cost of living crisis and pandemic recovery

Frontline demand-led services (homelessness, debt and money advice) have experienced an increase in approaches which drives increased workloads and a pressure on supply. Partners across the voluntary and community sector have experienced similar circumstances, impacting their ability to effectively fulfil their commitments.

Pressure on social housing supply

A shortage of social housing has caused increased reliance on the private rented sector. Landlords are experiencing increasing mortgage payments alongside changes to requirements around Energy Performance Certificate ratings and tax which is driving them to exit the market, reducing the supply of private rented accommodation.

Surging demand for temporary accommodation for homeless households combined with an increase in costs of provision has caused increased financial pressures.

The upcoming closure of Afghan bridging accommodation places an increased burden on homeless services, as well as local information and advice services.

Construction cost inflation impacting capital delivery projects

Challenging market conditions in the construction industry are negatively impacting on levels of interest, and prices returned, which in several cases have exceeded pre-tender estimates, putting pressure on approved capital budgets. The construction industry has become increasingly risk averse which has impacted on prices and the level of interest from contractors in bidding for regeneration projects and new affordable housing schemes.

Increased operating costs

Increased operating costs puts some leisure centres at risk. A slow post-pandemic recovery followed by rising inflation has placed considerable strain on operator's business models, but we are working alongside leisure operators to reduce energy consumption, deliver the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, and access Sport England funding (£63m announced in March 2023 budget) to support the leisure sector.

Major event cancellations

Major events provide significant economic benefits and are a key feature of cultural development plans for the area, but organisers can cancel at various stages. We work closely with organisers to identify the risks and incorporate mitigations for the council within event agreements to minimise loss and impact, but wider economic benefits associated with the visitor economy are at risk.

Our Priorities for 2023/24 - Housing and Communities

Community Safety, Engagement and Resettlement



- Continued support for approximately 500 Ukrainians as part of the Homes for Ukraine Programme; and the move-on of Afghan guests through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, delivering a commitment of at least 10 properties in West Northants and provision of wrap-around support.
- Develop the Community Grant Funding Framework to fairly fund local partners to support delivery of key services.
- Develop a strategic approach to working with voluntary and community sector including procurement of a Local Infrastructure Contract to increase capacity in the sector; procure a contract to provide community transport; procure a contract to provide information and welfare advice.
- Develop community hubs in local and trusted settings across our urban and rural geography to enable additional support wrapped around a primary need (provision of food, primary care, or a key form of advice).
- Deliver against a range of strategic priorities and associated action plans for: Anti-Poverty Strategy; Community Safety Strategy; Domestic Abuse Strategy; Serious Violence Strategy.

Housing solutions



- Design, develop and implement an aggregated structure for the delivery of the homelessness and housing solutions team services.
- Reduce the cost of service provision by enhancing the preventative measures and tools to reduce reliance on temporary accommodation.
- Implement the outcomes of the Single Allocations Scheme review.
- Re-procure private sector accommodation through a newly reviewed dynamic purchasing system.
- Implement the finding of the Housing Solution service health check.
- Enhance and embed a positive working culture and behavioural framework.

Housing Strategy and Partnerships



- Deliver a new and consistent allocation scheme before March 2024.
- Develop and implement a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Remodel and commission a new single homelessness accommodation pathway.
- Produce a development plan to increase delivery of affordable housing.
- Facilitate property acquisitions to provide a cost-effective alternative to expensive nightly-paid temporary accommodation.
- Deliver properties for families from Ukraine and Afghanistan through the Local Authority Housing Fund programme.
- Develop a new Supported Housing Strategy.
- Work in partnership with Northampton Partnership Homes to implement a new assurance framework to evidence compliance and service quality in response to the changing regulatory environment.

Private Sector Housing



- Continue the intelligence-led enforcement approach to regulating the private rented sector, seeing the conclusion of a number of significant prosecutions and provide assurances that the sector offers safe and secure accommodation.
- Undertake a housing stock condition survey to provide intelligence regarding the current state of housing, enabling the allocation of resources to ensure accommodation remains safe, secure and sustainable.
- Continue to deliver home adaptation services with confirmation that the council will continue to receive a Better Care Fund grant of c£2.7m for 2023/24.
- Deliver capital investment to see environmental improvements to the Ecton Lane travellers' site.

Our Priorities for 2023/24 - Place Shaping Services

Regeneration & Major Projects



- Market Square transformation, completion anticipated Summer 2024
- Old Black Lion, completion anticipated Spring 2024
- Northampton Social Enterprise Development Fund expected to conclude in Spring 2025
- 78 Derngate, practical completion expected April 2023
- 24 Guildhall Road, completion anticipated Spring 2024
- 35–45 Abington Street, Northampton, completion of pre-enabling works, including significant asbestos removal in by Spring 2024
- Four Waterside and Marefair development, technical survey work expected by Summer 2023 with developer procured for Spring 2024
- Marefair Heritage Park, completion of public consultation in April 2023
- Market Walk, Northampton, approval of grant funding agreement and exchange of property in April 2023.
- The development of a new holistic Regeneration Strategy, providing identification of regeneration opportunities across both rural and urban districts (completion in Autumn 2023).
- Creation of a new Daventry town centre investment plan and public realm strategy, helping to identify development opportunities across key sites (completion 2023/24).
- A new Place Vision Strategy to outline strategic ambitions and success criteria (completion Summer 2023).

Economic Growth & Inward Investment



- Develop an Employment & Skills Strategy.
- Develop a Visitor Economy/Tourism Strategy.
- Manage the delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund programmes.
- Develop an Economic Growth & Investment Strategy, and inward investment action plan.
- Promote Northampton and West Northamptonshire through brand and place making activities, communications and use of social media.

Libraries, Museums & Community Hubs



- Deliver the three-year Multiply Funding to delivery numeracy opportunities.
- Review museums and library service provision, including schools' library service, to realise efficiencies.
- Deliver a new Library Strategy to make best use of our libraries as part of a wider cultural offer.
- Provide support and grants to small and medium sized enterprises via the Business & Intellectual Property Centre using UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Sports, Leisure & Culture



- Develop a Major Events Strategy.
- Develop a cultural and music events programme.
- Leisure contracts procurement (ready for tender ahead of March 2026).
- Rugby World Cup 2025 planning and delivery.
- Active Quarter (Northampton) engagement.
- Development of Cultural Compact (We Make Northampton).
- Management of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy contributions for sport and leisure.
- Develop a Sport, Leisure & Culture Strategy, including associated documents: Playing Pitch Strategy, Sports Facilities Strategy, and Local Football Facilities Plan.

Transforming and improving services

- Our Housing Solutions Programme will bring together staff and processes, with a strong focus on prevention, meeting housing needs and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.
- The Debt and Money Advice project will simplify the pathway for residents seeking advice and support on debt and money issues, working closely with our voluntary sector partners and internal staff to support as many residents as possible, at the earliest opportunity.
- We will be streamlining the community transport model, aligning funding, and exploring the feasibility of reaching more residents to access transport.
- We will explore how we use our buildings that house our libraries and museums to make sure we are using them in the best way possible, both practically and financially, through the building feasibility project.
- Work will restart to separate our Libraries Support Services from a lead-authority model with North Northamptonshire Council, following a pause instigated by the cost to both authorities.
- Supporting the directorate leadership team to undertake aggregation and restructures following the completion of a leadership team restructure, furthering our 'one council' approach and aligning processes and services to respond to local demand.



Looking ahead

Staff structures

We have recently implemented a management restructure in both housing and economic development to confirm permanent heads of service who can spearhead organisational design of services to meet demand and work in the most efficient way possible. In housing they will undertake wider service restructures to bring together former area-based teams. Some services will see an alignment of roles to common policy and processes, while others will undergo a full transformation to fundamentally change how they operate to meet evolving need and make services fit for the future based on best practice.

Policies, procedures and processes

Through our restructures and transformation programmes, we will be aligning the differences in operating procedures across services to create a consistent customer experience and improve efficiency in our services.

Strategic planning

We have developed a structured forward plan of directorate activity to give our leadership team high level oversight of upcoming work so that we can identify dependencies quicker and better coordinate our requests on enabling services.

Strategic partnerships

We continue to leverage our relationships with key partners, whether through formal forums such as the newly created Housing Partnership Board, or through personal relationships that our teams have developed and strengthened. We are fundamentally changing the way we work with the voluntary and community sector, to make better use of their expertise, resources and professional standing; and refine the way in which we can co-develop innovative solutions to challenges facing the council over the coming years.



Chief Executive's Directorate

Portfolio Holder Foreword

Enabling others to make a real difference

The Chief Executive's Directorate is at the heart of West Northamptonshire Council and plays a key role in enabling colleagues and councillors to deliver for our communities.

In our first two years as a new Council we have delivered at pace, fully restructuring the directorate to introduce a bold and progressive structure, creating new apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers, enabling career progression for our talented colleagues from our legacy councils and recruiting external colleagues who have brought fresh perspectives to the team.

We have delivered robust financial management across our directorate realising over £800k in savings whilst delivering additional in year savings to support the corporate position.

From implementing our ambitious new sustainability strategy to leading on exciting events for our communities such as the jubilee and coronation celebrations, our work is already making a real difference and we are extremely proud of the hard-working and passionate team we have built.

**Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Member for Strategy**



What we do



Our Vision

Chief Executive's Directorate leads the charge to make West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive, enabled through:

- Developing our communications and engagement service to deliver a shared voice between residents, partners and the Council, focusing on prioritised campaigns with impact
- Driving our sustainability commitments to achieve net zero by 2030 for WNC and by 2045 for West Northants
- Enabling high performance and improving outcomes through data and insight.
- Delivering an efficient and effective Leader's Office and Chief Executive's Office enabling productivity and innovation
- Providing a high-quality Executive Support service to our senior leadership team
- Leading our Chairman and Lord Lieutenancy support to deliver on our civic commitments
- Championing the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure we meet our commitment to the armed forces community.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Communications and Engagement

- Our communications and engagement team continues to work successfully to raise the profile and reputation of our new council. During 2022/23 we have restructured and appointed a highly-motivated and talented team.
- We have been shortlisted for both LGC and MJ awards in the Health & Social Care integration, Climate Response, Large team of the year and Rising Star categories. This is an excellent reflection of all the hard work that colleagues and councillors have put in to make a difference in West Northants.
- We delivered an outstanding response to a series of important royal occasions over the last year including the Jubilee and Operation London Bridge. These events have brought residents together from across our communities.
- We have delivered high quality internal communications including all colleague briefings, Chief Executive's blog and vlog, coffee and chats with directors, keeping our colleagues informed and supporting the development of our new organisational culture.
- We have developed and launched a new fortnightly news bulletin for residents, achieving over 8,000 subscribers within its first few months.
- Our weekly Members briefing continues to develop with feedback from our councillors ensuring they receive proactive communications and are supported to keep residents informed.
- Our town and parish council briefings have received positive feedback and are helping to keep our local councils up to date with information and to support effective engagement with communities.
- We have delivered high quality and proactive campaigns in line with our corporate plan priorities including:
 - ▶ Cost of living, debt and money advice
 - ▶ Sustainable West Northants
 - ▶ Discover Northamptonshire: promoting the visitor economy
 - ▶ Equalities: International Women's Day, Pride, Black History Month
 - ▶ Health and Wellbeing: Weight management service, No smoking day, Well Northants
 - ▶ Regeneration: Market Square, talk of the town, Vulcan Works, Abington and Fish St Public Realm works, Marefair consultation, Active Quarter
 - ▶ Special Educational Needs and Disability strategy engagement
 - ▶ Rough sleeping and Homeless Strategy engagement
 - ▶ Community and Home to school transport
 - ▶ Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement
 - ▶ Garden waste renewals and Direct Debit comms.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Sustainability

- Our cross-party member working group continues to meet on a monthly basis to drive our sustainability programme activity and we are grateful to all members involved for their time and commitment.
- The Council's commitment to sustainability was rewarded by achieving bronze accreditation to the Investors in the Environment scheme, work will continue with the target of achieving silver accreditation in 2024.
- At the Cabinet meeting on Monday, 13 February, we presented our baseline emissions report for 2021-22; taking a step forward in meeting our sustainability goal to be net zero by 2030.
- This report provides a robust set of baseline CO2e emissions data for the Council's first year, April 2021 – 31 March 2022 and outlines WNC's intentions to eliminate or reduce these. Establishing the baseline for WNC emissions will enable the Council to develop a detailed emissions reduction plan and monitor progress towards our targets.
- Publishing our emissions report was a pivotal step to ensuring we not only meet our target of being net zero by 2030 but go above and beyond this. By understanding our current CO2e emissions, we can ensure that we take the right steps to reduce these and put measures in place to protect our environment for years to come. Whilst the emissions report is vital in tracking our environmental sustainability, a great deal of work is also being done to ensure future social and economic sustainability, for both present and future generations.
- We are embarking on a bold new approach to make West Northamptonshire a more sustainable place to live and work. Steps that the Council is taking are many and varied, from our £8million scheme to decarbonise our rural leisure centres to increased solar energy to reduce our emissions.
- We are encouraging residents, businesses and other organisations to visit our website and review the emissions report, and also make a pledge to live a more sustainable lifestyle, inspiring others to come on this journey with us.
- Our sustainability team continues to engage with residents, partners, parish councils, businesses and schools to raise awareness of sustainability and encourage uptake of relevant grants. Recent events have included a business start up event and school engagement.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Business Intelligence

- We have reorganised our Business Intelligence Service this year to introduce a progressive structure from apprentice to Head of Service, enabling us to provide business intelligence, performance reporting and equalities advice and guidance to support the operational and strategic objectives of West Northamptonshire Council.
- We have continued to embed our new Performance Framework and Corporate Dashboard, providing transparency and openness in how we are performing against our corporate plan and developing our baseline performance data for our new organisation.
- We have successfully completed our statutory returns to Government for all services.
- We have actively promoted equalities through celebrating key events in the year including Pride, International Women's Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Black History Month, Disability Awareness Events. Launching our staff networks for women, LGBTQ+, carers, disabilities, armed forces community, early careers, ethnic diversity, mental health and wellbeing.

Executive Support, Lieutenancy Office, and Armed Forces Covenant:

- Our Executive Support team continues to provide efficient and high-quality support to our senior leadership team and Cabinet members, as well as to the Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire and the Chairman of the Council.
- This year we have supported the wider organisation on a number of different projects, including arrangements for the staff THRIVE Awards, staff network events, and the Coronation Big Lunch.

- Over the past year, we have helped to raise the profile of the Council's Chairman, delivering a number of events and fundraising activities in a cost-effective manner.
- We have also supported the Civic Working Group to finalise the Council's Coat of Arms, which is a major milestone in our Civic workstream.
- Within Executive Support, the Lieutenancy office has played a key role in arrangements for the Platinum Jubilee, the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and most recently the Coronation of King Charles III. We are proud that we have been able to secure a number of royal visits to Northamptonshire, helping to raise the profile of some of the excellent local businesses and organisations within West Northamptonshire.
- Under our Armed Forces workstream, less than a year after achieving bronze status in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS), West Northamptonshire Council was awarded silver status in August 2022. The ERS silver award is the second step in a constant improvement programme which makes it easier for reservists to find flexible employers and improves employment pathways between the forces and the private and public sectors.
- After the initial bronze award in December 2021 which recognised our openness to employing reservists, veterans and anyone connected to the forces, we have since put in place policies which allow reservists to carry out their military commitments. We offer a range of support for serving personnel, veterans and their families including support with finance, housing and employment and education.

Our priorities for 2023/24

During 2023/24 we will continue to support and enable improvement across our organisation, key priorities include:

- Together with our councillor working group, taking forward our Sustainable West Northants work to raise awareness across our communities and make progress against the delivery of our pledges to deliver Net Zero for West Northamptonshire Council by 2030 and for West Northamptonshire residents and businesses by 2045.
- Launching our resident newsletters and continuing to grow and promote our communications channels to reach out to a wider audience.
- Delivering on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and continuing to support the development of staff networks.
- Launching our new Business Intelligence and Population Insights service to support effective decision making and improved outcomes.
- Achieving Gold status in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) ensuring we are providing the best support to our armed forces community.
- Providing an efficient and effective executive support service to enable enhanced productivity.
- Delivering our King's Coronation Celebrations including our Community Big Lunch at Delapre Abbey for up to 10,000 people.
- Developing our talented colleagues through our apprenticeship opportunities and through participating in the National Graduate Development Programme.
- Continuing to provide effective leadership for the development of our new organisational culture, ensuring all colleagues are able to thrive, taking pride in their work and feeling a part of our new council.

Our Challenges

- Work is underway to develop our Emissions Reduction Plan to deliver on our Net Zero commitments. Our targets align us with the most ambitious councils as part of UK 100 and will require collaboration and engagement across the organisation and with partners, residents and businesses.
- Mobilising our new Business Intelligence and Populations Insight Service will require learning and development support to ensure colleagues are supported to thrive in their new roles.
- The scale of change we are delivering as a new Council necessitates a challenging and fast paced communications and engagement programme and effective prioritisation of resource to ensure we continue to develop our new council brand and profile.

Looking ahead

- Embedding our approach to sustainability ensuring that it becomes an integral part of life across West Northamptonshire, and we can demonstrate progress against our pledges and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Developing our Business Intelligence and Populations Insights service to maximise our use of data and intelligence to provide a single version of the truth supporting evidence based decision making.
- Raising the profile of West Northants nationally and internationally, promoting our many thriving places and communities through our communications and engagement service.
- Continuing to champion equalities to ensure West Northants is a great place for everyone to live, work, visit and thrive.

Portfolio Holder Foreword

Dealing with our challenges proactively

The financial year 2022/23 has been challenging as a result of the changing global economy and the ensuing cost of living issue that has had a significant impact on the community we serve as a whole and on the services provided to residents and businesses.

Early in the year it became clear that there would be significant financial pressure for 2022/23 as a result of rising inflation and the implications that had on the provision of services alongside a general uplift in demand for key services.

Initial estimates highlighted that if the pressures were left unmanaged the year end position was likely to be almost £27m overspent representing approximately 8% of the net budget.

As an organisation we set about proactively dealing with the situation and as a result of the approach adopted we have brought the spend broadly back in line with the original budget that was set.

We also saw the same challenges have a significant impact on setting the budget for 23/24 but again the organisation rose to the challenge and whilst some difficult decisions had to be made a balanced budget

was able to be prepared for consideration and agreement at full council in February for the financial year 2023/24.

I am proud of what we as a directorate and as an organisation have achieved and if we continue in this manner with really excellent people working hard to stabilise, improve and make services more efficient we will continually improve the service offering to all residents, businesses, organisations and other stakeholders.



Cllr Malcolm Longley, Cabinet member for Finance

What we do in Finance

Our Finance Team lies at the heart of the Council providing resource management services both across the organisation and to residents, businesses and partners.



Accountancy – Dealing with closing the accounts of the Council and the predecessor Councils. Providing technical financial advice. Investing our money and managing our borrowings. Advising on taxes such as VAT and Stamp Duty. Paying suppliers and raising invoices for services provided. Being responsible for administering insurance claims.

Strategic Finance – Providing financial support and advice to the Council. Setting revenue and capital budgets, monitoring those budgets, providing advice and support to services, managing the medium term financial plan and providing strategic advice to services and Councillors.

Revenues and Benefits including Debt and Money Advice Services – Responsible for all billing activity associated with Council Tax and Business Rates bills. Provides support, advice and help to people who are eligible for Housing Benefits or Local Council Tax support. Provides debt and money advice to residents who need it the most. Administers the distribution of Government grants to those residents and businesses that need the support the most.

Audit and Risk Management – Provides internal audit and risk management services to the Council. Seeking to ensure that the internal control environment is robust and that the key risks affecting the Council are effectively managed. Responsible for detecting any fraud the Council is exposed to and dealing with it accordingly.

Pensions – Responsible for administering and managing the Local Government Pension Scheme for Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire Pension Funds taking responsibility for overall resources in excess of £5bn and dealing with payments and individual pensions schemes for active, deferred and retired members of the scheme.

Procurement – Ensuring that the purchasing of services is managed in a legislatively compliant way. Seeking to reduce the costs of services through procurement processes and advising on letting and managing contracts once the procurement process has finished and the contracts are let.

Our Vision

In three to five year we intend to see the robust work to build strong foundations, that has taken place in the first two years, cemented and become embedded. We have an ethos of seeking to continually improve and will not settle for mediocrity.

We will always seek to bring on, support and develop our own staff and nurture the many talented individuals we have within the service. However, we will also tackle any poor performance to ensure we are providing the best service we possibly can.

Over the next three to five years, we intend to ensure we continue to streamline systems and wherever we can. This reduces costs, allows us to flex resources across our demand and ensures we follow common best practices policies and procedures. In the next financial year, we will implement a single income management system and a single revenues and benefits system. Both projects will provide further efficiencies for the Council and importantly improve the service provided to residents and businesses.

We hope that the global economy will settle down and with that the impact on our finances. 2022-23 was a

difficult year and whilst we intend that the financial position will be broadly within budget, it will demand a significant effort across the organisation to get to that position.

We want the finances to sit quietly in the background rather than be front and centre of everything we do because of external factors which are outside of our control. But should the challenging conditions continue and there be a requirement to create financial controls again, we have now built in the early warning systems to identify this early and we have tried and tested ways of managing our finances (successful in 22-23) to ensure we can cope with pressure points and put in place mitigations to manage any deficits down. Many councils are predicting issues and its important we have the processes, governance and assurances processes to do this in line with best practice.

Our financial planning process will evolve again to include a 'worst case scenario' planning.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Whilst the financial impact on the council of the external factors highlighted earlier dominated matters in the directorate and across the organisation, we should not forget the excellent work that has continued in other services across the directorate:

- Business Rates collection rates improved compared to 2021-22
- Council Tax collection rates improved compared to 2021-22
- Benefit claims performance (new claims and Change of Circumstances) improved compared to 2021-22
- Statements of Accounts continue to be signed off for the predecessor authorities (just one final set left for audit sign off)
- Our Head of Procurement won the Individual of the Year award at the national GO procurement awards
- Successfully bringing the internal audit team in-house delivering cost savings and improving the service
- Continuing to be the guardian of the pension fund totalling £3bn for Northamptonshire and smoothly closing the pension accounts for 2021-22
- Successfully completing the 2022 valuation of the Northamptonshire Pension Fund
- Providing key financial and advice and support to services and major projects that progressed throughout the year
- Paid 96.6% of suppliers within 30 days
- Allocated 97.8% of all income received within 7 days
- Issued 98.6% of all pension awards within five working days
- Administration of a significant number of grants that have been distributed to help those residents most in need through the cost of living crisis. This has included the administration of the Winter Fuel Payments and the Homes for Ukraine host payments.
- Our Procurement Team leasing the challenge of implementing and embedding Social Value into the organisation
- Tightened controls and monitoring on our financial systems to identify and control future spend needs via a pipeline and produced significant cost avoidance. This is in addition to the many procurements led for services and awarded successfully new and improved contracts with particular note to the Highways contract which we led for both West and North Northants.



Directorate Challenges

Significant external factors impact

Service failure because of over reliance on key individuals in the team leads to excessive pressure being put on individuals.

Management within the service are aware of the staff who have most reliance placed on them and will actively consider that when allocating tasks.

Number of vacant posts across the directorate have an impact on the level of service provided

The only service area that continues to have a significant number of vacancies is Revenues and Benefits and a recruitment campaign was launched recently to seek to bring new recruits in and move reliance away from agency staff. The issue is being actively managed and performance is currently holding up.

Major issues come out of the closure of accounts at any of the predecessor authorities

This would impact on the total amount of reserves held and inherited by West Northamptonshire as well as impacting on the ongoing base budget.

Very good, technically skilled business support from finance. High level of commitment to balanced budgets by managers. Only one set of predecessor accounts remain but with minimal issues outstanding.

Actions taken to manage spend and improve services

- Service transformation has taken place in almost all areas of the Finance Directorate ranging from implementation of interim structures to wholesale change in two areas.
- All service transformation has taken place to stabilise and improve services with financial savings also being delivered.
- Major transformation has taken place within the Revenues and Benefits Service and the Internal Audit Service as we have moved away from lead authority and Teckal company arrangements to deliver a single target operating model.
- Revenues and Benefits has seen improvements in performance across the board compared to the arrangements in place prior to bringing the service in house. The Internal Audit Service is now dedicated to West Northants and is a stepped improvement on the previous arrangements that were in place.
- Two further major projects were both started in 2022-23. The move to a single income management system rather than the four systems that are currently in place and the move to a single revenues and benefits system to replace the three systems currently in place. Both projects will continue to be implemented in 23-24 and will lead to further efficiencies and improvement in service delivery.

Our priorities for 2023/24

- Further work to stabilise the budget in 23-24 and beyond.
- Continue to embed support and development of budget holders and services so that we continually improve the financial management of the authority.
- Get the final set of predecessor accounts signed off by our external auditors.
- Seek to address any anomalies coming out of the pay and grading exercise and the remaining TUPE staff within the directorate.
- Continue to progress the implementation of a new income management system to replace the existing systems. This is a major project.
- Further develop the new approach to risk management and internal audit across the directorate.
- Continue to progress the implementation of a single revenues and benefits system which will drive further efficiencies in the service and provide a better service to residents and businesses.
- Continue to address cultural differences and deal with poor performance where required.
- Automating processes wherever possible – there are basic manual processes being delivered that should be automated.
- Streamlining of contracts wherever possible.
- Improvement in performance levels across the directorate.
- Consideration of an improved asset management system.
- Developing Housing Revenue and Housing Capital reporting.

- Implementation of the revised asset allocation within the pension fund including the transition to sustainable, lower carbon solutions.
- Successfully deliver the continued suite of grants being received to distribute to those most in need including Homes for Ukraine payments, energy rebate payments and Household Support Fund 4.

Looking ahead

Within the next three years we would like to see:

- Greater stability and certainty in the budgets set across the authority given the challenges we have need to address in managing the budget for 2022-23 and setting the budget for 2023-24.
- Greater funding certainty from the Government in respect of issues such as the fair funding review and business rates re-baselining
- Continual improved performance in all services
- Systems and processes fully harmonised and operating with greater efficiency which also delivers a better service to the residents and businesses in the area.
- Timely production of West Northants Councils accounts and unqualified opinions on them.
- Development, nurturing and growing of our internal talent to aid with succession planning. A desire to keep our 'rising stars'.
- Continue to establish West Northants as a place where people want to work because of the culture we are promoting and because of the reputation we are building. Being an employer of choice.

Corporate Services

Portfolio Holder Foreword

Delivering the best, the west way

We are committed to ensuring that West Northants fulfils its vision, making West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive and our residents can live their best life. We are totally committed to providing excellent services to our residents and being totally customer focused and Corporate Services has a key role to play, managing many of the enabler services that make all areas of the Council function well across their front door, workforce and systems.

People are our greatest asset and one of our core priorities is supporting positive culture change, living our core THRIVE values. Over the next three years, we will continue to innovate and transform what we do and how we work, bringing together our collective expertise, seeking out excellence, and learning from others.

As a new public sector organisation, we are fully committed to good governance and ensuring that our statutory functions are discharged in the most efficient and effective ways and that we have open and transparent decision making and robust scrutiny.

We want all our employees, many of whom are residents of West Northants, to bring their very best selves to work, and we also want to be known as an employer

of choice. We are also committed to ensuring that when supporting residents and other stakeholders, we provide the very best customer experience.

Finally we want to ensure that we make it as easy as possible for people to engage and interact with the Council, as well to enable all our employees and elected members to work effectively.

We will continue to ensure that digital solutions and agile ways of working are enabled to ensure the council provides the greatest reach and joined up systems and processes that make a difference to residents.

Cllr Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for HR and Corporate Services



What we do in Corporate Services

Corporate Services enables and supports all other areas of the Council as they strive to deliver the highest standards of service, by providing them with the right governance arrangements, IT infrastructure, human resources and people development, open access routes for customers and members, within a culture of continuous improvement supported by robust transformation skills and tools.

- Customer Experience Strategy 2021- 2024
- People Strategy 2021 – 2025
- Digital Technology and Innovation Strategy 2022-2025
- The emerging Corporate Governance Strategy
- Our Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Plans

The main strategies that set out our key services outcomes:



Our Vision

We will act as the 'disruptive innovators' of the organisation, encouraging and supporting an evidence-based approach, advocating for those we serve, championing resident outcomes, and deploying the most appropriate solutions to current and emerging demand, be they technological innovation or people and culture.

We want Corporate Services to be:

- The productivity and improvement engine for the organisation:
- Responsive and accessible to support directorates to THRIVE.
- Proactively driving the organisation to deliver for our people.

For the Council this means:

- Making it easier to do business with the council and taking an approach that is co-produced by residents and local stakeholders
- Actively improving equality of access through targeted work with communities and those with protected characteristics, to help people to thrive.

For West Northants this means:

- Better meeting resident needs in localities and making it easier for residents to engage with a range of service providers in more seamless ways
- Taking an intelligence-based approach to actively target those who need more support to live their best lives.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Customer Services

Improving the customer experience through our website:

- Continuous development of the website with colleague representation from all hubs, leading to positive change and an enhanced customer journey
- Improved Contact Us page promoting top used pages for each service, and reducing the need for customers to call us.

Disseminating learning throughout the organisation:

- Delivered training to front line staff on Dealing with Difficult Conversations and bespoke, mandatory Customer Services Skills online training, promoting a consistent approach across the organisation
- Rolled out the 'Safer Customer Interactions' scheme, and encouraging colleagues to report potentially dangerous customers through the use of the Accident and Incident Reporting and Investigation procedures, ensuring a consistent approach protecting ourselves and our colleagues
- Rolled out and administering the Staff Alert Register to promote information sharing organisation-wide
- Cross-trained the Executive Support Team on managing Members and MP enquiries, helping reduce avoidable contact and improve response times.

Consolidating resources:

- Improved ability to allocate customer enquiries across the various teams and hubs, to better manage demand (such as Garden Waste subscriptions, Elections and Household Support Fund)
- Three hubs transitioned onto the same Customer Experience Management system (CXM), allowing for more services to be delivered across our full complement of staff and aligning processes for customers

- The Lodge Road hub has embraced access to the revenues system having been trained on direct debits, reprofiling and adding account notes. This has ensured residents have a better standard of service and many were able to take advantage of this during the energy rebate rollout
- Members and MP Enquiries processes consolidated onto CXM system, enabling trends analysis and ability to report centrally - 36% received are responded to by Customer Services, reducing impact on the service areas
- Training of our internal mailbot to identify the service and location and respond to, or prepare a draft response for approval prior to allocating to an advisor: Of 7,741 emails, 1,429 (18.5%) needed no amendments to be made, reducing email handling time by 50%.

Meeting customers where they are:

- The Towcester Hub has completed over 3,000 proactive callouts to residents in council tax arrears and supported revenues with the implementation and rollout of the energy rebate payment
- Drop-in outreach sessions rolled out across multiple locations, building closer working relationships with our partners and library and parish council counterparts in the process (we now have 12 active, regular outreach surgeries which are well-attended, and more to be rolled-out over the coming months)
- Bringing the One Angel Square Reception into Customer Services, implementing processes to include all visits recorded not just planned appointments and the health and safety and wellbeing of staff and visitors.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Emergency Planning

- Coordinated a successful programme of commemorative events for the funeral of the Queen
- Developed accessible and comprehensive guidance for officers and Elected Members to access in case of emergency, specific to different types of incident
- Developed and implemented a robust programme of training for various officer roles (Gold and Silver Command, loggist, Reception Centre Managers and Scene Incident Liaison Officer)
- In collaboration with partners, produced and socialised the Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism Strategy and its accompanying implementation plans
- Designed and rolled-out a consistent approach to business continuity management, supporting colleagues to assess the impact of incidents on their service areas and the mitigating actions to be put in place

HR Services

Resourcing

- Shortlisted for two national in house recruitment awards, design and launch of the new WNC Employer Branding and logo 'Where careers thrive' and procurement, build and launch of our new applicant tracking system - Recruitment Hub (www.jobs.westnorthants.co.uk) enabling:
- A better user experience for candidates
- Enhanced recruitment reach with 8 free jobs board plus LinkedIn, Facebook and Diversity jobs boards, and the Municipal Journal and Local Gov Jobs
- Reduced administration for managers due to the capability of the new Recruitment Hub.

Learning & Development

- Design and launch of 'Our West Welcome' corporate induction event and a separate new managers induction and design of first line manager/team leader training programme and our coaching and mentoring programme
- Phases one and two of the disaggregation of the Learning & Development Service from North Northants Council (NNC) meaning it can now be redesigned to be fit for purpose for WNC and better aligned to our

organisational culture and delivery of our Council priorities

- Re-procurement of the learning management system and system re-build following the disaggregation from NNC associated re-build to enhance user experience with easier to navigate pages and content, including new reporting tool for managers

Pay and Reward:

- Design of our new Job Family Architecture and associated new WNC Local Pay scale, job matching of c550 individual posts
- Completion of negotiation on day one terms and conditions of employment
- Negotiation and implementation of the 2022/23 local pay award

Policy:

- Launch of the Cycle2Work scheme, and the long service and Valuing Individual Performance (V.I.P) process developed, launched and embedded alongside the WNC Behaviour Framework (clarification and communication of our WNC expected behaviours, aligned to our THRIVE values)
- Establishing the diversity baseline through conducting an equality monitoring campaign, encouraging the workforce to disclose their equalities information to inform the future development of the equality, diversity and inclusion strategy
- Design and consultation of worker types carried out, all staff placed into worker types and reportable in ERP. Creation of associated policy/guidance to define the West Way of Working at WNC and associated manager training



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

HR Services

Health, Safety & Wellbeing:

- Development and publication of the WNC wellbeing strategy, informed by workforce feedback and coordination of a wellbeing roadshow and launching our '5 pillars of wellbeing', with supporting material for employees
- On-going training for Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) and the introduction of a £250 annual payment, reflecting the organisational commitment to mental wellbeing
- Re-procurement of key contracts to support employee health and wellbeing, occupational health and employee assist

Payroll Services

- Over 51,000 people paid over all payrolls per month
- 99.9% accuracy rate reported across all main clients (WNC, NNC, CCC, MKC)
- Delivery of payroll services to NCT, Pathfinder and Fire & Rescue with similar accuracy rates

Digital Technology and Innovation

Digital

- New paperless direct debits for garden waste in Feb 23, allowing residents to sign up for auto-renewal and payment: has taken over 3.5m in payments and cut calls to our teams
- New online registrations enabling people to book their weddings and ceremonies, removing a two-year event backlog created during the COVID pandemic
- A new User Experience (UX) function, which measures how staff and customers use our systems and uses data to simplify and streamline them, making them simpler and quicker.
- In-housed popular grassroots Merged Futures, giving backing to this showcase of the best of digital talent within the county.

- Received first place award in the country for accessibility of our council website
- Begun work in unifying our four customer relationship management (CRM) tools, moving us towards a single view of our customers and optimising team working
- We have begun disaggregation of our Digital service with North Northamptonshire Council, which will ultimately allow both councils to focus more clearly on their own sovereign priorities

IT operations:

- Disaggregated from a shared arrangement between former South Northants Council and Cherwell District Council, repatriating services back to our organisation.
- We have migrated all services from one of our data centres in Farnborough, reducing our technology estate footprint and gaining greater operational efficiency.
- Planned and supported migration of all staff and systems from Lodge Road in Daventry to allow us to close the premises: coordinating the moves of hundreds of staff and interdependent systems based at Lodge Road that power our core business.
- Begun work on a new WNC-wide telephony and contact centre system, standardising our contact methods, improving our reporting and analytics, providing for better management of inbound queries and increasing flexibility in location for our staff.
- Started a complete refresh of staff hardware, rolling out new computer devices tailored to the needs of each person's job profile, with the ability for true remote management to allow us to support these out in the field – a must in the era of hybrid working.

Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Digital, Technology and Innovation

Applications

- A new e-recruitment system in September 2022, reducing the time and effort for managers to get job vacancies to market, and improving the process of onboarding new staff.
 - A new internal helpdesk tool in January 2023, allowing WNC staff to raise requests for help from internal services (e.g. Payroll, HR, IT) from anywhere and get access to a system that shows them the progress of their issues.
 - Began work on a new income management system, which will streamline and enhance our banking reconciliation and payment receipting processes.
 - Began work on access to our main ERP system from outside of our corporate network, allowing remote workers to manage their leave, payslips and timesheets from anywhere.
 - Began work on replacement of the main case management system for the Children's Trust (and in the near future, for our internal Adult Social Care teams) to modernise and improve methods of managing cases.
 - Started work on replacement of our main housing and our main revenue and benefits systems.
- Established our internal Technical Design Authority. This body scrutinises all proposals for new systems and technology, applying key principles to tighten, improve and futureproof them and ensure they represent good value for money to the taxpayer.
 - A new Innovation function, which prototypes new technologies partners with the community to make Northamptonshire an attractive place for digital business. Currently running pilots using (VR) to support SEN children, a digital adult care package brokerage and using data to drive insights on preventing fly-tipping.
 - A cyber security function, which develops strong technical defences and human training to systematically combat some of the threats to business continuity that we face from increasingly sophisticated actors (including state-sponsored attacks).
 - The division contributed heavily to a variety of proposals to help reduce expenditure and balance the Council's budget during the cost-of-living crisis, including £1 million of DTI budget reductions and absorbing a further £1m of increased prices through good contract management and a collective effort to find efficiencies.

Governance

- Launched our very first Digital, Technology & Innovation Strategy. Passed by Cabinet in July 2022, it contains twelve key initiatives and sixty-five objectives which, enacted over three years, meet the council's objectives and empowers the council and its residents.
- A new Architecture function, which develops sound technical blueprints for systems, ensures good solution choices that have longevity and represent good value-for-money, and ensures consolidation and cost optimisation of our systems.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Transformation

- Supported the design and delivery of the Corporate Services Target Operating Model Project, a £1m project to realign corporate services to the emerging priorities of the organisation as well as ensuring we operate as a modern and effective support service.
- Initiated the delivery of a Legal Services Review, insourcing our legal provision from an external supplier as well as revising the operating model for our inhouse team. The delivery of a new structure, a new cloud-based IT solution and an internal charging model has allowed the directorate to realise £500k in financial efficiencies.
- Supported the design and delivery of a new Social Value framework with procurement colleagues underlining the organisations commitment to it.
- Project managed the Budget Task Force to work across the organisation on balancing the budget in 2022/23.
- We set up in a short window the Spending Review Panel and associated processes and also the back-office infrastructure to ensure its effectiveness.
- Re-orientated the Transformation Board to focus on priority projects and what matters to the organisation coupled with a revised project management framework.
- Took over from North Northamptonshire the running of the joint governance arrangements around disaggregation and intern authority agreements.
- Managed all DTI projects in delivery from Q2 this year, establishing robust plans and benefits for each project and then onboarding them to provide a more total view of change and bring discipline across all projects.

Democratic Services and Elections

- Building on foundations recognised by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny during their recent review, we have put into practice our learning and the recommendations in order to design a forward-looking overview and scrutiny process focussed on outcomes. Democratic Services now support four overview and scrutiny committees, which seek to align reviews to the Council's priorities, as well as producing outcomes that deliver benefits for communities
- Pursuant to the new requirements of the Elections Act 2022, we undertook a review of polling stations to ensure they are compliant with accessibility, voter identification etc. Work is also underway to ensure voter ID requirements are effectively communicated to the electorate. Team members also worked elections in neighbouring Councils to watch Voter ID in practice and share learning.
- Working with Planning Service and Facilities Management colleagues, we have put in place new governance arrangements for planning committees, building on the recommendations of the Planning Advisory Service peer review and will see planning committees being webcast for the first time from Towcester and Northampton.
- Supported the Council's first review of electoral boundaries, a complex task involving the analysis of a great deal of qualitative data about community identity and links within West Northamptonshire.
- Working with elected members, the team continue to refine and update the Council's Constitution and governance framework through the Democracy and Standards Committee and full Council.



Our performance and achievements 2022/23

Law and Governance

- Creation of the new legal service got off to a strong start with over 60 applicants in the first recruitment drive and only 5 posts within the 35 strong new team left unfilled – a second drive is now under way. Plans are being created to enable the new team to be up and running as soon as possible and work is underway to explore potential income generation opportunities over the next 18 months. The new arrangements are on course to deliver the £0.5m saving as well as providing a comprehensive and responsive service to clients.
- A Governance Group has been established to support effective governance arrangements across the council. Engaging with officers council-wide, it aims to demystify governance and provide access to information to help effectively support good governance as everyone's responsibility.
- The legal team successfully supported regulatory services to prosecute multiple unlawful HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation).
- Ongoing support and guidance is being provided in respect of the Council's Regeneration projects including the Bike Park, Market Square and Four Waterside.
- In relation to Information Governance the number of data breach reports has risen by 20% from 156 in 2021/22 to 191 in 2022/23. However, this is because the team has been effective in raising awareness and therefore the increase is largely due to improvements in reporting/escalating to the Data Protection team rather than an increase in data breaches.
- In addition the team is putting in place a new tool to help reduce data breaches which is likely to be ready to launch late summer to early autumn.
- The records management team have now been recruited to the Council and are beginning to work with our storage provider to identify and destroy out of date files relating to predecessor Councils.
- 2022/23 saw a total of 1670 requests (1252 FOIs 418 EIRs). Of these just 41 responses were challenged and just 8 escalated to the Information Commissioners Office. This means that 97.5% of all requests were responded to positively and satisfactorily.

Registration

- Wedding and other Ceremonies service delivered 1770 new ceremonies and implemented a new online booking process for ceremonies, available to the customer 24/7. This has resulted in no backlog and a more flexible service.
- The Registration Service website has been enhanced with updated content ensuring it meets all accessibility requirements
- The service has re-introduced the customer choice of private citizenship ceremonies and is also introducing a lower cost (simple ceremonies) at Towcester office to support those wishing to marry during the cost-of-living crisis from June 1st 2023.
- The service increased statutory marriage registrations from 4 per week to 6 per week, to meet rising demand and respond to customer need.
- Both Registration and Coroners continue to work closely with the County Medical Examiners for the implementation of the new Statutory Medical Examiner system. The go-live date has been pushed back nationally from April 2023 to April 2024.

Coroners

- Successfully recruited and trained Casual Coroners Officers, for Service resilience
- Worked collaboratively with Northants Police and Fire and Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital and activated The Leys due to the worst winter pressures ever experienced by the NHS
- Added to the Court provision and put in place the necessary digital support to be able to carry out Jury Inquests in The Great Hall, at the Guildhall.
- Worked with the Coroner to recruit three additional Assistant Coroners for the service to address the backlog of Jury Inquests.
- The service has ensured that it has implemented new legislative changes into its working processes across the service.

Our challenges

Data

There have been pressures associated with managing data and information effectively across the Council, reviewing systems and networks and a lot of work continues around cyber security and infrastructure support.

There is a need to ensure that the directorate and the council have high quality and robust processes and data collection and work continues to improve how we manage data and information, being a key priority for 2023/24.

Capacity

There is continued pressure to deliver a wide range of priorities and help to transform the council. This often is centred around bringing in new business systems and new capabilities.

In the past year work has been done to bring together all the key capabilities and governance around programmes and projects. This has led to a central PMO (Programme Management Office) and improved centralised governance of Transformation programmes with sub boards now in place (e.g. Assets Board and DTI Board)

HR

Within the current economic climate there have been pressures on recruiting a number of professions in high demand or where the external market conditions present different options for alternative recruitment for similar wages.

A lot of work has gone on in the past year to improve our recruitment processes with specialist HR recruitment support being in place. The work associated with the new WNC pay and grading work is also key to ensure fair wages and a more stabilised workforce.

Actions taken to manage spend and improve services

There is considerable grip on spend and budgetary pressures with regular review and improvement meetings taking place in the directorate and working with our Finance Business Partners. Work has also been done in advance of the new financial year to review how Corporate Services works as a whole. We have done a lot to better join up our services and make it easier to drive improvements.

Our priorities for 2023/24

- Delivery of our new Target Operating Model for Corporate Services:
 - Connected Customers Programme
 - Connected Enablers Programme
 - Rapid Improvement Analysis
- Delivery of new Target Operating Model for Legal Services
- Delivery of phase 1 of Pay and Grading for WNC
- Delivery of key enabling support activities for Directorates and joined up business support (reactive) (aligned to supporting corporate strategies)
- Delivering improvements in relation to management of scrutiny function following CPS review
- Delivery of Ways of Working and Office Optimisation
- Designing and delivering an improved offer following aggregation and disaggregation of corporate services (digital, learning and development, apprenticeships, ICT review) and managing the IAA process for 23/24
- Review, transform and improve the customer experience for interactions related to Revenues and Benefits, in order to unlock the potential benefits of proactive preventative work with residents
- Develop and embed a consistent and comprehensive front-door offer for Planning services, in order to improve the service's capacity to manage demand and increase resident satisfaction
- Deliver a One Stop Shop, multi-agency offer at The Abbey Centre in Daventry, bringing together Council and VCSE services to best support the residents of the town and surrounding areas
- Deliver a One Stop Shop, multi-agency offer at The Forum in Towcester, bringing together Council and VCSE services, with a specific focus on providing a Family Hub facility
- Simplify and enhance the offer on our website, to include translated information and guidance documents – top 5 spoken languages and Easy Read
- Develop website content which reflects the lived experience of residents, by providing 'packages' of information and advice, rather than addressing isolated queries (Bereavement, Having a baby, Moving into the area etc).
- Consolidate all customer records management onto one system, to allow us to work consistently across all geographical areas and start building the single view of customer approach
- Implement and fully adopt the new technological opportunities offered by the new telephony solution (omni-channel, flexible working, interactive phone lines etc).

Looking ahead

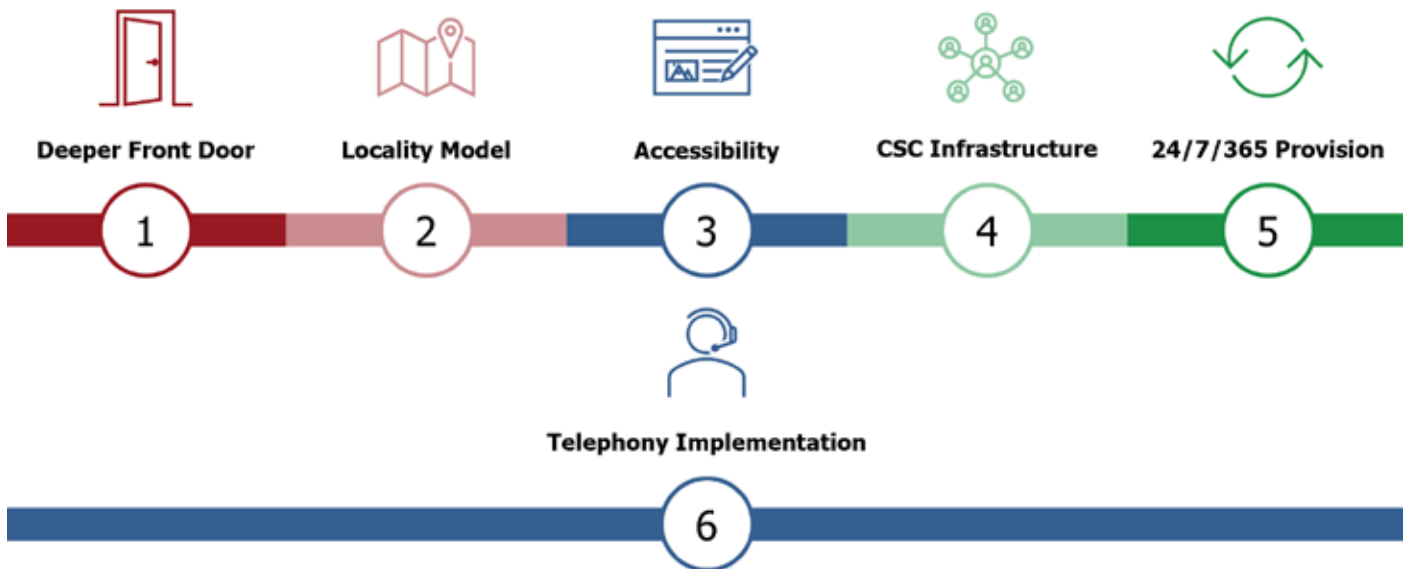
- 2022/23 has been a busy and productive year and the services have delivered immense improvements and have developed core foundations for the organisation and help to develop a truly connected council.
- Moving forwards there is a lot to do to work better with partners and develop a more connected West Northants and support will go into helping to develop the Local Area Partnerships
- The focus ultimately though is on improving outcomes for our residents, improving the customer experience and helping to reduce the inequality gaps that exist.
- Corporate Services will continue to join up our service offerings and help the council services to ensure we maximise technology and innovative practices, have better customer pathways and integrated systems and ensure we govern effectively and help facilitate improvements.

Our Priorities for 2023/24 - Corporate Services

Connected Customers Programme (2023 – 2025)

Aim: To develop a unified front door that enhances resident experience, integrates with partners' processes and systems and delivers value for money, through co-producing seamless services with our people, utilising local insight to fulfil our customers' current and future needs.

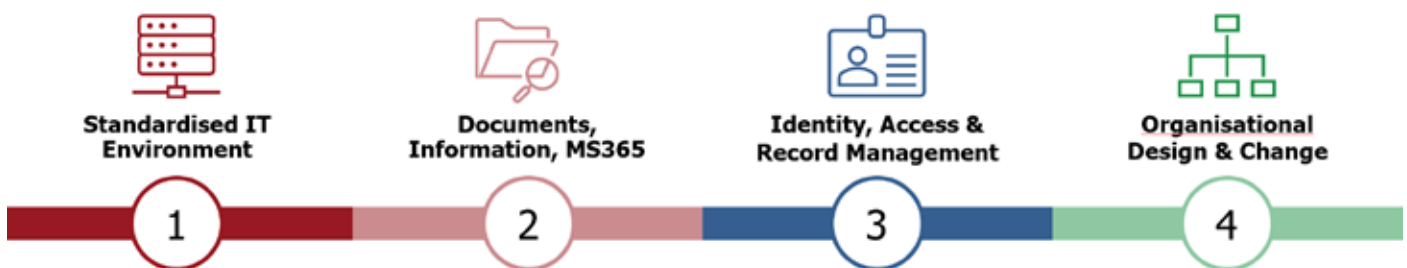
Defined projects for delivery



Connected Enablers Programme (2023 – 2025)

Aim: To cultivate conditions that enable productivity, collaboration and capability through connecting structures, practices, people and tools to achieve our organisations priorities.

Defined projects for delivery



Projects already in-flight



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Members of the public are welcome to attend any of the council's public meetings, including Council, Cabinet, Planning Committees and Scrutiny Committees.

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Democracy and Standards Committee 29 June 2023

Report Title	Updates to the Constitution
Report Author	Catherine Whitehead catherine.whitehead@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	15/06/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	02/06/2023
Communications	Becky Hutson	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft revised Constitution (available on request from democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable Council to consider the recommendations made by the Democracy and Standards Committee in relation to proposed updates to the Constitution in relation to the structure and operation of the Council's Planning Committees.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Constitution for West Northamptonshire Council was formally adopted by the West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority prior to vesting day (1 April 2021). A major review of the Constitution was then undertaken by the Democracy and Standards Committee in the autumn of 2021, reporting to Council in December 2021. Since that time, the Democracy and Standards Committee has considered several suggested changes to the Constitution and has made recommendations to Council accordingly.
- 2.2 Further suggested amendments are summarised in section 5 below. These changes have generally been made to address issues that have been identified with the operation of the Constitution or to ensure the Constitution is up-to-date, for example by reflecting changes to legislation or statutory guidance.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Council:
- a) Notes and approves the updates to the Constitution as set out in Section 5; and
 - b) Delegates to the Monitoring Officer the power to make these amendments and any consequential amendments that may be necessary.

4. Reason for Recommendations

Keeping the Constitution under regular review will help ensure that it is legally compliant, complete, reflects the character and culture of the authority and supports effective and efficient decision making.

5. Report Background

Authority to Consult

- 5.1 The Constitution provides for members of the Cabinet to be consulted on whether decisions that are ordinarily taken by officers should be referred to Cabinet.
- 5.2 Where consultations are undertaken by the Council, they are generally considered to be part of the preparatory work that may lead to a formal decision once the outcome of the consultation has been taken into account. Formal approval to commence consultation is not always necessary, save for some exceptions such as consultation on Policy Framework items, which requires approval by the Cabinet.
- 5.3 Nevertheless, it is recognised that consultation on an issue can attract considerable public interest. Proper consideration of the implications of launching a consultation should therefore be taken into account prior to commencement. It is proposed to make the following change to the Constitution:

Section 9 (Officers), 9.2 (Scheme of Delegation to Officers), Paragraph 4:

1. Portfolio holders for the relevant area should be consulted on the exercise of a delegated power in all cases where:
 - (a) there is likely to be opposition from members of the public;
 - (b) where there are political sensitivities;
 - (c) there is likely to be media (including social media) interest; or
 - (d) expenditure is unusual for the Budget area;

(e) a consultation concerning a decision that is likely to result in any of the criteria set out in (a) to (d) above being met is planned.

2. Before exercising any delegated power, officers must consider whether to consult with the relevant portfolio holder on the exercise of delegated powers or not to exercise delegated powers but to refer the matter to the relevant member or member body to decide.

Planning Protocol

- 5.4 Technology the Council has in place enables remote participation at certain committee meetings. The Democracy and Standards Committee debated this issue in relation to speakers at planning committees and resolved to recommend that the Planning Protocol be updated to reflect the ability of speakers as set out in Section 8.6 of the protocol (the appellant or the agent, objectors and supporters, the ward councillor(s), MPs and parish council representatives) to participate remotely.
- 5.5 The Committee were mindful of the risks of technological failure and the need to balance those risks against the need to make decisions in a timely and correct manner to reduce the risk of challenge. The committee resolved that safeguards should be put in place so there is a clear process to be followed in such instances.
- 5.6 The Committee recommended the following changes to the Planning Protocol (*new text in italics*):

1.3 Arrangements for Speaking

It is necessary to register with Democratic Services as soon as possible and in any event not later than midday on the last working day before the Committee. This applies to all speakers, with the exception of Ward Councillors. Speakers are required to indicate whether they will be speaking against or in support of an application.

Speakers referred to in paragraph 1.1 of this protocol may request to address the meeting via video link where such facilities are available. Should a speaker be unable to address the committee via video link for any reason, including a failure of technology, then in accordance with section 2.2 of this protocol consideration of the application will not be delayed. It is therefore recommended that such speakers submit a written statement to Democratic Services no later than 24 hours before the start of the meeting. Any statements received will be read out by the Democratic Services Officer at the invitation of the Chair.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The issues and choices insofar as they relate to the operation of the Constitution are set out in section 5 above.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no financial implications arising directly as a result of the Constitution review process.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 Every local authority is under a legal duty to prepare and keep up to date its Constitution (see Appendix B). In particular, section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 requires the Constitution to contain:

- a) a copy of the authority's standing orders;
- b) a copy of the authority's code of conduct;
- c) such information as the Secretary of State may direct; and
- d) such other information (if any) as the authority considers appropriate.

7.2.2 Regular review of the Constitution helps to ensure these legal requirements are met. The amendment set out above will assist in ensuring the Council is able to operate in a lawful manner.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from this report. Reviewing the Constitution helps to reduce any risks that could arise as a result of the Constitution not properly supporting decision making and delivery of Council services.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 Consultation will be undertaken with this committee prior to recommendations being submitted to Council.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Not applicable to this report.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There is no climate impact to consider in relation to the recommendation.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 None specific.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

29th June 2023

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for HR and Corporate Services: Councillor Mike Hallam

Report Title	Changes to Political Balance and Committee Places
Report Author	Paul Hanson, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services paul.hanson@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	15/06/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	15/06/2023
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	12/06/2023

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report invites the Council to review the changes to the political balance of the Council and approve changes to the membership of committees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- a. Notes the change to the distribution of seats held by political groups on the Council and determines the allocation of seats on committees to the groups as listed in Section 4

- b. Appoints members to the committees listed in Section 5 below to give effect to the wishes expressed by the political groups to which the seats have been allocated.

3. Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is required to review the allocation of committee seats when there is a change to the political balance of the Council. The Council is also responsible for appointing members to committees to give effect to such changes.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 At its annual meeting on 18 May 2023, the Council confirmed the political balance of the Council and the allocation of seats on committees between Political Groups. Since that meeting, the number of seats held by the Conservative Group has reduced from 65 to 64. The member in question has now joined the independent group on the Council, increasing its membership to 3.
- 4.2 In order to maintain the correct political balance, this change has necessitated a recalculation of the allocation of places on the Council's committees. The allocation of seats between the committees is now as follows:

Committee	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Independent Group	Un-grouped Independent	Total
Alcohol & Gambling Licensing Committee*	10 (was 11)	3	1	1 (was 0)	0	15
Taxi & General Licensing Committee*	10 (was 11)	3	1	1 (was 0)	0	15
Strategic Planning Committee	9	3	1	0	0	13
Planning Committee (North)	8	2	1	0	0	11
Planning Committee (South)	8	2	0	1	0	11
ASC & Health Scrutiny Committee	7	3	0	0	1	11
Corporate Scrutiny Committee	7	2	1	1	0	11
Children's Scrutiny Committee	8	2	1	0	0	11
Place Scrutiny Committee	8	2	0	1	0	11

Senior Appointments	5	2	0	0	0	7
Audit and Governance	6	2	1	0	0	9
Democracy and Standards	6	2	1	0	0	9
Pensions Committee	5	2	0	0	0	7
Total	97	30	8	5	1	141

4.3 In order to maintain the overall balance on the Council it is proposed to allocate seats on the Alcohol and Gambling and Taxi and General Licensing Committees to the independent group. The exact allocation to the Conservative Group on these committee has reduced from 10.5 seats to 10.3 each, necessitating the change. The Conservative Group have advised that Councillor Jake Roberts will be replaced by a member of the Independent Group with immediate effect.

4.4 Groups have also provided notice of the following changes to committee, which are included with this report for reference.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dermot Bambridge has stepped down from this Committee. He will be replaced by Councillor Jake Roberts. Councillor Alison Eastwood will become vice-chair.

Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Daniel Cribbin has stepped down from this Committee. He will be replaced by Councillor Brian Sargeant.

Local Pension Board

Councillor Ken Pritchard has stepped down from this Committee. He will be replaced by Councillor Gregg Lunn.

5. Issues and Choices

5.1 Once the Council becomes aware of a change that affects the allocation of committee seats to political groups, it must review the allocation at the next available opportunity.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

6.1.1 There are no resources or financial implications arising from the proposals.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 The Council has obligations under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and its associated regulations to review the representation of political groups and determine the allocations of seats. This was last completed at the meeting of Annual Council on 18 May 2023. Since then, further changes have occurred that impact on the membership of political groups, requiring a further review to be undertaken.

6.3 **Risk**

6.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.'

6.4 **Consultation and Communications**

6.4.1 There are no implications arising from the proposals.

6.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

6.5.1 None. The allocation of seats to political groups is a matter that only the full Council may determine.

6.6 **Climate Impact**

6.6.1 None.

6.7 **Community Impact**

6.7.1 None.

7. **Background Papers**

7.1 None.



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

29 June 2022

Cabinet Member for HR & Corporate Services: Councillor Mike Hallam

Report Title	Chief Officer Fixed Term Appointment and Remuneration
Report Author	Sarah Reed sarah.reed@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	15/06/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer)	Martin Henry	15/06/2023
Other Director/SME	Stuart Lackenby	15/06/2023
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	15/06/2023

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Council's Pay Policy Statement is produced in accordance with the requirements of Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and covers Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer roles.
- 1.2 Where any appointment, including an interim agency appointment, proposes a remuneration package that could exceed £100,000, approval will be sought from Full Council.
- 1.3 This report seeks approval for a proposed remuneration package in excess of £100,00 for nine Tier 3 Assistant Directors (WNC Local terms) and one Strategic Manager (on TUPE pay, terms and conditions), as a result of agreement of the 2023/24 Local Pay Award.

1.4 This report also seeks approval for the appointment of an interim Director of Children's Services (DCS) for a fixed term duration, with a proposed remuneration package in excess of £100,000.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 extends to a requirement to publish the salaries of senior officials, to support the aim of helping local residents better understand how public money is spent in their area. The Council's Pay Policy Statement requires approval by Full Council for any remuneration package over £100,000.
- 2.2 The Council has a number of roles at Assistant Director level, known as Tier 3. These roles report directly into Executive Directors (Statutory Chief Officers or Non-Statutory Chief Officers) and are responsible for the development and implementation of strategy relating to services. The posts carry very significant responsibilities for finance and a range of other non-financial assets and job holders will make autonomous decisions and lead the management of change throughout their Service areas.
- 2.3 In respect of remuneration in 2023/24, the Council will be:
- implementing the WNC Local Pay scale from June 2023, backdated to April 2023 (the Pay & Grading project),
 - implementing the Local Pay Award in July (backdated to 1 April), following completion of negotiations with the Council's recognised Trade Unions in late May 2023.
- 2.4 As a result of the above pay decisions and the individuals current assigned scale points in the pay structure, a number of individuals' remuneration will now meet the £100,000 category as set out in the pay policy, therefore requiring approval by Full Council. These are summarised in section 5.4 and remuneration for these roles will be £101,927 per annum.
- 2.5 In addition, the Council must ensure there is a single officer responsible for education and children's social care and appoint a Director of Children's Services (DCS). This designation is currently held by Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive, which means both key statutory roles of Director of Children's Services (DCS) & Director of Adults Services (DASS) sit under one Executive Director.
- 2.6 Due to the ongoing improvement journey of the Children's Trust, the additional and wide-ranging governance roles associated with Children's, the key work we are doing across Education and the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) strategy, and delivering the equal corporate priority of wider people services, and key strategy around Anti-Poverty and Local Area Partnerships, maintaining a shared DCS/DASS role is challenging.
- 2.7 As a result, the Head of Paid Service has proposed that WNC temporarily 'act up' a current Assistant Director to the role of interim full time DCS with effect from 1 June 2023, which does not create a substantial additional cost for the council as the substantive role would not be backfilled.
- 2.8 It is further proposed that the appointment to the role of interim DCS is made on a fixed term basis to 31st March 2024.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) approves the proposed remuneration over £100,00 for the listed Assistant Directors/Strategic Manager.
- b) approves the proposed fixed term appointment of the DCS and remuneration over £100,000.

4. Reason for Recommendations

4.1 To comply with the requirements of the Council's pay policy and national guidance.

4.2 To ensure that the appropriate level of pay is set for the fixed term DCS role.

5. Report Background

5.1 It is a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for the Authority to approve and publish a Pay Policy Statement.

5.2 The Localism Act aims to increase transparency in local government. This includes a requirement that local authority pay policy is openly approved by democratically elected councillors.

5.3 This extends to a requirement to publish the salaries of senior officials, to support the aim of helping residents better understand how public money is spent in their area. The Policy Statement requires approval by Full Council for any remuneration package over £100,000.

5.4 As a result of the pay decisions outlined in section 2.3, and the individuals current assigned scale points in the pay structure, a number of individuals remuneration will now meet the £100,000 category as set out in the pay policy, and these are:

- Assistant Chief Executive
- Assistant Director of HR
- Assistant Director Commissioning & Partnerships
- Assistant Director Education
- Assistant Director Finance and Strategy
- Assistant Director Finance and Accountancy
- Assistant Director Place Development
- Assistant Director Discharge to Assess Services
- Assistant Director Safeguarding and Wellbeing
- Head of Enterprise Applications (NCC TUPE)

5.5 Remuneration for these roles will be £101,927 per annum.

- 5.6 The Council must also ensure there is a single officer responsible for education and children's social care and appoint a Director of Children's Services (DCS). This designation is currently held by Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive, which means both key statutory roles of Director of Children's Services (DCS) & Director of Adults Services (DASS) sit under one Executive Director.
- 5.7 It is recognised that the ongoing improvement journey of the Children's Trust, the additional and wide-ranging governance roles associated Children's and concerns over the Financial stability of the Children's Trust, require an increasing amount of time and attention. This is also in addition to key work we are doing across Education and the SEND strategy.
- 5.8 Given this, and the equal corporate priority of wider people services including Adults Social Care, Public Health and key strategies around Anti-Poverty and Local Area Partnerships, maintaining a shared DCS/DASS role is challenge. As a result, the Head of Paid Service has proposed that WNC temporarily 'act up' a current Assistant Director to the role of interim full time DCS with effect from 1 June 2023, which does not create a substantial additional cost for the council as the substantive role would not be backfilled.
- 5.9 It is further proposed that the appointment to the role of interim DCS is made on a fixed term basis to 31st March 2024. Following job matching to the new WNC local payscale, the salary for the Interim Director of Children's Services has been set at Band 14, £118,243 – 121,047 which is consistent with other Director of Statutory Services.
- 5.10 Doing this will ensure there is a full-time focus of resource at this key statutory and strategic level on some of the biggest areas of focus, challenge and ambition. By using a fixed term approach, it will also allow the council to assess the benefits of doing this and assess whether a return to a permanent single DCS best supports the Council's plans and children's positive outcomes.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The recommendation to appoint to the proposed level of remuneration for Assistant Directors is in line with the Council's pay and grading outcomes.
- 6.2 In relation to the DCS fixed term appointment, the alternative available is to retain the current arrangements in relation to the DCS. However, given the significant nature of the Children's Service it is proposed that a dedicated DCS is the right step to take to deliver effective Children's Services.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There is provision within the service budgets to meet the cost of these roles and there are no additional funding requirements.

7.2 Legal

The requirements of the Localism Act 2011 and associated guidance are set out in paragraph 5 of the report. There are no legal implications arising from the appointment as the Council will continue to provide statutory functions associated with the DCS role.

7.3 Risk

There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

Consultation has been undertaken with Cabinet in accordance with the Executive arrangements regulations which require such consultation.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

This report has not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There is no climate impact to consider in relation to the recommendation.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 There is no specific community impact in relation to this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1 None

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL

29 June 2023

Report Title	Integrated Care Northamptonshire Outcomes Framework
Report Author	Rhosyn Harris, Public Health Consultant, Rhosyn.harris@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	21/06/2023
Chief Finance Officer	Martin Henry	21/06/2023
Other Director/SME	Stuart Lackenby	20/06/2023

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update members on the process undertaken to prioritise metrics for the Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN) Outcomes Framework, and the resulting agreed metrics.
- 1.2. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) guidance on developing integrated care partnerships notes the importance of ..."agreement by all actors within the integrated care system on priority outcomes, based on the needs identified in the joint strategic needs assessments"

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Key to ensuring that the Integrated Care Northamptonshire partnership moves forward towards its stated ambitions will be agreement of measures with available baselines from which to measure progress.

- 2.2 Using a prioritisation process overseen by the Strategy Development Board (with membership from the constituent partners of Integrated Care Northamptonshire) a proposed Outcomes Framework has been developed.
- 2.3 The proposed framework includes 15 priority metrics across the ten ambitions of the Integrated Care Strategy.
- 2.4 We also present recommendations for areas of data development where existing metrics do not adequately capture health and wellbeing outcomes, for particular groups, in a meaningful way.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that members:
 - 1.3. Note the priority metrics agreed by Integrated Care Northamptonshire as part of its initial Outcomes Framework.
 - 1.4. Note the multi-agency process undertaken to prioritise metrics for the Outcomes Framework.

4. Reason for Recommendations

To ensure that members are updated on the process undertaken to prioritise metrics for the Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN) Outcomes Framework.

5. Report Background

Legislative Background

- 5.1 The Health and Care Act 2022 established Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and required that all upper-tier local authorities that fall within the footprint of the ICB must establish an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).
- 5.2 The Act required integrated care partnerships to write an integrated care strategy to set out how the assessed needs (from the joint strategic needs assessment) can be met through the exercise of the functions of the integrated care board, partner local authorities or NHS England (NHSE).

National Guidance

- 5.3 Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Guidance on the preparation of integrated care strategies published in July 2022 states that:

“Agreement by all actors within the integrated care system on priority outcomes, based on the needs identified in the joint strategic needs assessments, is a powerful way for the integrated care strategy to bring focus to the system, galvanising joint working and driving progress on the most important outcomes for the local population.

We expect this to be an important aspect of all integrated care strategies, which

can also play an important role in supporting the setting of joint goals for local areas.”

Local Governance

- 5.4 In advance of Northamptonshire partners formally meeting as a new Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) a multi-agency Strategy Development Board (SDB) was established, with membership from the constituent organisations, to develop the Integrated Care Strategy.
- 5.5 Core to the emerging Integrated Care Strategy were its ten ambitions (Table 1) and associated 22 outcomes. For the partnership to be able to measure its progress on delivering these outcomes, however, specific metrics would need to be agreed as part of an outcome framework.
- 5.6 The SDB has had oversight of the development of the outcome framework throughout with, crucially, input from the ICB, both North and West Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs), and the ICP (in its inaugural meeting in December 2022) to guide development.

Process

- 5.7 The outcomes framework began as a longlist, developed by the public health team, of nearly 80 metrics that each measured an aspect of the strategy’s outcomes.
- 5.8 Through compiling this longlist and sharing/engaging with key stakeholders it became clear that:
 - 5.8.1 The ten ambitions were comprehensive in their scope and therefore the list of potential corresponding metrics countless, therefore, there would need to be a prioritisation exercise to identify specific areas of work and metrics for the partnership to focus on in its first years.
 - 5.8.2 Three ambitions sat more in the sphere of influence of the ICB, and the remaining seven – focused on the wider determinants of health – sat more in the sphere of influence of the HWBs, therefore, these constituent partners of ICN should ‘own’ their respective ambitions.
 - 5.8.3 Existing metrics, though in some cases valid and useful, in other cases represent data that are routinely collected rather than measures that really matter in terms of health outcomes for the population, therefore, the outcomes framework would need to be complemented by a programme of data development.
- 5.9 Based on these findings, two prioritisation exercises took place using the same methodology, focusing on prioritising metrics for the ICB-led and HWB-led ambitions respectively. The process involved a workshop-style exercise in which senior leaders considered data for Northamptonshire across a broad range of metrics for each ambition and used defined prioritisation criteria or “tests” to select priorities.

5.10 The prioritisation criteria applied included:

1. There is an identified need at a county level (Northamptonshire benchmarks poorly compared with its peers)
2. Both North and West of the county recognise a need (this is not a specific need in one “Place”)
3. Focusing on this metric area will have an impact on shifting the population health curve
4. Focusing on this metric will have a significant impact on reducing health inequalities
5. There will be real value added from the Partnership working together on this
6. This is an issue amenable to local action

Results

5.11 The prioritisation exercise has identified 15 priority metrics (Table 1 below) for the partnership to focus on across nine of the ten ambition areas with the tenth ambition area having a qualitative feedback focus.

Table 1. Proposed Initial ICN Outcomes Framework - Strategy Ambitions and Priority Metrics

AMBITION	AVAILABLE SYSTEM PRIORITY METRICS
Best start in life	% Children achieving good level of development at age 2-3
Access to the best available education and learning	Gap in Attainment Level 8 for pupils who are Looked After or eligible for Free School Meals
Opportunity to be fit, well and independent	% Adults current smokers (Adult Population Survey) % Adults classified as overweight or obese Adolescent self-reported wellbeing (Schools Health Education Unit Survey) Standardised rate of emergency admissions due to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty	Gap in employment for those in touch with secondary mental health services
Housing that is affordable, safe and sustainable in places which are clean and green	Number of households owed a prevention duty under Homelessness Reduction Act
To feel safe in their homes and when out and about	Number of re-referrals to the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) for children experiencing domestic abuse

Connected to their families and friends	% Adult social care users who have as much social contact as they would like
The chance for a fresh start, when things go wrong	Number of emergency hospital admissions for those of no fixed abode
Access to health and social care when they need it	% Cancer diagnosed at stage1/2 % of people discharged from hospital to their usual place of residence Rate of ED attendances for falls in those aged 65+ % Eligible Looked After Children and Adults with a Learning Disability or Serious Mental illness (SMI) receiving an annual health check
To be accepted and valued Simply for who they are	Qualitative feedback as part of community engagement exercises

5.12 Alongside the existing metrics identified, we also identified areas for which there were metrics that don't allow us to understand health outcomes for residents as well as we would like and therefore data development areas have been proposed (Table 2 below).

Table 2. Suggestions for areas of required data development

AMBITION	DATA DEVELOPMENT SUGGESTIONS
Access to the best available education and learning	<i>Need to better explore wellbeing in school aged children Need to better measure quality of education and outcomes for SEND pupils</i>
Housing that is affordable, safe and sustainable in places which are clean and green	<i>Need to explore available data on quality of homes and exposure to cold/damp/mould conditions</i>
To feel safe in their homes and when out and about	<i>Need to look at data linkages with NARP/Police observatory to track outcomes for CYP experiencing ACEs</i>
Connected to their families and friends	<i>Need to look at data collection for socially excluded groups and opportunity for data linkages to start tracking outcomes (CORE20PLUS5 link)</i>
The chance for a fresh start, when things go wrong	<i>As above, need to explore more connected data systems to understand outcomes for people with experience of rough sleeping/criminal justice</i>

5.13 The format of reporting of the outcomes framework and supporting documentation including relevant activity performance indicators will be developed with the support of the public health team, in conjunction with performance leads from constituent partners in the next phase of work.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 The issues and choices faced in developing the outcomes framework included prioritising metrics for the Integrated Care Partnership as detailed above.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 While there are no direct resource or financial implications arising from this paper, the purpose of the outcomes framework is to support all system partners to prioritise their spend to maximise population health outcomes.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 While the public have not formally been consulted on this first version of the ICN Outcomes Framework, part of the prioritisation process involved testing out emerging priority themes against the findings of community LAP discussions and stakeholder engagement findings.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 Scrutiny have not been involved in discussions around the ICN Outcomes Framework to date.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 One of the “Live Your Best Life” ambitions is to have “housing that is affordable, safe and sustainable in places which are clean and green”. While the prioritised system metric for this ambition focuses specifically on housing rather than climate, given both West and North Northamptonshire councils’ carbon commitments we expect many other areas of action to contribute to the achievement of this ambition.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 The Health and Care Act 2022 requires Integrated Care Partnerships to positively impact the health and wellbeing of local communities

7.7.2 The approach outlined in the strategy ensures that the issues and inequalities relevant to Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) are the focus of how services work with local communities to improve outcomes as set out in the outcomes framework.

8. Background Papers

8.1 [Guidance on the preparation of integrated care strategies \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

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