



Cabinet

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held at the Council Chamber, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 12 March 2024 at 6.00 pm

Agenda

Public Session	
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 (Pages 5 - 16) To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 13 th February 2024
4.	Chair's Announcements To receive communications from the Chair.
5.	Urgent Business The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.
6.	Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Review of the VOI E-Scooter Trial (Pages 17 - 66)
7.	Corporate Plan – Quarterly Performance Report (Pages 67 - 100)
8.	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-27 (Pages 101 - 136)

9.	WNC Communications & Engagement Strategy 2024-27 (Pages 137 - 164)
10.	The Establishment of West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum (Pages 165 - 174)
11.	Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register (Pages 175 - 206)

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
4 March 2024

Cabinet Members:

Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)

Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Fiona Baker

Councillor Rebecca Breese

Councillor Matt Golby

Councillor Mike Hallam

Councillor Phil Larratt

Councillor Daniel Lister

Councillor Malcolm Longley

Councillor David Smith

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.

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NN1 1DE

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Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at Council Chamber, The Forum, Moat Lane, Towcester, NN12 6AD on Tuesday 13 February 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Chair)
 Councillor Adam Brown (Vice-Chair)
 Councillor Fiona Baker
 Councillor Rebecca Breese
 Councillor Matt Golby
 Councillor Mike Hallam
 Councillor Phil Larratt
 Councillor Daniel Lister
 Councillor Malcolm Longley
 Councillor David Smith

Also Present:

Councillor Sally Beardsworth
 Councillor Ian McCord
 Councillor Kevin Parker
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor Bob Purser
 Councillor Wendy Randall

Officers:

Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive
 Rebecca Purnell, Assistant Chief Executive
 Paul Hanson, Democratic Services and Elections Manager
 Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
 Sofia Neal-Gonzalez, Democratic Services Officer (minutes)
 Jane Carr, Director of Communities & Opportunities
 Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director - People Services & Deputy Chief Executive
 Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
 Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place, Economy and Environment
 Josh West, Political Assistant to the Labour Group

113. **Apologies**

None

114. **Declarations of Interest**

None

115. **Minutes**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting of 16th January 2024 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

116. **Chair's Announcements**

None

117. **Urgent Business**

None

118. **Report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the draft Budget 2024/2025 and Medium Term Financial Plan - General Fund Revenue and Capital**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Ian McCord, Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report. Thanks were given to members of the committee and all those who participated in the breakout sessions. The Chair felt that good work had been done. The committee had made a conscious decision to not look into the Children's Trust this time but would revisit it in the future once the various interventions that were in place had taken effect. There was a great deal of discussion about the overspend on temporary housing in relation to rough sleepers. The committee would like Cabinet to consider further innovative works regarding housing to help with future expenditure. The drastic increase in fees from external auditors was also discussed. The committee asks that Cabinet reviews the council tax hardship fund to ensure that those most at risk are given the help they need. It was requested that Cabinet looked for a long-term solution for investment in roads and their maintenance.

119. **2024-25 Final Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that the report had already been through scrutiny. It was advised that WNC had no control over the Children's Trust Budget, but it could support and guide the trust.

Councillors made the following comments.

- The household support fund was welcomed.
- A long-term budget was needed from central Government.
- It was noted that a shift towards prevention was needed.
- The cut to the highways budget would lead to the further deterioration of roads

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- a) Approved the 2024-25 Budget for West Northamptonshire set out in this report, and recommends the Budget to the Full Council meeting on 22 February 2024, including;
 - i. an estimated net revenue budget of £889.5m (£414.5m excluding Dedicated Schools Grant) as set out in Appendix A.
 - ii. an average Band D Council Tax of £1,778.25 for West Northamptonshire Council, which represents an average increase of 4.99% (2.99% increase in 'core' Council Tax and 2% Adult Social Care Precept).
 - iii. Fees and Charges as detailed in Appendix D.
 - iv. Dedicated Schools Grant budget of £475m as detailed in Section 7 and Appendix E.
 - v. Capital Strategy additions as set out in Appendix F1 and F2.
 - vi. the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy set out in Appendix G.
 - vii. the Treasury Management Strategy set out in Appendix J.
 - viii. setting the authorised limits for borrowing as set out in Appendix F1 section 8.13 and 8.14.
- b) Noted the final tax base for West Northamptonshire at 142,664.60 Band D equivalent properties, as set out in paragraph 5.91.
- c) Would recommend the following to Full Council on 22 February 2024, to ensure that the revenue and capital budget and all associated financial policies can be delivered from 1 April 2024 and also to ensure there is flexibility to manage the overall budget in the year:
 - i. Delegated authority to the Executive Director - Finance to manage any variation in budget prior to the start of 2024-25 as a result of final confirmation of the local government finance settlement, or as a result of unforeseen commitments; in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance.
 - ii. Delegated authority to the Executive Director - Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2024-25 going forward so that it accurately reflects issues such as slippage on current year projects that will need to be added to the programme, any amendments made to existing capital programmes, adjustments to accommodate any future use of capital receipts policy and for any other reason where the Capital Programme needs to be adjusted.
 - iii. Noted the use of reserves as summarised in the table contained at paragraph 5.103
 - iv. Delegated authority to the Executive Director - Finance to employ earmarked reserves for the purposes they were set up for including the release of the risk reserve if required.
 - v. Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for finance to release the general contingency fund of £10.0m if required in the year.
 - vi. Noted the Executive Director – Finance has delegated authority to amend fees and charges.
- d) For the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):
 - i. Noted the provisional allocations and planned usage of the DSG for 2024-25 pending the final DSG settlement.
 - ii. Following consultation with the Schools' Forum, delegated authority to the Executive Director for Children's Services to determine the DSG 2024-25

- schools funding formula, high needs funding arrangements and the Early Years Funding Formula in line with Department for Education guidance.
- e) Considered the Section 25 statement of the Chief Finance Officer detailed in section 8 of the report.
 - f) Noted the consultation feedback on the budget in Appendix H.
 - g) Noted the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Appendix I.
 - h) Agreed a further recommendation to Council to 'top up' the Council Tax hardship fund by £150,000 to be funded from one-off earmarked reserves at the discretion of the Executive Director – Finance.
 - i) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance to take the necessary steps to introduce the new premiums on long term empty properties and second homes at the earliest opportunity as set out in paragraphs 5.94 to 5.96.

120. **Housing Revenue Account Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Adam Brown noted that most of the rent increase would be covered by housing benefit and that the council was working hard with NPH (Northamptonshire Partnership Homes) on its own hardship fund.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was noted that the way that universal credit works almost guarantees that some renters would end up in arrears.
- The importance of social housing and not affordable housing was mentioned to cater for those residents in the lower earning bracket.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet recommended Council to approve: -

- a) The HRA revenue budget for 2024-25 of £65.49m.
- b) An average maximum rent increase of 7.7% per dwelling, in line with the legislation and the government's amended national rent standard, to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- c) An average maximum increase of 7.7% in garage rents and commuter surcharges to take effect from 1 April 2024.
- d) An average increase of 7.7% in tenants and leaseholders service charges with effect from 1 April 2024.
- e) The HRA capital programme for 2024-25, noting the future year estimated commitments, and proposed sources of finance.
- f) The total management fee of £34.9m for NPH to deliver the HRA services in scope for 2024- 25.
- g) The setting of the working balance at £6m, with the assessed minimum level of £5m informed by the outcome of the latest financial risk assessment.
- h) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance to transfer monies to/from earmarked reserves and the working balance, should that become necessary during the financial year.
- i) That authority be given to the Executive Director of Finance to update the prudential indicators in the Treasury Management Strategy reported to Council.

- j) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to amend the capital programme for 2024-25 going forward so that it accurately reflects issues such as slippage on current year projects that will need to be added to the programme, any amendments made to existing capital programmes, adjustments to accommodate any future use of capital receipts policy, and for any other reason where the capital programme needs to be adjusted.
- k) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Finance to make any technical changes necessary to the papers for the Council meeting of 22 February 2024.

121. **Revenue Monitoring Period 9 - Financial Year 2023-24**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that it had been a challenging period.

The Chair noted that the significance of the Children's Trust budget.

The Chief Executive advised that there were currently 32 projects running within the Children's Trust and that a lot of work was being done on this issue. Councillors were advised that more briefings on this would take place.

Councillor Fiona Baker advised that the goal was to have WNC-owned children's homes and that some of the homes proposed in the past not happened due to objections from councillors.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried whether the Council had realistic expectations with regards the Children's Trust expenditure.
- There had been extra pressure on temporary accommodations due to flooding at Billing Aquadrome.
- Overspend in museums was mentioned in the report, did museums not receive discretionary relief?
- It was queried why there were so many back-dated invoices, and why they were not being raised when needed.

Councillor Malcolm Longley advised councillors to email him any questions.

Councillor Fiona Baker noted that the overspend within higher needs is due to the increase in demand for spaces.

In his capacity as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee Councillor Ian McCord asked that the responses to any of the questions submitted by councillors be shared amongst all councillors.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet;

- a) Noted the forecast outturn position for 2023-24 and associated risks.
- b) Noted the deliverability assessment of West Northamptonshire Council savings requirement for 2023-24 summarised in section 7 and detailed in Appendix B

- c) Noted the Treasury Management update in appendix C
- d) Delegated authority to the Executive Director – Finance in consultation with the portfolio holder for finance to apply any budget virements required to effectively manage the overall budget.

REASONS RESOLVED:

To update members on the financial position of the Council and ensure that the Authority complies with its financial regulations.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

None

122. Period 9 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report 2023-24

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

A councillor noted that a sustainable long-term solution for flood resilience was needed.

The Executive Director Place & Economy advised that WNC would not seek to budget flooding until solutions had come forward, central government support would be needed.

RESOLVED: Cabinet:

- a) Approved the proposed budget reprofiling outlined in section 6 and detailed in Appendix B.
- b) Noted the latest capital monitoring position for the General Fund and HRA.
- c) Noted the new capital schemes and changes to the Capital Programme since the report that was considered by Cabinet in December 2023.

123. Provision of an Environmental Enforcement Contract to supplement the work of the Environmental Crime team

At the Chair's invitation Councillor David Smith presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that there had been extensive communication with the public.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It was queried why the Council was outsourcing, could this not be dealt with in-house?
- The current level of fines given out was low.
- It was queried whether the parish and town councils had been engaged in discussions about this.
- Could the schedule be shared with councillors?

Councillor Phil Larratt advised that the scheme was part of an old NBC one. It was recognised that the wardens did not have the time to deal with smaller infringements such as littering and were often busy with larger issues like as fly tipping. To bring the service in-house would be expensive.

Councillor David Smith confirmed that the new environmental team would complement the wardens that WNC already had and that it was important to work with parish and town councils on this.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet;

1. Agreed to the procurement, at no anticipated direct cost to the Council, of an environmental enforcement contract, that specifies the issuing of fixed penalty notices for littering and other environmental misdemeanours and includes an option for the provision of other enforcement services.
2. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place & Economy, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Regulatory Services and the Head of Environmental Protection & Environmental Crime to select a suitable contractor and award the aforementioned contract for a period of up to five (5) years, with an initial contract of three (3) years, with an option to extend for a further period of up to two (2) years in annual increments (3+1+1), following the procurement process.
3. That Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Place & Economy, to allow the contractor to issue fixed penalty notices on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council, in accordance with our Enforcement Policy.

124. **Future use of the County Hall site**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that the building was not being sold.

Councillors made the following comments.

- No plan had been made for county hall during the building of OAS.
- It was important for the building to still belong in part to the people of Northampton.
- The report was difficult to read in some places.
- Concern was raised at the disposal of another publicly owned site.
- There had been nothing in budget that mentioned capital asset disposals. It was questioned whether the Council would need to spend money to deliver this.

The Executive Director Place & Economy advised that a variety of options had been looked at, which were reflected within the report. It was advised that it was in the best interests of the Council to work with potential end users.

RESOLVED:

1. That the strategy for future use of the County Hall site as set out in paragraphs 5.14 to 5.18 is agreed.
2. The Assistant Director Assets & Environment in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Finance Portfolio Holder is authorised to:
 - Appropriate parts of the site to planning purposes, if useful to ensure that they can be disposed of whilst seeking to secure their future and best use.
 - Grant long leasehold disposals of Judges' Lodgings and Centre Blocks, including any ancillary areas or rights.
 - Grant long leasehold disposals of the parts of the Former Constabulary Block and Front Block, including any ancillary areas or rights, no longer required for the Council's operations.

125. **Hosting the functions of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership**

The Chair introduced the report and its main points, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Councillors made the following comments.

- As WNC was currently in a transformation phase would this enterprise have any affect.
- The importance of ensuring that young people were given the skills to meet the needs of the future was noted.
- It was queried whether WNC would have to cover costs.

The Chief Executive advised that there would be no effect on the Council's transformation work. Councillors were advised that there would be no additional costs other than shared costs and that the SEMLEP reserves would cover that.

The Executive Director Place & Economy confirmed that he would be happy to answer any questions from councillors.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet:

- a) Would receive the transfer of all the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) rights, loans and liabilities including all reserves and funding as the accountable body for the six local authorities within South East Midlands economic area from 1 April 2024 as detailed in paragraph 4.2 and in recognition of Luton's ongoing accountable body role as detailed in 4.5.
- b) Would receive future funding as accountable body, where it is deemed appropriate that services or functions should be managed by the accountable body.
- c) Accepted the transfer of staff and any liabilities, in accordance with TUPE, to include where applicable finance, communications and operational support.
- d) Noted the inherited financial position as set out in paragraph 6.1.1
- e) Agreed the governance structure and responsibilities for the transferred LEP functions, as described in paragraph 5.2.4 option 2, with Milton Keynes City Council, Luton Borough Council, North Northamptonshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council

- f) Would enter into an agreement with the five authorities in relation to the delivery of the services on their behalf and for the use of the reserves to meet the liabilities and where the reserves are insufficient to meet the liabilities to be able to recover the liabilities from the relevant local authorities including any successor bodies as described in paragraph 5.11.
- g) Delegated authority to the Director of Communities & Opportunities in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to lead the integration process, including finalising the joint agreement with the other local authorities.

126. **Bikeability Contract**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that the initial contract would be for 7 months, which could then be extended.

A councillor noted that it was important to have the appropriate infrastructure in place, such as cycle lanes.

Councillor Phil Larratt advised that infrastructure had been looked and was being addressed.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet agreed to procure a new Bikeability cycle training contract with delegated authority given to the Executive Director for Place and Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, to award the new contract.

127. **Recommissioning of Extra Care Services**

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Matt Golby presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated advising that this was an important recommission.

A councillor noted that there had been no mention of the living wage provision within the report.

Councillor Matt Golby advised that the living wage would be incorporated into the contract.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet;

- i. Approved the procurement of a single framework for the provision of care and support delivered within extra care housing in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.
- ii. Delegated authority to the Executive Director for People Services (DASS), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration, to take any further decisions and actions required to conclude this procurement and award the contract.

- iii. Approve a proposed contract term of five years with an option to extend for a further period of 12 months + 12 months resulting in a maximum framework duration of 7 years.

128. Lease of land at New Manor Farm for NCCC second site

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Adam Brown presented the report, copies of which had been previously circulated. Members were advised that the lease would be subject to the County Cricket Club being able to raise the relevant funds. There would need to be a full consultation and the County Cricket Club would engage with residents.

Councillor Mike Hallam stated that he had had various emails from residents concerning this site and made the following points:

- Would the new site be used in the same capacity as Wantage Road by hosting concerts?
- Engagement with residents should have already happened as many were not aware.
- If the money required is not raised what would then happen to the site?

Three members of the public then spoke and made the following comments, two of them from Sol Haven, a local Community Interest Company

- Cabinet were asked to remember that Sol Haven received mental health referrals from WNC.
- There were various concerns regarding the local environment.
- The traffic coming through the area would increase significantly.
- There had been no communication with residents.
- On street parking would increase on already busy roads.
- There were concerns about the unpredictable behaviour of inebriated people.
- Growth would be welcomed, but community support is important.
- There were also concerns about light and noise pollution, which could affect those with sleeping disorders.
- There were flooding issues, would this be looked in to.
- The ability of emergency services to navigate through the extra traffic was a concern.

Councillors made the following comments.

- The public need to be encouraged to get involved.
- It was important to be open about what would happen and how it would affect residents.
- It was noted that leasing from WNC would be more transparent for residents that leasing from private owners.
- It was questioned whether there would be a break clause in the 125-year lease.

The Executive Director of Place and Economy made the following comments.

- Sport is very beneficial for mental health.

- The proposal would be subject to planning permission and would need to answer a variety of questions including environmental impacts.
- Natural England would be involved, and a full consultation would take place.
- The County Cricket Club would work with stakeholders.
- The Council was working through all the assets gained during the amalgamation process.
- There would be a process to formalise the agreement with the charity that currently uses the site.

The Chairman of the County Cricket club advised members that they would welcome discussions with stakeholders and there would be full engagement.

Councillor Adam Brown reminded members that the report was not concerned with a planning application but would enable the County Cricket Club to begin the planning process.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet authorised the Assistant Director Assets & Environment in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to enter into the agreements envisaged in the heads of terms at Appendix A (with any minor variations as is practically necessary) and any matters reasonably necessary to give effect to them.

129. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**
None

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12TH MARCH 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE: COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

Report Title	Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of the VOI E-Scooter Trial
Report Author	Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager, tracy.tiff@westnorthants.gov.uk 01604 837408

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
Deputy MO	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
S151	Martin Henry	04/03/2024
Communications Team	Beth Longhurst Communications Lead	22/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - VOI E-Scooter Trial

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present for consideration the responses to the scrutiny review undertaken by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 VOI E-Scooters are a high-profile issue within Northampton and nearby areas. Residents have voiced concerns regarding the operation of the scheme and the riding of the scooters. It was appropriate that the scheme be subjected to scrutiny prior to a decision being taken by Cabinet.

on the future of the scheme and how it operates. I welcome the report from the scrutiny group undertaking the review, the outcome of which will assist Cabinet in determining the continuation of the E-Scooter trial for a further period on a well-informed basis.

- 2.2 I would like to thank Councillor Alison Eastwood for chairing the group undertaking the scrutiny review, as well as all Members and partners who participated in it.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet notes the report and considers the recommendations proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the VOI E-Scooter Trial scrutiny review and associated actions as set out within paragraph 5.1 of this report.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The recommendations are intended to provide proposals in respect of the continuation of the E- Scooter Trial for a further two years, which will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet in May 2024.

Alternative options considered

- 4.2 The report is for noting only.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The objective of this comprehensive Scrutiny Review was to consider the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

Key lines of enquiry

- Ensuring the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
- An evaluation of the misuse of E-Scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate.
- An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton’s infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters.
- An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport.

- 5.2 The required outcome of the Scrutiny Review was to enable the Committee to produce a report which makes informed recommendations to Cabinet regarding the evaluation of the VOI E-Scooter trial.

- 5.3 A motion was passed at the meeting of full Council held on 28 September 2023. By a majority vote, full Council agreed to refer the motion to the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee considered the proposal at its meeting on 4 December 2023 and established a Task and Finish Group, composed of members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the proposer and seconder of the motion. A Task and Finish Group was established consisting of nine Councillors.
- 5.4 A significant amount of evidence was received, details of which are within the report. After gathering evidence, the Task and Finish Group established its key findings and conclusions which contained within the report (**Appendix A.**)
- 5.5 Recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee are detailed in the table set out in section 5.5.1 of this report, together with comments on the recommendations, actions and progress to date.
- 5.6 A report will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024 to determine whether the VOI E-Scooter trial should continue and the findings from the Overview and Scrutiny review will be included within that report.

Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 5.7 The accepted recommendations of this Overview and Scrutiny report will contribute to achieving the priorities of the West Northants Corporate Plan, in particular clean & green, improved life chances, connected communities, thriving villages and towns, economic development and robust resource management.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny recommendations:

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
That the trial of the VOI E-Scooter is continued to May 2026 but there is a need for improvements and a Road Map for development of the improvements should be a condition of any contract extension	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
<p>offered.</p> <p>The Road Map should address:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Review the current scheme to seek improvements and changes in respect of Geo-fence areas where: <p>Speed controls and restricted zones to be reviewed and extended ;</p> <p>E-Scooters cannot be parked on an individual basis in specific key locations (i.e., Disabled access and emergency access points).</p> 2 That parking is reviewed to improve end location via use of improved technology (AI)and infrastructure (parking frames) are implemented where appropriate. 3 That new and emerging technology is assessed, and timescale set for the implementation in regard: 				

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
<p>Eliminating twin riding. Preventing E-Scooters from riding pavements.</p> <p>4 That E-Scooter safety is reviewed improving visibility at night, ensuring registration numbers are more visible and that campaigns and messaging to existing riders are increased and more regular in regard to best practice and also to include the wearing of helmets.</p> <p>5 That a review of the complaints' procedure is undertaken with the aim of improving the process of tracking complaints via a reference number with timely action and communication.</p>				
<p>Recommendation 2: That a new governance and project</p>		<p>To be considered in May 2024 upon</p>		

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
management process in set up to include West Northants Council, VOI and Northamptonshire Police. That the terms of reference for this group include the management and monitoring of progress of items included in the Road Map.	Agreed	presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024
Recommendation 3: That Officers produce a suite of KPI's for Cabinet to review which will provide transparency in relation to the numbers of complaints, actions taken and enforcement	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	May 2024
Recommendation 4: That Cabinet considers setting up a regular all Member Quarterly forum that will provide context and challenge for improvement and improved communications		Six Monthly forum will be created	Nick Henstock	June/July 2024
Recommendation 5: That Cabinet reviews enforcement to ensure all resources available to the Council, Police and VOI are aligned and efficient and that any enforcement actions can be aligned and the results fully	Partially agreed	To be included in the terms of reference for the governance arrangements and reported to Cabinet in the annual report as described in Recommendation 7	Nick Henstock	May 2024 and June 2025

Recommendation and Action	Agreed/ Partially agreed Not agreed	Actions / comments	Responsible Officer	Progress (add date)
communicated and released.				
Recommendation 6: That Officers investigate best practice from other areas and where applicable implemented to a include a review of future policies and infrastructure identified as part of the local plan process once subject to government approval.	Partially Agreed	“as part of the local transport plan process once subject to government approval.”	Nick Henstock	Following govt legislation relating to E-Scooters.
Recommendation 7: That Cabinet has oversight and puts in place monitoring (period in review) of the Trial.	Agreed	Cabinet to receive annual report regarding the E-Scooter trial	Nick Henstock	June 2025
Recommendation 8: That Cabinet is requested to provide a report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the conclusion of the E-Scooter Trial that identifies progress and issues for discussion.	Agreed	To be considered in May 2024 upon presentation of a future report to Cabinet.	Nick Henstock	TBC – subject to the date of the conclusion of the trial.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee may have financial implications in relation to the extension of the Trial and the proposed improvements, which will be considered in a future report to Cabinet in May 2024.

7.2 **Legal**

7.2.1 The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to make recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet will need to consider those recommendations and then reach decisions based on the usual public decision-making criteria. The recommendations of a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported by evidence can be the basis of a cabinet decision, but Cabinet's responsibility remains to ensure that it has sufficient information to make a decision including the financial and legal implications of the specific proposals presented.

7.3 **Risk**

7.3.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee had regard to any risks and mitigation factors associated with the extension of the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire and has made recommendations accordingly.

7.4 **Consultation and communications**

7.4.1 The Task and Finish Group received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in Section 3 of the report of the VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Group.

7.4.2 2,663 responses were submitted as part of the survey which took place from 20 December 2023 to 11 January 2024, generating 7033 comments

7.4.3 The survey was publicised across multiple channels when the survey was launched, including social media channels: Facebook, X and Instagram Stories. As well as via a press release, a news article on the Council website, in the resident e-newsletter, and internal & stakeholder channels. The post generated over 100 comments on Facebook and was shared widely. Publicity was conducted throughout the remainder of the time that the survey was open.

7.4.4 The outcome of the consultation and scrutiny committee recommendations were published on the Council's corporate channels

7.4.5 The outcome and recommendations from cabinet will be shared on the Council's corporate channels, and this will be supported with a strategic communications plan.

7.5 **Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

7.5.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the report of the VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 31 January 2024.

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 The proposals of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee have direct positive impact on the climate and sustainability as VOI E-Scooters complement public transport in the town and provide users with access to sustainable transport.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 VOI E-Scooters are available for all those over the age of 18 to hire within West Northamptonshire.

8. Background Papers

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Agendas and minutes - 4 December 2023 and 31 January 2024

O&S VOI E-Scooter Trial Task and Finish Group - Agendas and minutes – December 2023 to January 2024

Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – VOI E-Scooter Trial 31 January 2024

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**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Review of the VOI E-Scooter Trial

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	Scope of the Review
Appendix B	Motion submitted to full Council - 28 September 2023
Appendix C	Headlines from the public survey - E-Scooter Trial
Appendix D	Headlines from written public comments – E- Sooter Trial

Chair's Foreword

The objective of this Review was to consider the effectiveness of the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

Key lines of enquiry

The scrutiny review considered the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire, including:

- Ensuring the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
- An evaluation of the misuse of E-Scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate.
- An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton's infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters.
- An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport.

The required outcomes were to enable the Committee to produce a report which makes recommendations to Cabinet regarding the evaluation of the VOI E-Scooter trial.

The Task and Finish Group was composed of members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – myself (Chair); Anthony Bagot-Webb, William Barter, Terrie Eales, André González De Savage, Paul Joyce, Kevin Parker; together with two further non-executive members – Councillors Emma Roberts and Zoe Smith. There were no co-optees to this Task and Finish Group but a wealth of information was gathered from a variety of expert advisors who attended the meetings.

The Task and Finish Group received both written and verbal evidence from these expert advisors. Representatives of the Task and Finish Group undertook a site visit to the VOI factory. A survey was made available on the WNC website to enable members of the public to express their views regarding the Voi E-Scooter trial. The survey attracted around 3,000 responses and a Focus Group organised by NCALC for representatives of Town and Parish Councils within West Northamptonshire was well attended. Through the combination of these sources, a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this important Scrutiny review was obtained.

Following the collation of the evidence, the Task and Finish Group drew various conclusions and recommendations that are contained within the report.

The review took place over just six working weeks between December 2023 and mid-January 2024.

I would like to thank all the individuals acknowledged below who gave up their time and contributed to this review.



Councillor Alison Eastwood Chair, Task and Finish Group – Review of VOI E-Scooter Trial

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors Anthony Bagot-Webb, William Barter , Terrie Eales, André González De Savage, Paul Joyce, Kevin Parker, Emma Roberts and Zoe Smith who sat with me on this Review
- Councillor Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Leader of the Council, Ian Achurch, Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability (North Northants Council), Matt O’Connell, Safer Roads Team Manager, Northants Police, Matthew Pencharz, Head of Policy for UK, Ireland & France, VOI, Theo Gough, City Success Manager, VOI, Sara Homer, Chief Executive Officer, Brackmills BID, Hollie Darby, Northampton University and a member of the public, for attending meetings of the Task and Finish Group and providing evidence to inform the Review
- Clare Topping, Northampton General Hospital, for providing written evidence to this Review
- Danny Moody, Chief Executive of NCALC for facilitating a focus session with various Parish and Town Councils within West Northamptonshire
- Gillian Baldock, Political Assistant to the Conservative Group for her work on the public survey
- Duston Parish Council for submitting its written views
- Members of the public and various groups and organisations who took the time to complete the VOI E-Scooter Trial survey that the Task and Finish Group had put together

Executive Summary

1.1 The objective of this Review was to consider the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire

Key lines of enquiry

The scrutiny review considered the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire, including:

- Ensuring the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
- An evaluation of the misuse of E-Scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate.
- An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton's infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters.
- An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport.

1.2 A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at **Appendix A**.

2 Context

2.1 A motion was passed at the meeting of full Council held on 28 September 2023. A copy of the motion is attached at **Appendix B**. By a majority vote, Council agreed to refer this motion to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The Committee considered the proposal at its meeting on 4 December 2023 and established a Task and Finish Group, composed of members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with the proposer and seconder of the motion - Councillors Emma Roberts and Zoe Smith.

Corporate Priorities

2.2 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities - clean & green, improved life chances, connected communities, thriving villages and towns, economic development and robust resource management.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was taken into consideration. Further details are set out elsewhere in the report. After gathering evidence the Task and Finish Group established that: -

After receiving all the evidence, the Task and Finish Group heard that the Trial of the VOI E-Scooters meets, and in certain cases exceeds, requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.

Opportunities exist to address the concerns and challenges that were identified via the review in order to ensure the VOI E- Scooter Trial within Northampton and the wider communities is

continued. Overall, the economic and environmental benefits provide a compelling case for the retention of the scheme.

The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should VOI E-Scooters become permanent following the Trial, there would be a need for improvements to be made to the infrastructure to support this.

Evidence received from VOI, businesses and the public survey highlighted the economic benefits of the trial and in particular the reliance of many people and some businesses on E-scooters as a way to access work. Whilst some people acknowledged that alternatives may be available it was also clear that for certain areas, such as Brackmills, cessation of the trial would reduce opportunities for some existing workers.

With regard to the environmental benefits of the scheme, whilst difficult to pinpoint a precise figure in terms of carbon reduction, the high use of scooters and reasons provided via surveys does point to a significant reduction in car use thereby reducing congestion and also impacting positively upon air quality in the town.

The Task and Finish Group identified a willingness from all partners; VOI, Northamptonshire Police and West Northants Council to work together in a positive and effective manner to ensure continuous improvement and resolution of existing concerns and problems. This positive approach is set within the context of improving governance, increasing communications and campaigns, works and new technologies within the infrastructure and improvement of processes.

The committee also acknowledges the consensus with respect to the problems identified by all parties and subsequently confirmed through the survey of residents and users. These problems are wide-ranging and predominantly relate to poor practice from a minority of users, whether that be riding on pavements, leaving scooters blocking pavements or twin-riding (two persons on a scooter). Other issues identified that complaints were not handled in a consistent way, leading to poor levels of responses, that the level of safety messages and advice required more emphasis and that enforcement of noncompliance needs to be improved in both prosecutions, penalties and the communication of actions.

Concern was expressed also that due to the reliance on E-scooters by some users, the ending of a regulated scheme could result in a significant increase in the use of illegal E-scooters, which are already considered to be a problem in Northampton. This could result in an increase in anti-social behaviour, the importing and use of 'dangerous' E-scooters and also reduced effectiveness of enforcement.

With respect to the governance of the project, it was acknowledged that the scheme was a joint project with North Northamptonshire Council and that the scheme would benefit from much closer management from West Northamptonshire Council, particularly relating to the detail and performance of the Northampton element of the trial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations: -

That the trial of the VOI E-Scooter is continued to May 2026 but there is a need for improvements and a Road Map for development of the improvements should be a condition of any contract extension offered.

The Road Map should address:

- 1 Review the current scheme to seek improvements and changes in respect of Geo-fence areas where:
 - Speed controls and restricted zones to be reviewed and extended.
 - E-Scooters cannot be parked on an individual basis in specific key locations (ie. disabled access and emergency access points).
- 2 That parking is reviewed to improve end location via use of improved technology (AI) and infrastructure (parking frames) are implemented where appropriate.
- 3 That new and emerging technology is assessed and timescale set for the implementation in regard:
 - Eliminating twin riding.
 - Preventing scooters from riding pavements
- 4 That E-Scooter safety is reviewed improving visibility at night, ensuring registration numbers are more visible and that campaigns and messaging to existing riders are increased and more regular in regard to best practice and also to include the wearing of helmets.
- 5 That a review of the complaints procedure is undertaken with the aim of improving the process of tracking complaints via a reference number with timely action and communication.

That a new governance and project management process is set up to include West Northants Council, VOI and Northamptonshire Police. That the terms of reference for this group include the management and monitoring of progress of items included in the Road Map.

That Officers produce a suite of KPI's for Cabinet to review which will provide transparency in relation to the numbers of complaints, actions taken and enforcement.

That Cabinet considers setting up a regular all Member Quarterly forum that will provide context and challenge for improvement and improved communications.

That Cabinet reviews enforcement to ensure all resources available to the Council, Police and VOI are aligned and efficient and that any enforcement actions can be aligned and the results fully communicated and released.

That Officers investigate best practice from other areas and where applicable implemented to include a review of future policies and infrastructure identified as part of the local plan process once subject to government approval.

That Cabinet has oversight and puts in place monitoring (period in review) of the Trial.

That Cabinet is requested to provide a report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the conclusion of the E-Scooter Trial that identifies progress and issues for discussion.

West Northamptonshire Council

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of VOI E-Scooters Trial Task and Finish Group

1. Purposes and Rationale

- 1.1 The objective of this review was to consider the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire.

Key lines of enquiry

The scrutiny review considered the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire, including:

- Ensuring the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
- An evaluation of the misuse of E-Scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate.
- An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton's infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters.
- An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport.

- 1.2 A copy of the Scope of the Review is attached at **Appendix A**.

2 Context and Background

- 2.1 A motion was proposed at the meeting of full Council held on 28 September 2023. A copy of the motion is attached at **Appendix B**. The Cabinet Member proposed to refer the matter to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. By a majority vote, Council agreed to refer this motion to the Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 2.2 Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee considered the proposal at its meeting on 4 December 2023 and a Task and Finish Group was established, composed of members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Alison Eastwood (Chair) Councillors Anthony Bagott-Webb, Andre Gonzalez De Savage, William Barter, Terrie Eales, Paul Joyce, together with the proposer and seconder of the motion - Councillors Emma Roberts and Zoe Smith.

2 Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly clean & green, improved life chances, connected communities, thriving villages and towns, economic development and robust resource management.
- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities in its evidence gathering:

Evidence collection

Background data, including:

- Site visit to the VOI factory, Northampton
- NCALC facilitated focus session with various Parish and Town Councils within West Northamptonshire
- VOI E-Scooter Trial survey
- Written representations from members of the public

Carried motion – full Council of 28 September 2023 (**Appendix B**)

Relevant governance guidelines regarding E-Scooter Trials

Data provided to the Department of Transport (DofT)

Views from internal expert advisors:

- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste
- Executive Director for Place and Economy
- Assistant Director for Highways & Transport

Views from external expert advisors:

- Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability– Highways and Transport (North Northants Council)
- Safer Roads Team Manager, Northants Police,
- Senior Officers, VOI
- Organisations whose employees use the VOI E-Scooters

Methodology and Evidence Collection

2.3 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

- Site visit
- Focus Group
- Public Survey
- Written evidence
- Expert advisor attendance at meetings of the Task and Finish Group

3 Background data

Site Visit

Key points from the site visit to the VOI factory on 11 December 2023:

- E-Scooters are re-charged, maintained, repaired and checked at the site
- Each E-Scooter is checked every 28-30 days unless attention is required sooner

- The site provides 43 jobs, which will soon to increase to 45
- VOI is proactive with genuine interest in the local area

Focus Group session

Salient points from the Focus Session with representatives of Parish and Town Councils across West Northamptonshire held on 17 January 2024:

- Eight Councillors, and 14 parish representatives from 9 parish councils and a number of Officers from WNC were in attendance. There were no objections to the Trial in principle, but concerns were raised regarding :
 - misuse
 - poor parking
 - Tandem riding
 - A need for more enforcement

Desktop Research

The Chair carried out desktop research. Key points:

- Out of 11 E-Scooters companies operating in the country, four covered one town only.
- VOI covered seven towns
- When contracts were up for renewal in both Bristol and Bath, VOI lost out to a competitor, with the new company receiving many negative complaints and reducing the company workforce

Report to the Department of Transport (DofT)

The Task and Finish Group had sight of the confidential, not publicly accessible E-Scooter situation report that the Authority provides to the Department of Transport on a regular basis. The report contains details of incidents that have taken place with the E-Scooters during the trial.

Public Survey

A public survey regarding the trial of the E-Scooters commenced on 20 December 2023 and closed on 11 January 2024. The main points are summarised as:

- 2663 respondents to the survey.
- The majority of respondents were aware of the E-Scooter Trial.
- 610 respondents used the E-Scooters and 2097 did not, 272 used them on a regular basis.
- 381 used the E-Scooters to make their journey easier and 379 used them to save time.
- 942 respondents felt that E-Scooters were good for people who cannot travel (far) by foot/bike and 923 respondents felt they were easy/convenient for short journeys to get from A to B.
- There were 3241 responses in respect of the question around issues with E-Scooters and these related to poor parking, underage usage of E-Scooters and tandem riding (defined as two or three riders).

- 1,569 respondents commented on improvements. The areas commented on for improvements suggestions and improvements were similar. The two most frequently mentioned areas were the removal of the scheme and further regulation enforcement by WNC and partners.

The headline results from the survey are detailed within **Appendix C**.

Written submissions

A number of written submissions regarding the E-Scooter trial were received. Respondents mainly commented around:

- Tandem riding, riding on pavements, inconsiderate and dangerous riding.

Further details are contained within **Appendix D**.

Duston Parish Council

The Parish Clerk, on behalf of the Parish Council, submitted the Parish Council's comments regarding the E-Scooter Trial. Duston Parish Council had concerns regarding safety, pavement riding, underage riding and poor parking. More transparency was requested regarding complaints.

Expert Advisor Evidence

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group received a wealth of evidence from expert advisors over a series of meetings – 4 December 2023, 18 December, 4 January 2024 and 12 January.
- 3.2 Salient points of evidence:

Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, West Northants Council

- E- Scooters are a great sustainable form of transportation with environmental benefits
- There are problems with regards to the use and management of the E-Scooters
- Councillor Larratt put on record his thanks to the member of public for putting forward complaints which were likely similar to many other residents.
- Better management and enforcement are needed to prevent dual riders, underage riders, speeding and riding on the pavements.
- The majority of complaints received were in relation to poor parking, in particular how they are left on pavements restricting people with pushchairs, prams and people living with disabilities, for example visually impaired.
- The Cabinet Member's personal preference was for the use of docking stations for the E-Scooters.
- The majority of complaints received were in relation to poor parking
- The Cabinet Member suggested a review of restricted low speed areas for the E-Scooters.
- Number plates need to be clearer. Currently they are too small to be seen easily.
- There should be greater transparency with regards to reporting issues.

Leader of the Council, West Northants Council – personal views as a user of the E- Scooters

- E-Scooters were very useful for short journeys and meant that there was no longer a default to use the car. The change in habits has been positive.

- There were a number of issues when the scheme was first introduced, most of which have been resolved, through the use of photo ID and registration numbers on E-Scooters.
- Some issues remained more difficult to address including tandem usage, poor parking and pavement riding. It is hoped that the technology can be extended to reduce pavement riding, though it was appreciated that investment was required to enable this to take place.
- The E-Scooters prove useful for getting to work when public transport is not available.
- There are benefits in terms of air quality.
- The 'end of ride' photo is checked by AI (Artificial Intelligence) and is not as proficient as the human eye.
- Consideration should be given to allow the public to identify good, designated parking bays, though it was noted that they can reduce usage. Docking stations however are not considered to be beneficial. Parking areas need to be in convenient areas.
- Education has a key role to play in encouraging good and safe E-Scooter use. Educating on E-Scooter use should begin with children before they are old enough to ride. The age enforced in Northampton being 18.
- Improvements to the Scheme could be made a condition of any contract extension offered.

Executive Director Place and Economy

- Many of the issues raised relate to governance. Tighter contract management is required.
- The scheme had originally been led by NCC for the first year and a half, now WNC needs to take a lead on the management of the VOI E-scooter agreement.
- Better communication with elected Members is required.
- Additional resources, governance and communication of the scheme going forward will be very beneficial.
- The scheme is still a trial which stifles some innovation for Councils and operators. Once the E-Scooters are regulated there will be more provision to include them in the Local Transport Plan and Local Plan etc.
- It would be useful to plan ahead and not wait for legislation.

Assistant Director for Highways and Transport

- The intention is for West Northants Council to take a more proactive role in the scheme going forwards.
- A small minority are misusing the E-Scooters.
- There is discretion to not extend the trial for the additional 24 months.
- There are concerns that if the trial is discontinued, the use of private E-Scooters could increase with the associated problems of no insurance and possibly poor maintenance. VOI's E-Scooters are regulated, insured and maintained by mechanics and VOI could be notified if there were problems with an E-Scooter.
- The Council has a good working relationship with VOI. There are a number of issues to overcome and the intention is to work together to mitigate them. It is easier to influence issues when working together, than from 'the outside'.
- Officers consider that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the disadvantages.
- Improvements are needed with regard to complaints and the ease of making complaints.
- It would be beneficial to geo-fence areas where E-Scooters cannot be parked on an individual basis (e.g. disabled access).

Student Services, University of Northampton

- The waterside campus has reported 97,500 journeys in and out of the area.
- 9 E-Scooter incidents have been reported, with 5 identified as VOI E-Scooters. One incident involved a security officer being struck from behind by a E-Scooter.
- An extension to the restricted/slow zone was requested, for example through the campus.
- The scheme is promoted to students and staff and the University was supportive of their use.

Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability– Growth & Regeneration, North Northants Council

- The scheme was initially considered around four years ago. The trial began in September 2020 (initially for a 12-month period) following a competition asking for operators to run the scheme, which was won by VOI. The trial was extended to November 2022 and then to May 2024. A legal order was obtained to run the trial.
- The scheme initially launched in the town centre and was later extended to Moulton Park, Brackmills, and the remainder of the urban area.
- Government legislation regarding e scooters was still awaited but was not included in the most recent King’s Speech. The trial scheme can then be extended for a further 24 months to May 2026.
- The context for choosing Northampton as a suitable area for the trial was due to a number of factors – high car dependency, limited public transport and low cycle usage.
- The cycle hire scheme operated at the time by Northamptonshire County Council had not been effective. It was not popular with users and was costly to the Council.
- The E-Scooter trial operates at no cost to the Council. It ties into the Council’s objectives regarding the climate emergency. A trial provides an opportunity to see if the scheme can work in the area.
- There are currently 70,000 registered users in Northampton, with 3.4 million rides having taken place during the duration of the trial scheme, averaging out at 20,000 to 30,000 per month.
- The scheme had exceeded expectations in terms of usage and has been shortlisted as a finalist in national awards.
- During the early stages of the trial, many users were young people who couldn’t take their driving tests due to delays during the covid pandemic. Recent user data indicates that there is a broad spread of rider ages.
- Over a third of journeys are part of the commute to work.
- A wide range of data is available showing start and finish points, times, and distances. This is useful to the Council for transport and land-use planning.
- Discussions had taken place with three lead local authority bodies which use different operators for licensed E-Scooters - Newcastle (Neuron), West of England Combined Authority (TIER), and West Midlands (Beryl). Four main issues had been identified – underage riding, twin riding and anti-social behaviour, pavement riding and poor parking.
- The situation for operators is fluid with numerous factors influencing the long-term futures of the schemes, such as the economic situation and the delay in Government legislation.
- Parking options deployed by operators include physical racks (on pavement and/or on street), painted parking (on pavement and/or on street), geo fenced parking (without physical markings), and ‘free floating’. The Northampton trial used a hybrid approach. No operators rely on racks as the only solution.
- Areas shifting from the Northamptonshire approach to a mandatory parking scheme had experienced significant reductions in usage (down up to 50%).

- The research concluded that new guidance issued by the government last year incorporated many of the practices first trialed in the Northampton trial (e.g. mandatory ID plates and photo verification for new users). VOI remained a leader in the use of technology to mitigate any issues.
- Suggested improvements include:
 - Random driving licence reverification via selfie. Automatic reverification of driving licence if account is accessed on a new device.
 - Commitment to explore and trial technology to identify twin riding.
 - Acknowledgement and reference numbers provided for reporting.
 - Introduce the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to review all parking photos meaning rides cannot be ended without approval.
 - Higher level conversations with WNC to discuss governance issues.
- Some operators are dropping out of trials, mainly due to the finances involved. Transport often operates on marginal gains. The delayed provision of Government legislation also has an impact on long-term business planning.

Safer Roads Team Manager, Northants Police

- The rider age had been increased from 16 to 18 years old when the scheme was initially introduced. Although Government legislation is still awaited, it is anticipated that that a new legislation will be created, with perhaps a 16 and over age limit.
- The majority of 'misbehaviour' on E-Scooters will also constitute a traffic offence.
- Two riders on a scooter may be dealt with by the Police as a dangerous passenger load.
- Attempts are usually made to educate users on a first offence before imposing fines/bans depending on the offence.
- The police can report directly back to VOI where accounts can be quickly suspended or banned when misuse of the VOI scooters had occurred.
- The availability of resources/officers played a large part in enforcement.
- There is a concern that if the trial was discontinued, users could buy private scooters which would be unable to be legally used until the Government legislation is in place.
- Photo ID is required for all riders to be able to hire a scooter.
- VOI is trialing a system to reduce pavement riding through an artificial intelligence mapping system. This will take time to develop and extending the trial would be advantageous as stability was required to enable investment to take place.
- Data suggests most users are in their 20's and 30's. In the case of underage users, it appears that often parents are setting up the accounts for them. When found, such accounts are permanently banned.
- An operation is planned to enforce safe scooter use – targeting young riders and areas surrounding schools.
- Consideration is being given to prosecuting account holders (parents) for allowing use of the account by underage riders.
- The Neighbourhood Policing team is carrying out work regarding VOI and private E-scooters
- Consideration could be given to 'geo-fencing' a whole street in the town where it is particularly busy and identifying 3 or 4 areas along the street where parking would be permitted.
- There was a good working relationship between the Police and VOI.

- It was unlikely that traffic cameras could pick up the scooter registration plates. Although VOI stated that if a time stamp and location could be provided that scooters/riders could be identified.

Head of Policy for UK, Ireland & France, VOI and City Success Manager, VOI, City Success

- VOI introduced the scooters to Northampton during the Covid19 pandemic as a form of socially distanced transportation .
- The scooters are currently classified as motor vehicles, until the Government introduces new legislation.
- Legally the age limit for riders is 16+, but it was agreed to restrict users to 18+ in Northamptonshire.
- Responsible parking is encouraged with users required to submit a photo of the parked scooter after use.
- 38% of rides were used for commuting.
- 1.6 million car journeys have been replaced by E-scooter rides.
- Should the use of VOI scooters cease the use of private E-scooters is expected to increase.
- Riders are across most age groups and were mostly male.
- The lower number of female users may partly be attributed safety concerns around unsafe roads and unlit routes/parking areas.
- Parking E-scooters at the journeys end ('free-float parking') is preferred by users over designated parking bays as it was much more convenient.
- In the top five as start and end location in Northampton for rides are Brackmills, the General Hospital and the University of Northampton.
- Although the scheme is very positive, concerns are recognised, such as underage riding, anti-social riding and poor parking. Such issues are mitigated by raising safety concerns with the Police, incentivising the use of helmets when riding, and encouraging new users to a lower speed.
- Anti-social behaviour is very low, accounting for less than 0.15% of total rides.
- Since the scheme's launch, a number of new practices have been trialled in Northampton and then rolled out nationwide.
- VOI has recently processed the results of its bi-annual survey of riders. There were 25,000 rides per week in the town, with 37% commutes and 20% social. The age of use was spread fairly evenly from 18 to 44. Around a third of journeys would have been by car or taxi were scooters not available.
- Some of the concerns raised can be dealt with quickly – such as better communicating the benefits of incentivised parking zones and increasing communication with users regarding safer parking.
- VOI will promote submitting complaints to a support email address - support@voiapp.io
- The industry is looking at technology to identify weight changes to reduce twin riding. This is a difficult process due to riders with shopping/back packs. It will be expensive to retrofit the appropriate technology to the existing fleet but it can be fitted to the next generation of scooters.
- Cameras have been fitted to some E-scooters to monitor pavement riding. The tech is quite expensive and there has been some vandalism of the boxes being attached to the scooters.
- VOI strongly supports the Police in its planned campaign to target underage riding. VOI offers support in the prosecution of account holders allowing use by underage riders.
- Brackmills, along with the University and General Hospital are large users of the scooters.
- Employees often cannot afford cars and the bus services were not convenient. New facilities opening in Brackmills are offering reduced parking for staff in order to encourage

sustainability and sustainable travel. If the VOI E-scooters did not continue, people may use private E-scooters which are currently not legal or use cars.

- There is currently no legislation stipulating there must be only one rider per scooter, but it was specified in the trial conditions. The industry's view is that one rider only is safer. Two riders result in weight shifting and more erratic riding and is dangerous and irresponsible.

Chief Executive, Brackmills BID

- VOI E-Scooters were first introduced on to the Brackmills industrial Estate on 13 September 2020. The Brackmills BID had a launch of the trial of the VOI E-Scooters on the site of the VOI Business on Sketty Close. Since then they have moved to a much larger and suitable site on Weddel Way, Brackmills.
- E-Scooters were launched on the estate to make it easier than ever before to enable staff to get on and off of the estate, at a time that suited their individual working rotas.
- Brackmills also trialled the "Boris Bikes " but the take up was never very good.
- The Chief Executive of the BID worked with Officers of the Council, VOI, the local PCSO in putting together a safety plan which enabled the E-Scooters to not be able to work on some of the roads on Brackmills due to safety issues either permanently or at certain times. Over the past few years of this project, this has been updated where there were safety implications to the vehicles on the roads and also to the user.
- There are 183 businesses and approximately 212 hereditaments on the Brackmills site.
- These businesses are home to approximately 18000 + employees.
- The Business Improvement District is keen to work on its sustainability and any projects that can help it to improve the environment around it.
- A large number of employees travel to and from Town Centre and find the VOI E-Scooters a very affordable and viable option.
- E-Scooters help to reduce the carbon footprint. From a greener point of view, employees travel on the E-Scooters to Delapre Abbey, through the underpasses to travel safely and not having to use the roads at lunch times to relax in the grounds of the Abbey for lunch and to simply enjoy the lovely green environment around them. This is a good option to relax from the hustle and bustle of working in a warehouse and to aid with a stressful job and to assist with their health, safety and mental wellbeing
- Car sharing has never worked on Brackmills. Since employees have been using the VOI E-Scooters, it has created a better sustainable and green option for the businesses and employees to travel to and from the estate.
- A new initiative is being looking at taking on board is a scheme called "Smartgo" which is being rolled out around the UK especially when very large warehouses are being built where very large numbers of employees are going to be working long and varied shift patterns that will not be sustainable with the normal bus services that is on offer. VOI E-Scooters will be an integral part of this scheme and would help with the movement of people to and from Brackmills.
- There was initial scepticism when the E-Scooters were first introduced but now much of the workforce rely on them.
- VOI is a socially responsible organisation who is good to work with. VOI had worked with Brackmills initially to plan out the site and set up 'reduced speed zones'.
- There is a very positive working relationship with VOI.

Northampton General Hospital

- From a sustainability perspective the VOI E- Scooters are clearly a positive addition as anything that reduces traffic and pollution coming to site is a benefit to the town.
- The hospital has a couple of areas that are geofenced for the E-Scooters which appear to be well used.
- Although there were originally issues with the E-Scooters abandoned on site, Staff worked with VOI to prevent this from occurring and there has not been any recent issues reported.
- The main concern would be illegal E-Scooter user, any potential fire risks from them being stored or illegally charged on site.

Local Resident

- From the end of May to October 2023 , the resident had recorded 604 offences in relation to E-Scooter usages, offences often related to reckless riding and underage riding.
- The resident had sent numerous emails which had not been responded to.
- The resident felt there was minimal Police enforcement.
- In his opinion, the use of E-Scooters did not correlate with Government aims to increase walking and cycling and reduce obesity.
- The resident proposed that a reference number should be provided for any issue raised to increase accountability.

4 Conclusions and Key Findings

- 4.1 After all of the evidence was collated, the following conclusions were drawn:
- 4.2 After receiving all the evidence, the Task and Finish Group heard that the Trial of the VOI E-Scooters meets, and in certain cases exceeds, requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 and any subsequent changes to those requirements.
- 4.3 There are concerns and challenges that should be addressed and/or improvements made to ensure that the VOI E-Scooter trial within Northampton and the wider communities is continued but that overall the economic and environmental benefits provide a compelling case for the retention of the scheme.
- 4.4 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should VOI E-Scooters become permanent following the Trial, there would be a need for improvements to be made to the infrastructure to support this.
- 4.5 Evidence received from VOI, business and the public survey highlighted the economic benefits of the trial, in particular the reliance of many people and some businesses on scooters as a way to access work. Whilst some people acknowledged that alternatives may be available it was also clear that, for areas such as Brackmills, it would be difficult and would reduce the opportunities of some existing workers if the scheme were to be stopped.
- 4.6 In regard to the environmental benefits whilst difficult to be definitive on the actual figure of carbon reduction the high use of E-scooters and reasons provided in surveys does point to a significant reduction in car use thereby reducing congestion and also impacting positively upon air quality in the town.

- 4.7 The Task and Finish Group identified a willingness from all partners, VOI, Northamptonshire Police and West Northants Council to work together in a positive and effective manner to ensure continuous improvement and resolution of existing concerns and problems. This positive approach is set within the context of improving Governance, increasing communications and campaigns, works and new technologies within the infrastructure and improvement of processes.
- 4.8 The Task and Finish Group also acknowledges the wide consensus in relation to the problems identified by all parties and subsequently confirmed through the survey of residents and users. These problems are wide-ranging and predominantly relate to poor practice by a minority of users whether that be riding on pavements, leaving scooters blocking pavements or twin riding. However other issues identified that complaints were not handled in a consistent way leading to poor levels of responses, that the level of safety messages and advice required more emphasis; and that enforcement of non-compliance needs to be improved in both prosecutions, penalties and the communication of actions.
- 4.9 Concern was express also that due to the reliance on E-scooters, the ending of a regulated scheme could result in a significant increase of illegal E-scooters which are already part of the problem in Northampton. This could see an increase in anti-social behaviour, the importing and use of 'dangerous' E-scooters and also reduced effectiveness of enforcement.
- 4.10 In regard to the Governance of the project it was acknowledged that the scheme was a joint project with North Northamptonshire Council and that the scheme would benefit from a much closer management form West Northamptonshire Council in particular into the detail and performance of the Northampton element of the trial.

5 Recommendations and Reasons

- 5.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that:

That the trial of the VOI E-Scooter is continued to May 2026 but there is a need for improvements and a Road Map for development of the improvements should be a condition of any contract extension offered.

The Road Map should address:

- 1 Review the current scheme to seek improvements and changes in respect of Geo-fence areas where:
 - Speed controls and restricted zones to be reviewed and extended.
 - E-Scooters cannot be parked on an individual basis in specific key locations (ie. disabled access and emergency access points).
- 2 That parking is reviewed to improve end location via use of improved technology (AI) and infrastructure (parking frames) are implemented where appropriate.
- 3 That new and emerging technology is assessed and timescale set for the implementation in regard:

Eliminating twin riding.

Preventing scooters from riding pavements

- 4 That E-Scooter safety is reviewed improving visibility at night, ensuring registration numbers are more visible and that campaigns and messaging to existing riders are increased and more regular in regard to best practice and also to include the wearing of helmets.
- 5 That a review of the complaints procedure is undertaken with the aim of improving the process of tracking complaints via a reference number with timely action and communication.

That a new governance and project management process is set up to include West Northants Council, VOI and Northamptonshire Police. That the terms of reference for this group include the management and monitoring of progress of items included in the Road Map.

That Officers produce a suite of KPI's for Cabinet to review which will provide transparency in relation to the numbers of complaints, actions taken and enforcement.

That Cabinet considers setting up a regular all Member Quarterly forum that will provide context and challenge for improvement and improved communications.

That Cabinet reviews enforcement to ensure all resources available to the Council, Police and VOI are aligned and efficient and that any enforcement actions can be aligned and the results fully communicated and released.

That Officers investigate best practice from other areas and where applicable implemented to include a review of future policies and infrastructure identified as part of the local plan process once subject to government approval.

That Cabinet has oversight and puts in place monitoring (period in review) of the Trial.

That Cabinet is requested to provide a report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the conclusion of the E-Scooter Trial that identifies progress and issues for discussion.

Reason

The E- Scooter Trial is continued for a further two years but there is a need for improvements to the Trial to be made as detailed in the recommendation.

6 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, requests Cabinet to provide a report at the conclusion of the E-Scooter Trial that identifies progress and issues for discussion.

APPENDICES

Scope of the Review - Review of VOI – E-Scooter Trial in West Northants

Topic title	<i>Review of the VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire</i>
	<p>The scrutiny review will consider the effectiveness of VOI E-Scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 • An evaluation of the misuse of E-scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate. • An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton’s infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters. • An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport. <p>The scrutiny review will enable the Committee to produce a report which makes recommendations to Cabinet regarding the evaluation of the VOI scooter trial</p>
<p>Link to the Council’s Corporate Priorities (from Form A)</p>	<p>E-scooters offer increased accessibility in the town centre, major employment locations as well as access to local services including health care and leisure.</p> <p>The provision of E-scooters may encourage modal shift from car use for short trips, improving air quality and reducing emissions.</p> <p>The use of E-scooters and E-bikes links to the following corporate priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean & Green • Improved life chances • Connected Communities • Thriving Villages and Towns • Economic Development • Robust Resource Management
<p>Key objectives and measures of effectiveness (from Form A)</p>	<p>The scrutiny review will seek to understand where the VOI scooter trial has worked well and where there are areas for improvement. It will consider all of the evidence received to</p>

	make informed recommendations to Cabinet regarding the VOI scooter Trial in West Northamptonshire, and which will be also be provided to VOI.
Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE)	<p><i>The Key Lines of Enquiry of this Review:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the current trial meets the requirements introduced by the Department for Transport in April 2022 • An evaluation of the misuse of E-scooters operating under the trial (including underage usage, issues of drink-driver usage, poor parking), the impact this has on the safety of all road users, the complaints procedure relating to the misuse of E-Scooters and enforcement where appropriate. • An evaluation of the suitability of Northampton’s infrastructure to accommodate E-scooters. • An evaluation of the benefits that E-Scooters bring to West Northamptonshire as part of the options for sustainable transport and the economy.
Outlining stakeholders	<p>The Committee will ask for evidence and information from the following expert advisors to inform its Review:</p> <p>Internal Expert Advisors</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste</p> <p>Assistant Director – Highways and Transport</p> <p>Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability – Highways and Transport (North Northants Council)</p> <p>External Expert advisors</p> <p>Senior Officers - VOI</p> <p>Officers – Northamptonshire Police</p> <p>Representative of Employers from Northampton where their employees use the E-scooters e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brackmills BID • Northampton General Hospital • University of Northampton <p>Parish and Town Councils</p> <p>Chief Executive of NCALC</p> <p>VOI scooter users</p>

<p>Outlining evidence</p>	<p>VOI scooter contract</p> <p>Government Guidance - Powered Transporters</p> <p>Statistical data from the Trial included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Safety measures ➤ Scooter usage data, including Km travelled ➤ Health and wellbeing data ➤ Parking of the VOI scooters ➤ Complaints data ➤ Governance data ➤ Action plan - VOI <p>Background information to the Trial – including what constitutes a legal E-Scooter, where they can be ridden and by whom; “no ride” zones</p> <p>Compliments and complaints procedure</p>
<p>Outlining Briefings and/or site visits</p>	<p>VOI has offered a visit to their establishment in Northampton for Councillors to understand their operation more fully and its impact.</p> <p>It is important that any recommendations are deliverable therefore it may be necessary to provide context or research from other schemes delivering similar services.</p>
<p>Risks</p>	<p>The subject matter of this Review is relatively wide and could involve evidence from a large number of groups, therefore a number of meetings may be required which may make a report to January 2024 cabinet (as per the proposal form) difficult to achieve.</p> <p>Risks will be mitigated by agreeing in advance of the commencement of the Review a series of dates for meetings with focussed agendas allowing for the correct experts/witnesses to be available to respond to the line of questioning at each meeting.</p>
<p>Membership</p>	<p>A Task and Finish Group to be convened. Membership to comprise all Members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Councillors E Roberts and Z Smith invited to join the Task and Finish Group.</p>
<p>Timeframe</p>	<p><i>Set out the dates and times of the meetings here. It is good practice to check the availability of any witnesses or stakeholders required at meetings to avoid delays to the review. If any visits are required these should also be timetabled at the outset to</i></p>

	<p><i>enable the planning of those visits to take place as early as possible.</i></p> <p>The review will commence in December 2023, concluding in January 2024. The Chair of the Committee will present the report of Place OSC to Cabinet at its January 2024 meeting:</p> <p>Meeting dates:</p> <p>4 December 2023 - to formally approve the scope of the Review.</p> <p>Task and Finish Group meetings:</p> <p>4 December 2023</p> <p>Receive evidence from:</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste</p> <p>Assistant Director – Highways and Transport</p> <p>Head of Economic Growth & Sustainability– Highways and Transport (North Northants Council)</p> <p>Representative(s) from Northamptonshire Police</p> <p>18 December 2023 - Task and Finish Group meeting</p> <p>Evidence gathering:</p> <p>Senior officers - VOI</p> <p>Representative of Employers from Northampton where their employees use the E-scooters e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brackmills BID • Northampton General Hospital • University of Northampton <p>Parish and Town Councils</p> <p>Chief Executive of NCALC</p> <p>VOI scooter users</p> <p>4 January 2024 - To consider the evidence received and develop potential conclusions and recommendations for the final report</p> <p>15 January 2024 - To consider the evidence received and develop potential conclusions and recommendations for the final report</p> <p>31 January 2024 – The Chair to present the final report to the meeting of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>12 March 2024 - Report of Place Overview Scrutiny (Review of the VOI scooters) to be presented to Cabinet</p>
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28th September meeting of Council:

Motion 3

Proposed by: Cllr Emma Roberts

Seconded by: Cllr Zoe Smith

“E-scooters have become an integral part of Northampton’s transport and play a valuable role in this council’s active travel and carbon-reducing schemes by providing cheap, clean and efficient travel for commuters and students.

But the ongoing trial is being repeatedly plagued with riders breaking vital and statutory safety regulations in the town. Residents are repeatedly complaining of underage children using the scooters, of two people on a scooter at one time (so-called double-riding), of scooters parked in dangerous places like verges, and users thinking riding on the pavement is acceptable.

These illegal activities pose a serious risk to the safety of riders, drivers, and pedestrians, especially in the elderly and disabled communities. Since the trial began in 2020, two deaths in Northampton have been linked to e-scooters, whilst a representative of the National Federation of the Blind of the UK said in March that “rider behaviour is not safe for the rider or for any pedestrian” and proposed the trial’s immediate termination.

The extension of the current trial until May 2024, agreed with the provider and North Northamptonshire Council in December, was on the condition that additional safety measures were introduced by the provider. Yet residents have also complained of repeat offenders who, despite being reported to the provider, are still seen later riding on pavements or double riding. Last month, WNC and the provider announced the expansion of the scheme in Northampton to Moulton and Collingtree, despite ongoing concerns from residents over their safety.

This council acknowledges and welcomes the ‘We share the road’ campaign being run jointly with Northamptonshire Police to raise awareness of the rules of the road for e-scooters, but also recognises that better policing and evaluation of the trial is required. It therefore calls on the Cabinet to:

- Assure the Council it has enacted all of the additional e-scooter trial requirements the Department for Transport introduced in April 2022 to ensure the trials were as safe as possible
- Conduct a full evaluation into the safety measures of e-scooters, including consulting with Northamptonshire Police on better policing of underage and drink-driver users and the widespread problem of poor parking, and their complaints procedure
- Conduct an evaluation into the suitability of Northampton’s infrastructure to accommodate e-scooters and e-bikes and how this could be improved should they become legal
- Forward the results of these evaluations to the Members of Parliament for West Northamptonshire to take to Parliament as it continues to discuss and prepare legislation on e-scooters

- Agree to decline any further expansions or extensions of the trial in West Northamptonshire until the above evaluations have been taken place and the Cabinet, Police and communities are reassured that riders, drivers and pedestrians will be safe.”



West Northamptonshire Council
Public Rental of E-Scooters & E-Bikes
Call for evidence – headline survey results
January 2024

Executive Summary

The Public Rental of E-Scooters & Bikes survey, launched on the 20th of December 2023 and closed on the 11th of January 2024. A total of 2663 responses were received as part of the call for evidence. These were received via the West Northamptonshire Council's online platform – Have your say.

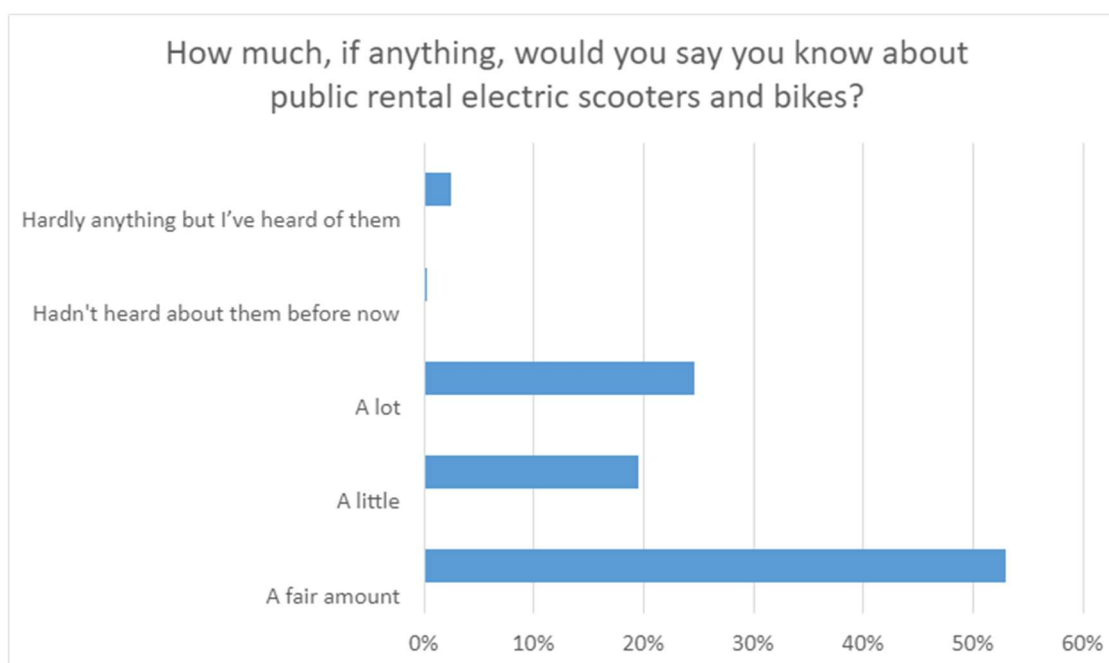
Knowledge of Public Rental E-Scooters

Respondents were asked how much, if anything, would you say you know about public rental e-scooters and bikes. There were 2729 responses to this question 1446 stated they knew a fair amount whereas 77 hadn't heard about them before now or knew hardly anything about but had heard of them.

Table 1: **How much, if anything, would you say you know about public rental electric scooters and bikes?**

Answer	Count	Per cent (%)
A fair amount	1446	53%
A little	533	20%
A lot	673	25%
Hadn't heard about them before now	8	0%
Hardly anything but I've heard of them	69	3%
Total	2729	100%

Chart 1: **How much, if anything, would you say you know about public rental electric scooters and bikes?**



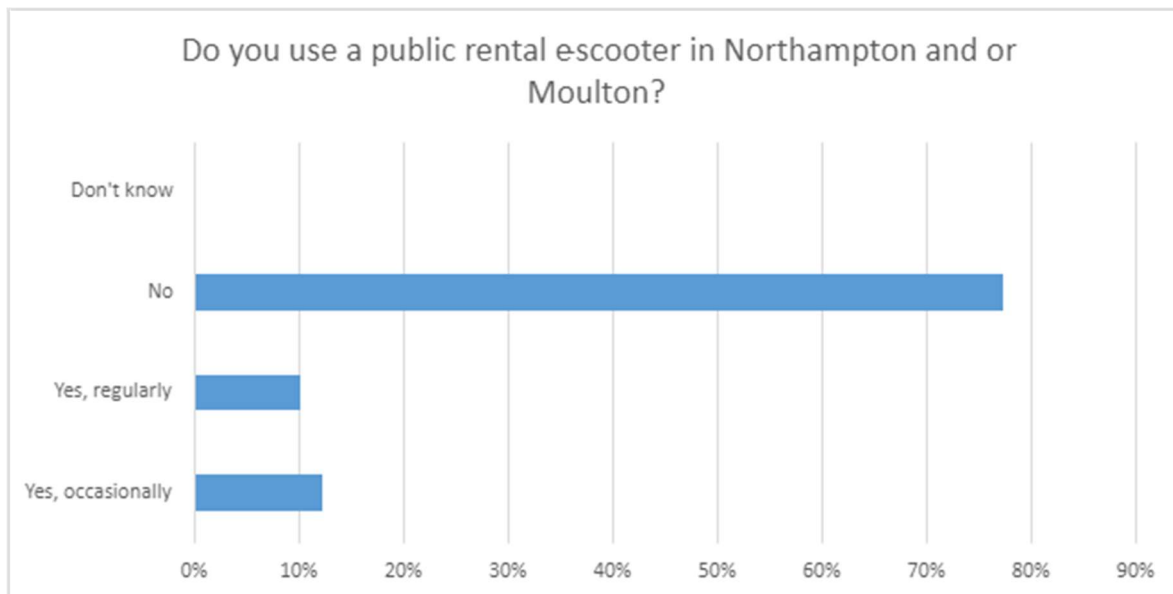
Usage of Public Rental E-Scooters

Respondents were asked do you use a public rental e-scooter in Northampton and or Moulton. There were 2712 responses to this question with 610 stating yes, occasionally or yes, regularly and 2097 answered no.

Table 2, **Do you use a public rental e-scooter in Northampton and or Moulton?**

Answer	Count	Per cent (%)
Yes, occasionally	333	12%
Yes, regularly	277	10%
No	2097	77%
Don't know	5	0%
Total	2712	100%

Chart 2: **Do you use a public rental e-scooter in Northampton and or Moulton?**

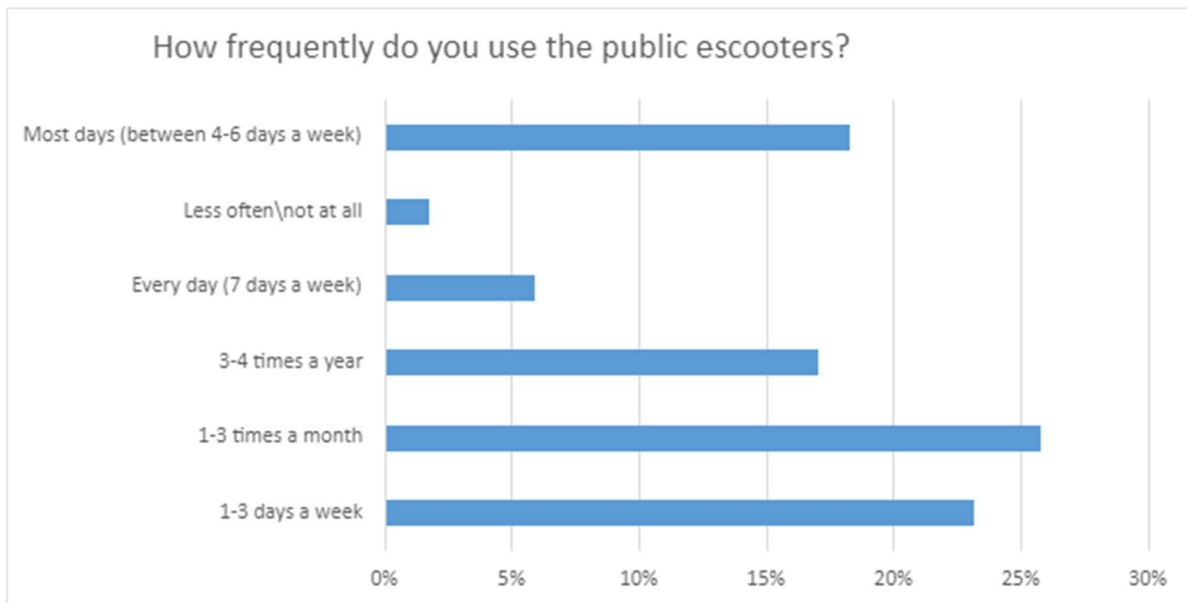


Respondents were asked how frequently do you use the public e-scooters. There were 574 responses to this question 272 respondents answers 1-3 days a week or every day or most days (between 4-6 days a week.)

Table 3: How frequently do you use public e-scooters?

Answer	Count	Per cent (%)
1-3 days a week	133	23%
1-3 times a month	148	26%
3-4 times a year	98	17%
Every day (7 days a week)	34	6%
Less often\not at all	10	2%
Most days (between 4-6 days a week)	105	18%
Once or twice a year	46	8%
Total	574	100%

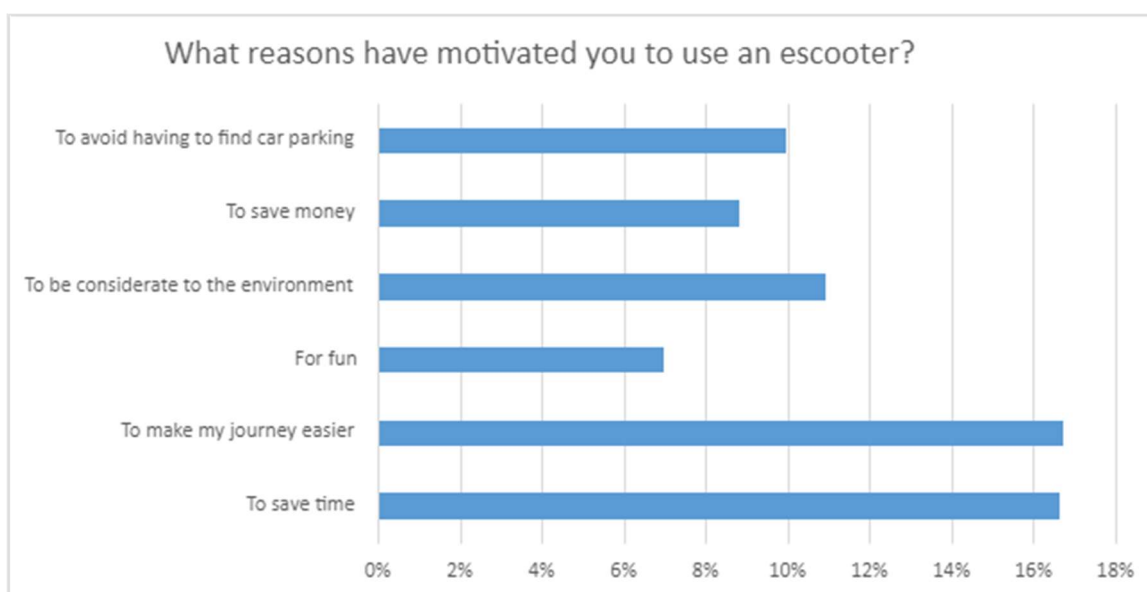
Chart 3: How frequently do you use public e-scooters?



Motivations for Using an E-Scooter

Respondents were asked what reasons have motivated you to use an e-scooter. The most selected responses were to make my journey easier with 381 selections and to save time with 379.

Chart 4: **What reasons have motivated you to use an e-scooter?**



Alternative Transport for E-Scooters

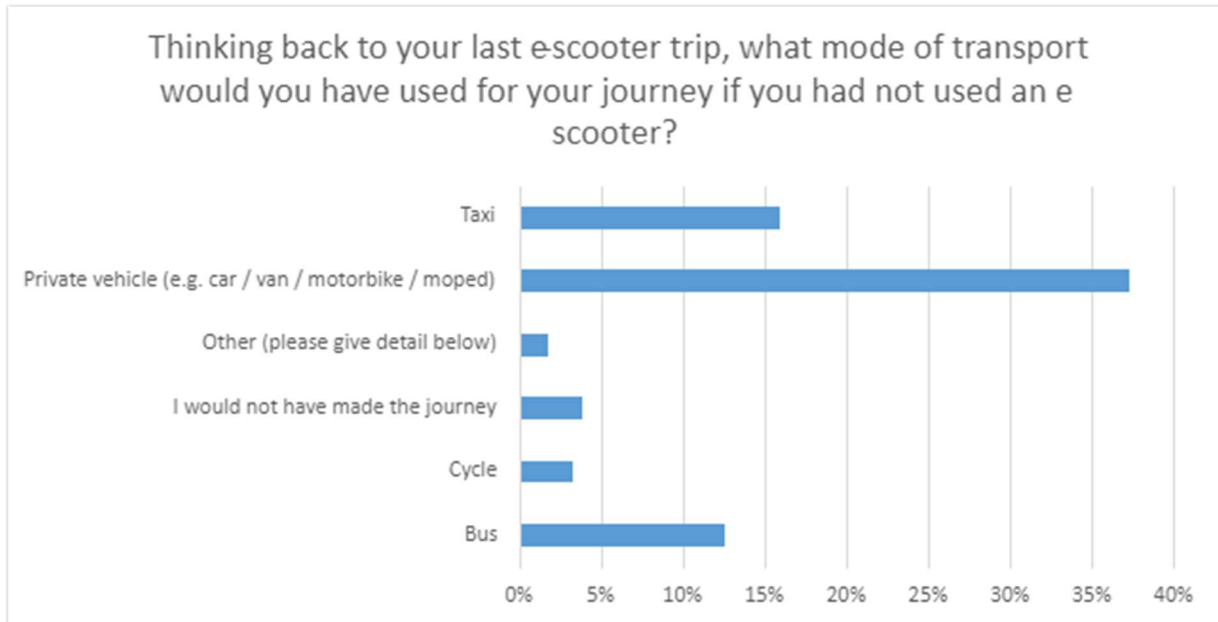
Respondents were asked thinking back to your last e-scooter trip, what mode of transport would you have used for your journey if you had not used an e-scooter. Of the 570 responses, 37% (213) chose private vehicle, while 13% (72) selected bus.

Table 4: **Thinking back to your last e-scooter trip, what mode of transport would you have used for your journey if you had not used an e-scooter?**

Answer	Count	Per cent (%)
Bus	72	13%
Cycle	19	3%
I would not have made the journey	22	4%
Other (please give detail below)	10	2%
Private vehicle (e.g. car / van / motorbike / moped)	213	37%
Taxi	91	16%

Walk	143	25%
Total	570	100%

Chart 5: **Thinking back to your last e-scooter trip, what mode of transport would you have used for your journey if you had not used an e-scooter?**



Advantages of E-Scooters/E-Bikes

Respondents were asked what you think are the advantages, if any of electric scooters/e-bikes. The two most selected answers were good for people who can't travel (far) by foot/bike chosen by 942 respondents and easy/convenient for short journeys to get from A to B chosen by 923 respondents.

Table 5: **What do you think are the advantages, if any, of electric scooters/e bikes?**

Answer	Count (#)
Good for people who can't travel (far) by foot/bike	942
Easy to use/learn/little effort required	590
Speed	271
Easier to use than a bicycle (can travel longer distances/easier going up hills)	545
Reduces pollution/better for environment	888
Fun to ride	357
Reduces congestion (relative to cars)/smaller than a car)	642
Safer roads (e.g., if more people are out of cars)	238
Able to travel in more places (than in a car)	337
Cost	328
Easy/convenient for short journeys/to get from A to B	923

Appearance/fashionable	69
Other (please give detail below)	451

451 respondents selected Other, of those answers 379 said there were no advantages while 88 expressed general dislike for e-scooters. 11 other advantages were listed those included: independence if they don't drive, available where public transportation is not and greater security or personal safety.

Table 6: **What do you think are the advantages, if any, of electric scooters/e bikes? (Other)**

Answer	Count
No advantages	379
General dislike	88
Good transport	2
Affordable	4
Employment Opportunities	1
Transport if don't drive	2
Commute	2
Greater security: personal bikes at risk of theft	2
Available where other public transport is not	3
Convenient	6
More income for the council	1
Independence: Unable to drive/not dependent on lifts	5
Personal safety: particularly at night-time	1
Total	496

Issues with E-Scooters/E-Bikes

Respondents were asked what they think the issues are, if any, with e-scooters/bikes. Of the 3241 responses provided the most frequently mentioned areas were poor parking, underage usage of e-scooters and tandem riding which was defined as two or three riders.

Table 7: **What do you think are the issues, if any, with e-scooters/ e-bikes?**

Safety protection: helmets + Hi-Vis	298
Too quiet/ Can't hear them	93
Visibility in dark	206
Regulation enforcement	259
Poorly parked/left	596
Underage usage	575
Ridden on pavements/footpaths	304
Sharing e-scooter (2-3)	516
Lack of suitable paths i.e few cycle lanes and/or problems with road surface	70
People have a negative perception	15
Not enough e-scooters	4
Too fast	214
Too expensive	21
Issues with the scooter	31
Late night curfew	6
No Issues	27
Not in the right locations	6
Total	3241

Diagram 1: **What do you think are the issues, if any, with e-scooters/ e-bikes? - What do you think are the issues, if any, with e scooters?**



Improvements for E-Scooters/E-Bikes

Respondents were asked if they had any improvements or suggestions that would be of use to the electric scooters/e-bikes trial. There were 1569 improvements provided. The areas commented on for improvements suggestions and improvements were similar.

The two most frequently mentioned areas were the removal of the scheme and further regulation enforcement by WNC and partners.

Table 8: **If you have any other improvements or suggestions that have not been mentioned in this survey please specify here - improvements.**

Answer:	Count (#)
Removal of Scheme	573
Regulation Enforcement	354
Greater regulations	238
Safety Education	82
Mandatory Helmets	87
Improved Maintenance	8
Face Verification	27
Improve Road Surfaces	21
Increase Visibility	14
Better Parking Facilities	47
Ban/Suspension for Breaking Regulations	26
E-Scooter Lanes	35
Weight Sensors	8
Fines for Breaking Regulations	37
Better Reporting Systems for Problems	12
Total	1569

Diagram 2: **If you have any other improvements or suggestions that have not been mentioned in this survey please specify here - improvements.**



Suggestions for E-Scooters/E-Bikes

Respondents were asked if they had any improvements or suggestions that would be of use to the electric scooters/e-bikes trial. There were 1727 suggestions provided which were largely similar to the improvements provided in the previous section.

The two most frequently mentioned suggestions were the removal of the scheme and further regulation enforcement by WNC and partners.

Table 8: **If you have any other improvements or suggestions that have not been mentioned in this survey please specify here – suggestions.**

Answer:	Count (#)
Removal of Scheme	721
Regulation Enforcement	402
Greater Regulations	201
Safety Education	54
Mandatory Helmets	107
Improved Maintenance	3
Face Verification	31
Improve Road Surfaces	45
Increase Visibility	40
Better Parking Facilities	63
Ban/Suspension for Breaking Regulations	22
Dedicated E-Scooter Lanes	34
Weight Sensors	4
Total	1727

Diagram 3: **If you have any other improvements or suggestions that have not been mentioned in this survey please specify here – suggestions.**



Table of Public Comments Received

Topic of Public Comments	Comments Received
Relating to the misuse of E-Scooters	Riding on pavements (15) Underage users (15) Riding under the influence of alcohol (1) Multiple people on a scooter (24) Inconsiderate parking (4) Irresponsible driving (8) Irresponsible disposal of scooter (17) Anti-social behaviour (2) Speeding (5) Using Mobile Phone (1) Danger of parents signing children up (1) Adults riding with young children (1) Using in pedestrianised areas such as town centre (1) Riding the wrong direction on roads and pavements (2) Joy riding (1)
Comments relating to the environment and infrastructure	Scooters parked on pavements (10) Scooters blocking/obstructing pathways or underpasses (8) Scooters knocked over (1) Scooters left near resident's home (4) Good for the environment (4) Need for designated parking (3) Poor road conditions (2) Scooters weaving in road to avoid potholes (1) Pavements not adequate for scooters (3) Lack of geofencing (1)
Comments relating to road safety	Risk to other road users (7) No road sense of users (5) Dangerous in cycle lanes (1) Riders ignoring traffic lights and other traffic regulations (10) Dangerous incidences with cars (3) Drivers having a near miss with scooter user (1) Scooters left in road (1) Reported deaths (3) Drivers weaving across road lanes (2) Breaking motoring laws (1)
Comments relating to public safety	Concern for safety of pedestrians (12) No warning bell to alert pedestrians (6) Users have no consideration for pedestrians (4) Near miss incidences with pedestrians and scooters (2) Pedestrians having to walk on road to avoid scooter blocking pavement (2) Hazard for disabled persons and/or wheelchair users (14) Hazard for pushchairs (9) Potential hazard/concern for older residents (11) Accidents with pedestrians hit by scooters (5) Trip hazard (1)
Other Health and Safety Comments	Riders not wearing helmets (6) No protective equipment (1) No high viz clothing (1) No insurance for riders (5) Put speed limitation on scooters (1) Riders wearing dark clothing at night (1)

	Scooters difficult/heavy to lift (2)
Other Comments	<p>Dangerous (10)</p> <p>Issues relating to management of the scheme by VOI (3)</p> <p>Policing and enforcement related (20)</p> <p>Public nuisance (4)</p> <p>Should be more restrictions for riders (1)</p> <p>Impact on number of residents using buses/cycling since the scheme (1)</p> <p>Increase in private unlicensed scooters (4)</p> <p>Ban the scooters (9)</p> <p>Take scooters off the road (2)</p> <p>Cheap to use (2)</p> <p>Instant and flexible transport (1)</p> <p>More reliable than waiting for the bus (1)</p> <p>Great reliable transport for work (2)</p> <p>Facilitating criminal activity such as supply of drugs (1)</p> <p>Making people lazy (2)</p> <p>Negative impact on public transport (1)</p>



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

12TH MARCH 2024

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGY -
COUNCILLOR JONATHAN NUNN

Report Title	Corporate Plan Performance Report – 2023-24 Q3
Report Author	Richard Corless, Intelligence & Partnerships Manager richard.corless@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	22/02/2024
Other Director	Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive and All Directors via EPB.	19/02/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	22/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Corporate Plan Report – 2023-24 Q3

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The attached appendix provides an update for the third quarter of 2023-24 to Cabinet on West Northamptonshire Council's (WNC) performance metrics for the current year and set against the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 1.2. This report provides an overview of performance for West Northamptonshire Council for the period of October to December 2023 (Quarter three).

- 1.3. The performance indicators included in the report have been subject to review, challenge and approval by both the Cabinet and the Executive Leadership Team with our aim being to create a meaningful dashboard of measures that provide members and officers with good insight into the council's performance.
- 1.4. The performance indicator changes in this year's report reflect changes implemented by government departments in the past 12 months which impact a number of regulatory/ inspection regimes. These change how we are inspected as well as create changes in data collection frameworks. In some cases these have entirely changed some of the national metrics that are collected and that local Authorities will report against, this also causes challenges for us in being able to provide trend information for some indicators.
- 1.5. There have been many changes to teams, services and systems as part of creating the new council and therefore some indicators will need to be developed in order to provide a complete unitary view and move away from the old district and borough boundaries. This is also exacerbated where we have different delivery vehicles or contracts for services, such as Northamptonshire Children's Trust or Public Health contractual services that has the opposite effect of not being able to provide a West Northamptonshire only version of performance.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a) Note the content of the appendix detailing performance against the metrics covering the second quarter of 2023-24

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To ensure appropriate monitoring and oversight of the Council's performance against the metrics set is undertaken.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 It is important that the Council is clear and transparent on its performance and that there are clear action plans where our performance falls below target or that of other benchmark authorities.
- 5.2 The council monitors performance across all services areas and against hundreds of national and contract metrics 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.
- 5.3 This performance report provides an overall high-level summary of the key metrics that underpin our stated corporate priorities and sets out proposed metrics that we will be developing and monitoring for this quarterly report in addition to the wider overall performance framework we have in place.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 This is a report for information and discussion and therefore there are no choices to be made, as outlined in section 6.4, consultation and discussion around metrics has occurred with Cabinet members in the leadup to this report.

7. Implications

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the report. However, services need to consider the implications of under- or over-performance and identify what resources may need to be reallocated to address these.
- 7.1.2 Financial indicators included within the performance report can be found in greater detail within the finance reports that are presented to Cabinet.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are no specific 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 and Communications

- 7.4.1 The metrics included in this report have been chosen based upon the priorities identified within the Corporate Plan and in consultation with members of Cabinet and senior officers. The Corporate Plan priorities and wider service objectives are underpinned by 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. The inclusion of additional performance metrics further builds on the Council's communications principles of transparency and openness to inform and engage residents on its corporate priorities, objectives and outcomes.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

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

7.6 Climate Impact

- 7.6.1 There are no direct implications on climate/environmental impact from this report, it does however provide an update on the delivery of the corporate plan which includes commitments

to be Net Zero by 2030. This quarterly report will provide updates on the council's progress to this aim as appropriate.

7.7 **Community Impact**

7.7.1 Managing our performance is key to ensuring we are making a positive impact on our communities, celebrating our successes, and addressing our challenges.

8. **Background Papers**

8.1 The West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 provides the basis for the data and project updates that are provided within this quarterly report. The corporate plan can be found on our website - [Corporate Plan | West Northamptonshire Council \(westnorthants.gov.uk\)](https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan)



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Corporate Plan 2023-24 Quarter 3 Report

Oct to Dec 2023

Last Updated: 21st February 2024



Welcome to the latest update on delivery of the West Northamptonshire Council Corporate Plan with data and project updates covering the second quarter of 2023-24 broken down into monthly information where that is available. The metrics included in this report have been chosen based upon the priorities identified within the corporate plan and consultation with both the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Cabinet members.

The data elements that are provided in this report include a monthly breakdown of the current quarter, where the information is available to that level, as well as an overall quarterly position. In addition to this there is trend information for the current year and last year. Where there is externally published information available we have begun to add in benchmark data, covering national (normally England), regional (East Midlands) and where appropriate statistical neighbour groups (for Children's Services).

The report contains two main elements - a summary 'dashboard' type information on each page alongside a short narrative and also at the end of the report all indicators are available in a detailed scorecard view. Some of these areas are long term projects and therefore there will not always be an update to that narrative each quarter, we will provide an update each quarter assuming that there has been progress or something has changed since the previous report.

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

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

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

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

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

Robust Resource Management Transparency & financial probity

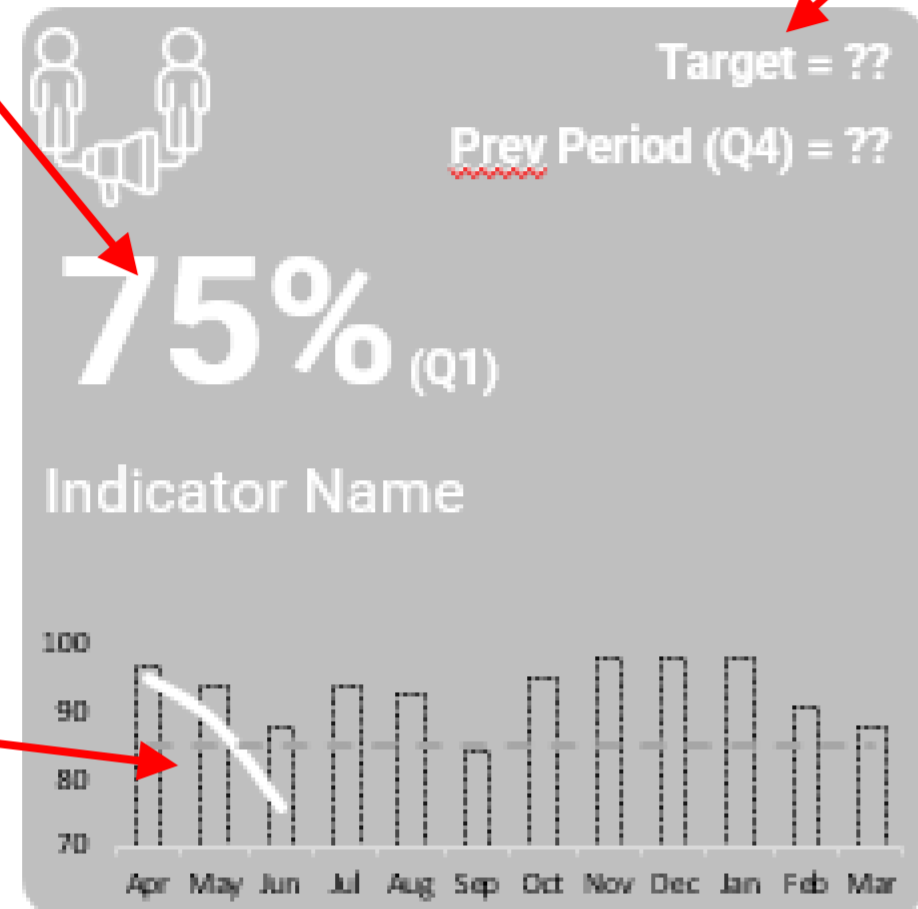
6

- Council tax rises capped at £99 a year
- 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

The diagrams below for the indicator dashboard pages and the detailed scorecards outline the data elements within them and how to interpret what is being shown.

The current period's performance.

This will be the period for the current report, unless otherwise stated. The current period can always be found in the bottom left corner of each page



The previous period's performance

The last period will states if that is a quarter or a specific month

Trend Chart

White line - shows recent trend, either by month (if available) or by quarter

Dotted Line - represents target

Bar chart - represents last year's performance

Indicator details

This section includes the indicator name, the priority it is relevant to in the Corporate Plan, the lead directorate and indicates whether the performance should be higher or lower.

Performance Data

This section includes the target and current performance data broken down to month where available, quarterly and year to date (YTD).

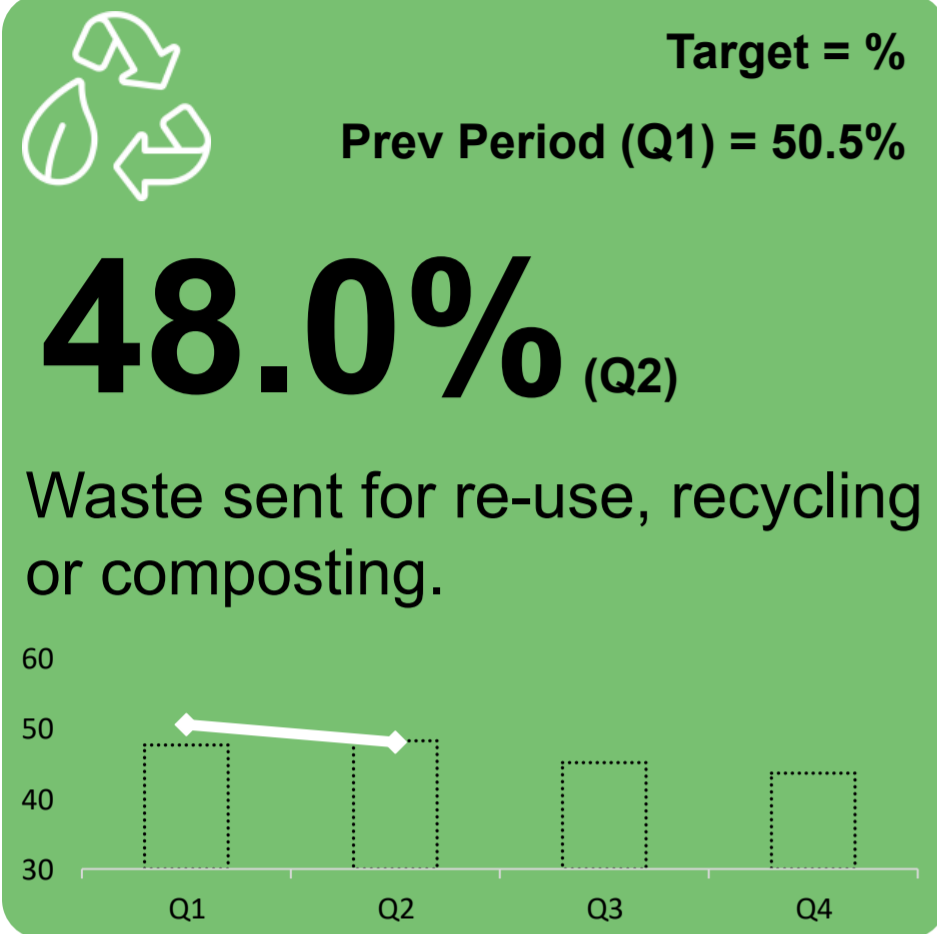
In addition benchmarking information is included on the right hand side, covering regional, national and statistical neighbour groups. There are and will continue to be a number of indicators that have no published data in order to benchmark against.

Corp Ref:	Metrics (Number / Rates / Financial)	Priority	Directorate	Better to be?	Target	Apr	May	Jun	Q1	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q2	YTD	Regional	National
1.2	Percentage of household waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting	Green & Clean	Place & Economy	Higher		50.85%	52.32%	56.42%	53.33%					53.33%		
1.3	Percentage of waste from HWRCs diverted from landfill								71.50%							
1.4a	Net trees planted this year												-140	-91	n/a	n/a
1.5	Council vehicles that are electric or hybrid	1. Green & Clean	Place & Economy	Higher									22			
1.6	Council owned parks and green spaces that have Green Flag accreditation	1. Green & Clean	Place & Economy	Higher	10 in 5 years				5				5	5		

Temporary image as an example only

Priority 1 – Green and Clean

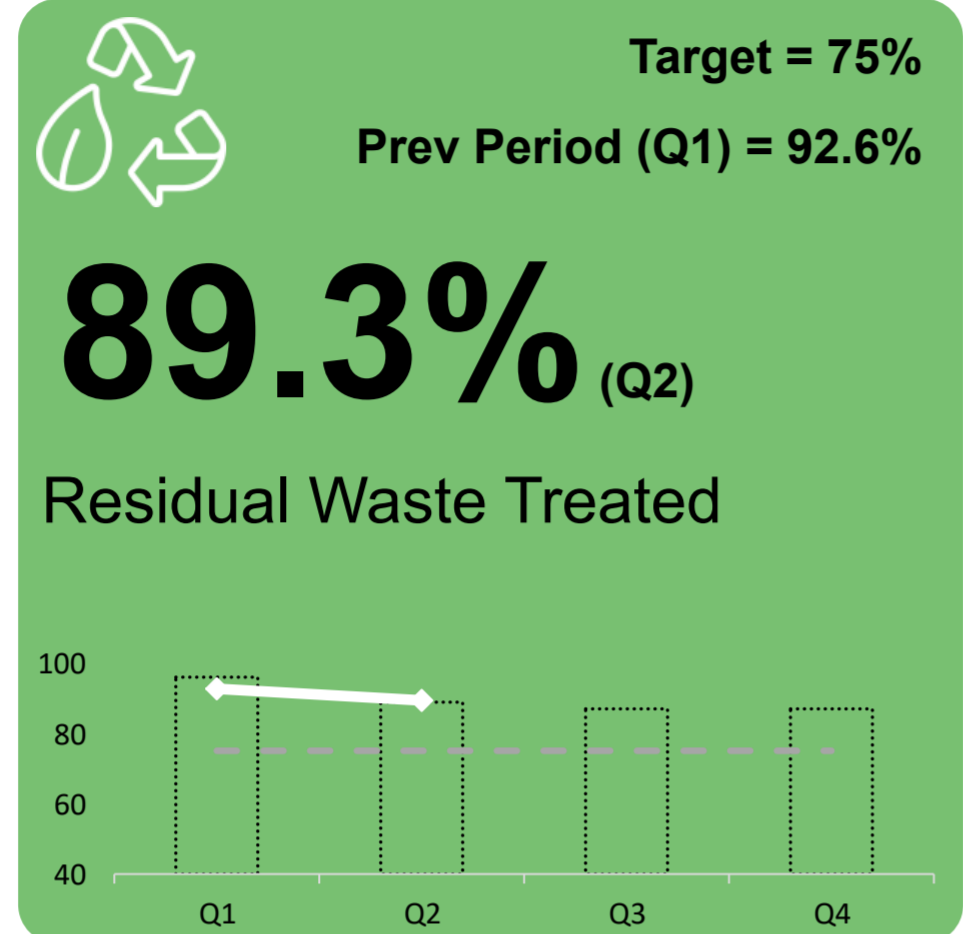
Environment & Wellbeing



This indicator measures household waste that is sent for re-use, recycling, or composting across West Northants.

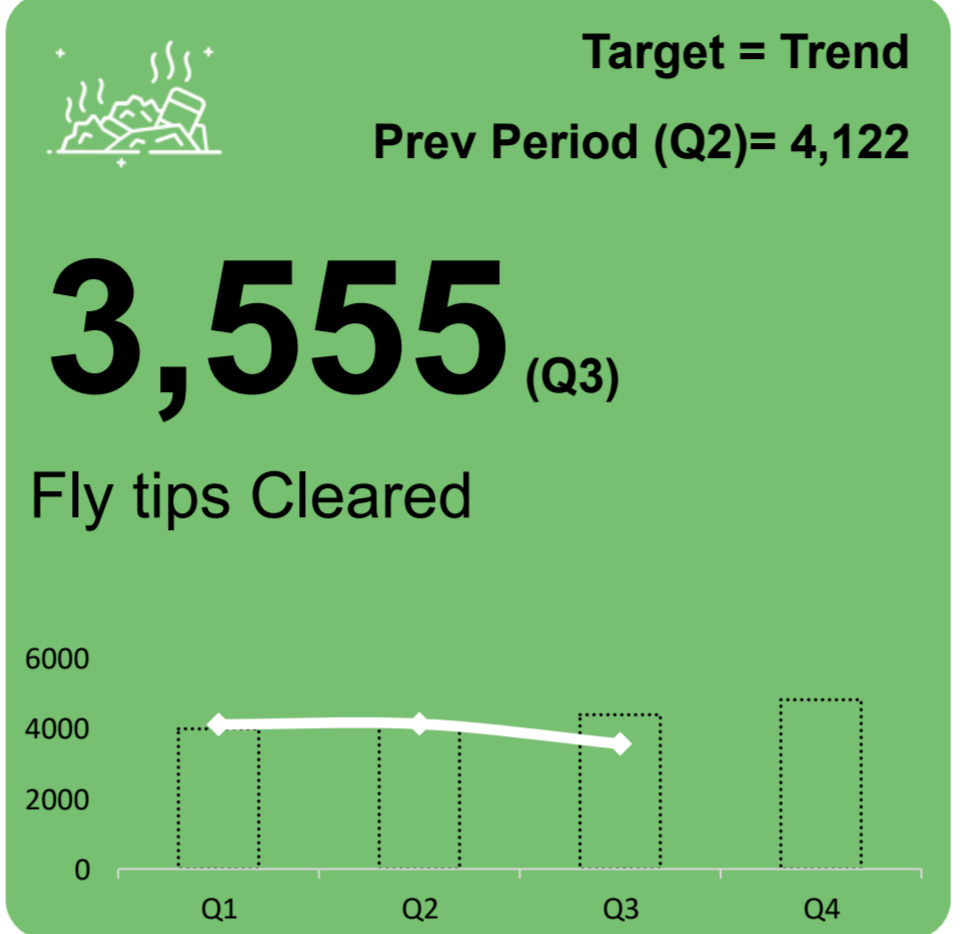
The performance for this measure remains relatively consistent across the year with some seasonal shifts in household recycling habits. This measure is reported in arrears due to reporting processes via WasteDataFlow. Therefore this report shows performance for Q2.

The cost of living crisis has decreased the amount of goods that people are purchasing and therefore there is less recycling. The introduction of charges for garden waste has also reduced the amount of garden waste collected. However, as a comparison, the latest national average for unitary authorities is 42.2% for the 2021-22 year.



This indicator measures a combination of all waste types that through some form of treatment process (i.e. do not go to landfill) and provides an overview of how waste is treated in West Northamptonshire.

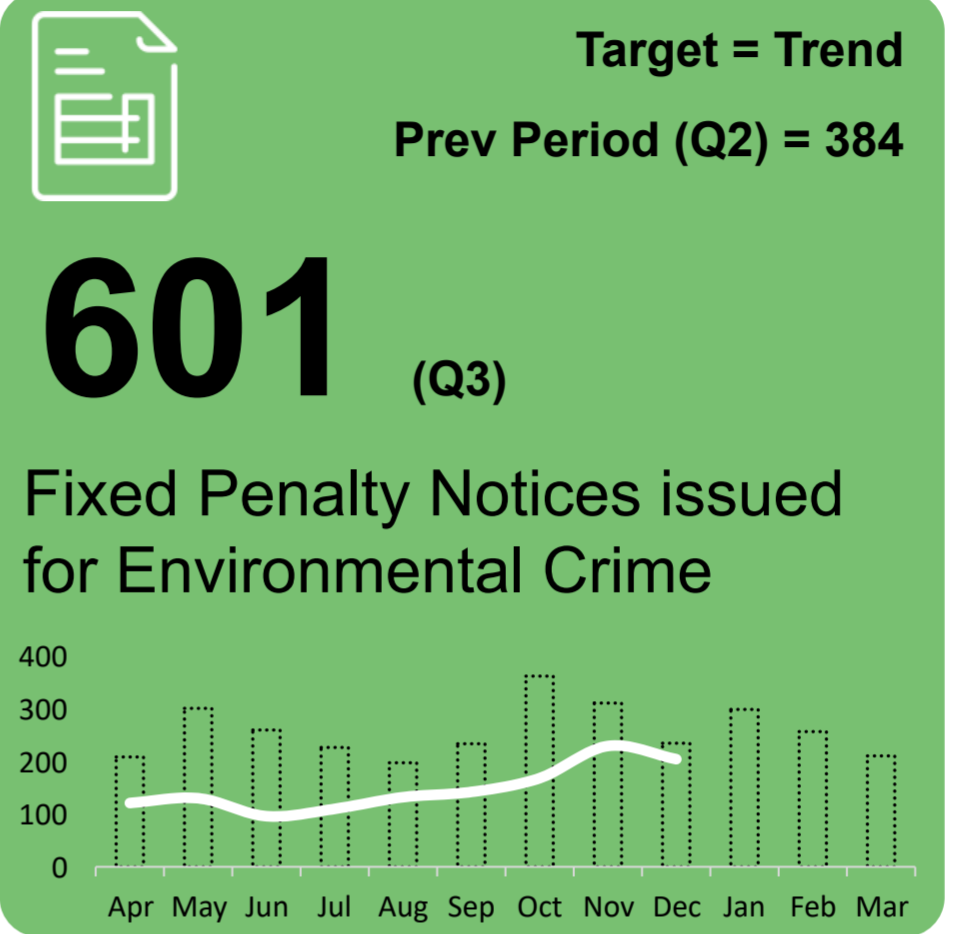
This measure is also reported in arrears due to reporting processes via WasteDataFlow. Therefore this report shows performance for Q2. This latest data shows that 89.3% of residual waste was treated, this is an improved of 0.5% when compared to the same period last year. This metric is affected by seasonal fluctuations in waste habits and despite the reduction current performance remains above the target set for the year.



Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of liquid or solid waste on land or in water. The waste is usually dumped to avoid disposal costs or for convenience. Should the fly-tipping occur on public land, it is the responsibility of the LA to clear the rubbish and pay for all associated costs.

Quarter three has seen a decrease when compared to the previous period from 4,122 in Q2 down to 3,555 clearances in Q3. This is also a reduction when compared to the same period last year when 4,380 fly tips were cleared in Q3.

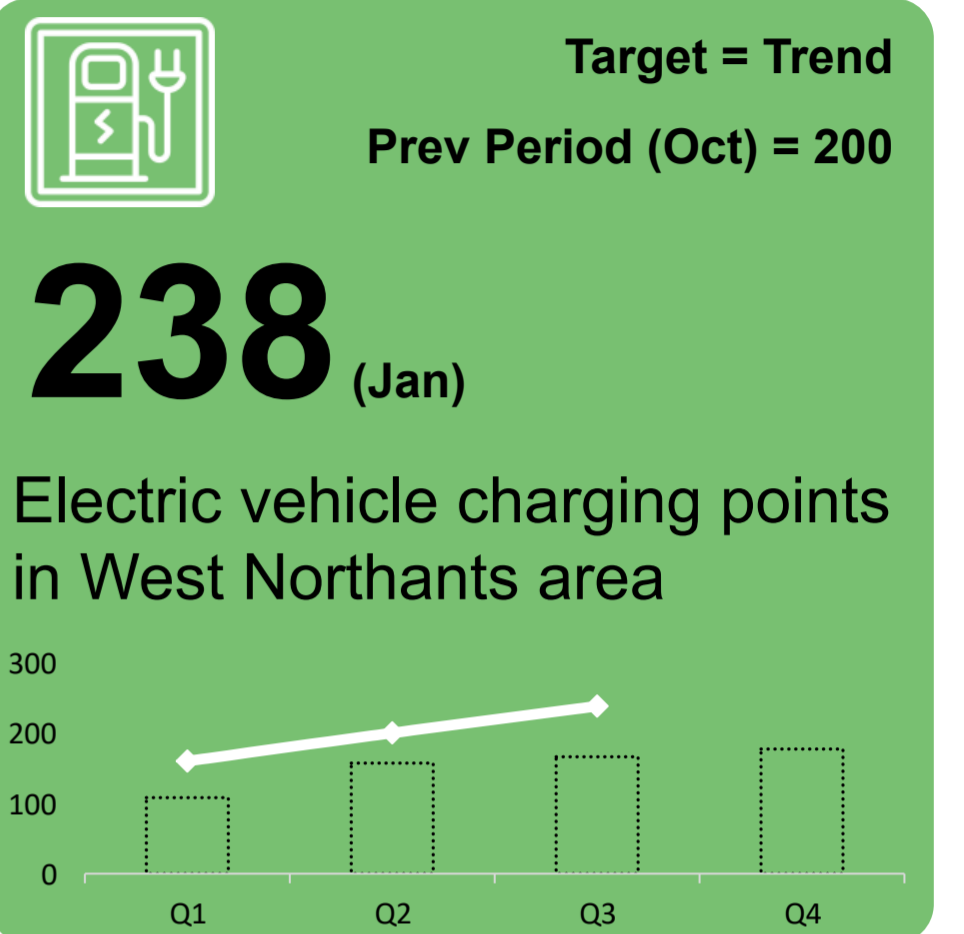
The total number of clearances in the current year is 11,780, a reduction from 12,495 across the first 9 months of last year.



This measure reports against those fixed penalty notices (FPNs) that have been issued on behalf of WNC for environmental crime, this would include those fines issued for fly-tipping.

Across the third quarter this year 601 FPNs have been issued, an increase from the 384 issued in quarter two and 347 issued in quarter one

Overall, there have been 1,332 FPNs issued for environmental crime this year, this is a reduction from the 2,328 FPNs issued to the same point last year.



The total publicly accessible charging points for West Northamptonshire as of January 2024 shows that there are 238 public charging devices, an increase of 38 since October, of the 38 additions 21 are defined as rapid charging devices bringing the total number to 105 publicly accessible rapid charging devices.

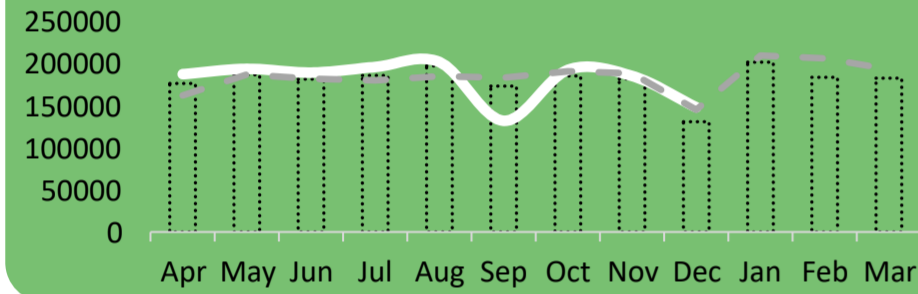
The West Northamptonshire area has 55.8 charging points per 100,000 population (up from 46.9 in October 2023). This is higher than the East Midlands (50.4) but lower than the England (82.0) average.



Q3 Target = 522,200
Prev Period (Q2) =
528,038

524,066 (Q3)

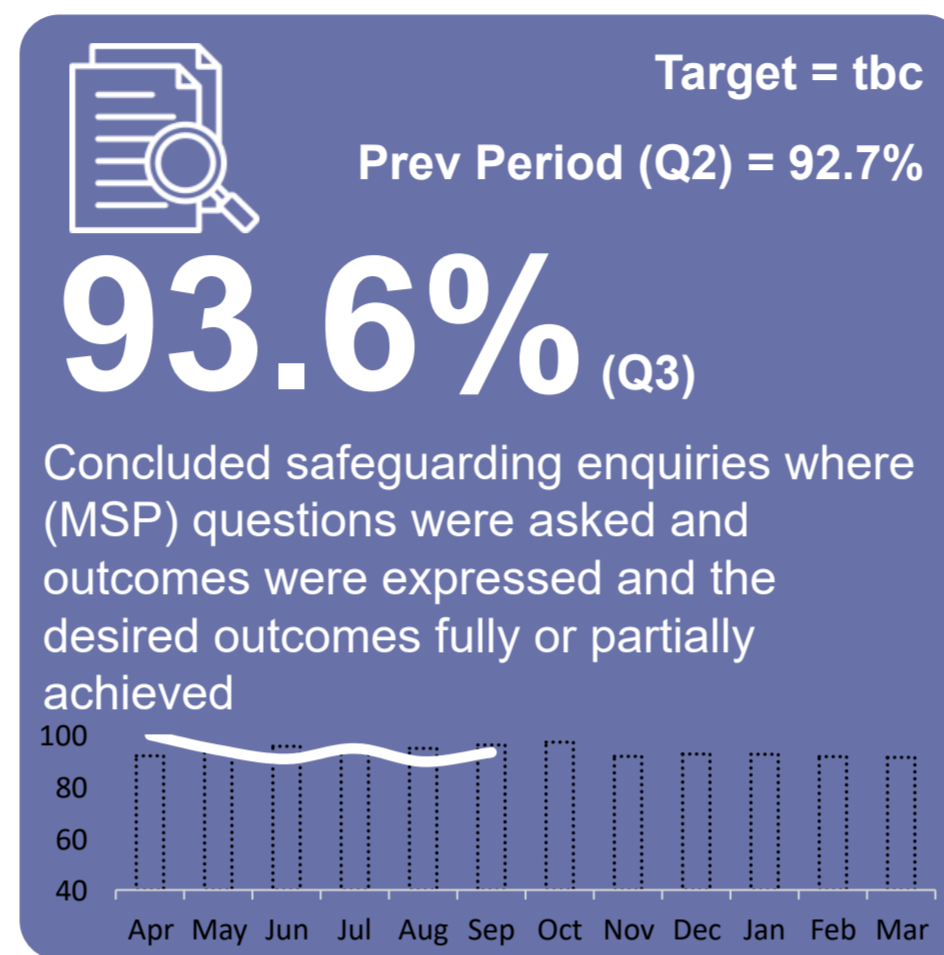
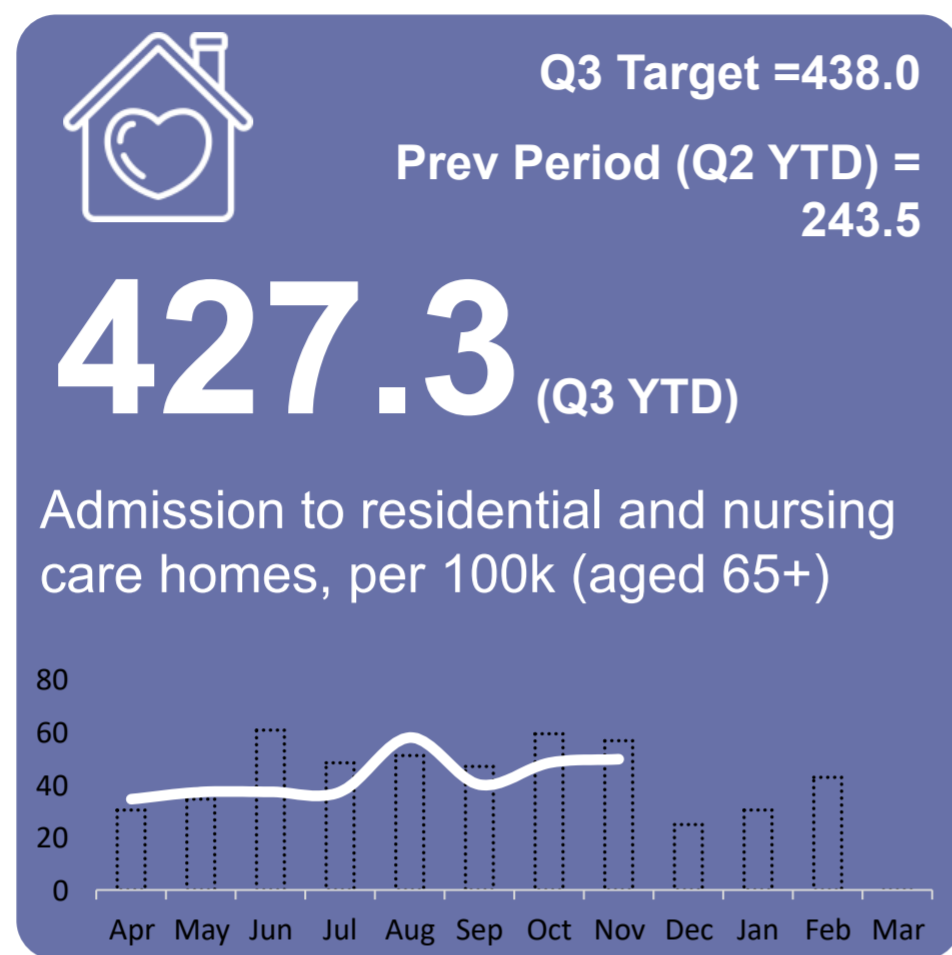
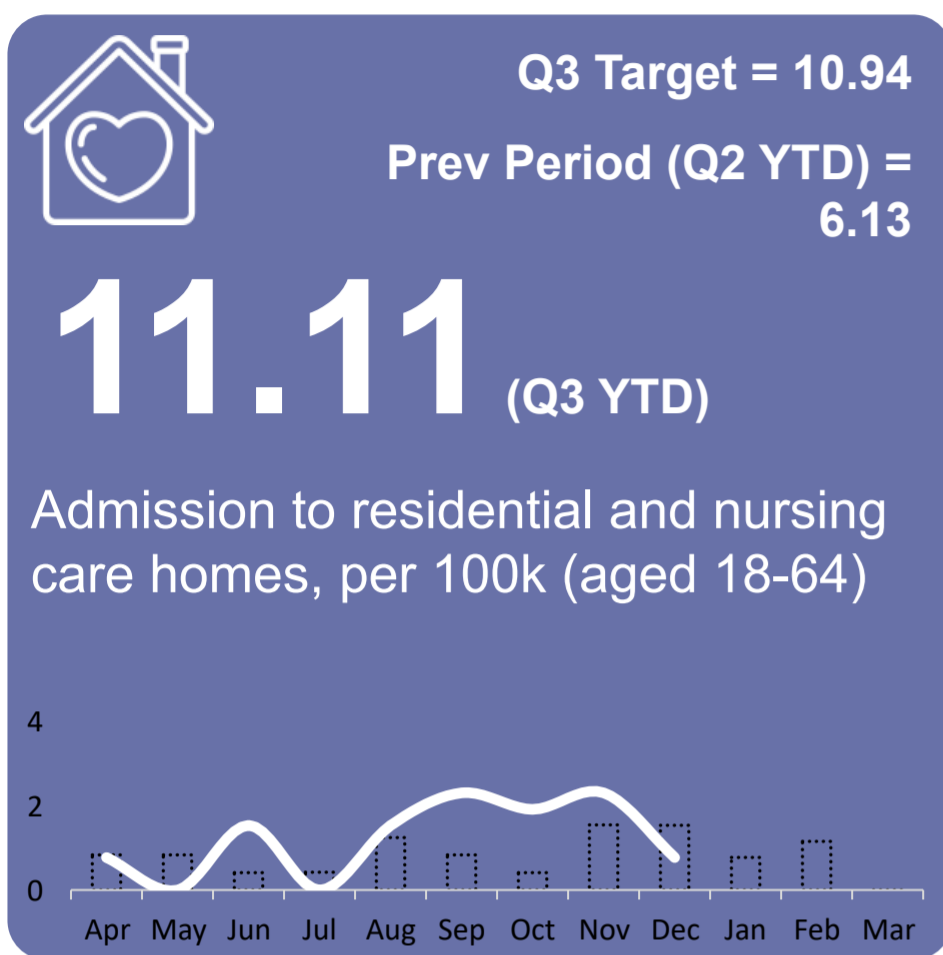
Visitors to Leisure Centres



This measure counts the number of visitors to leisure centres run by West Northamptonshire Council.

The Q3 performance is above the target set for that period, this is despite one of our centres, at Moulton, being closed for part of October to complete repairs on the pool floor.

Comparing to the same period last year there is an increase of 28,000 visitors to leisure centres, in addition when comparing the first 9 months of this year to last year there is an increase of 27,500 visitors.



Both of these indicators are performing very well, both in comparison to previous years and against our regional and national comparators, our outturn last year for the 18-64 cohort was 8.81 vs a 13.9 latest national average, similarly in the over 65 age group our outturn was 434.8 vs 538.5 latest national average. Continually in recent years, we have reduced admission to long-term support via residential and nursing home provision.

Avoiding permanent placements in residential and nursing care homes is a national best practice of delaying dependency and research suggests that, where possible, people prefer to stay in their own homes rather than move into residential care. However, it is acknowledged that for some people admission to residential or nursing care homes can represent an improvement in their situation.

Admissions for those aged 18-64

For the first 9 months of the year there have been 11.11 people per 100,000 population admitted to residential or nursing homes, this relates to 29 individuals. This is an increase on the same point last year when 8.04 per 100,000 had been admitted.

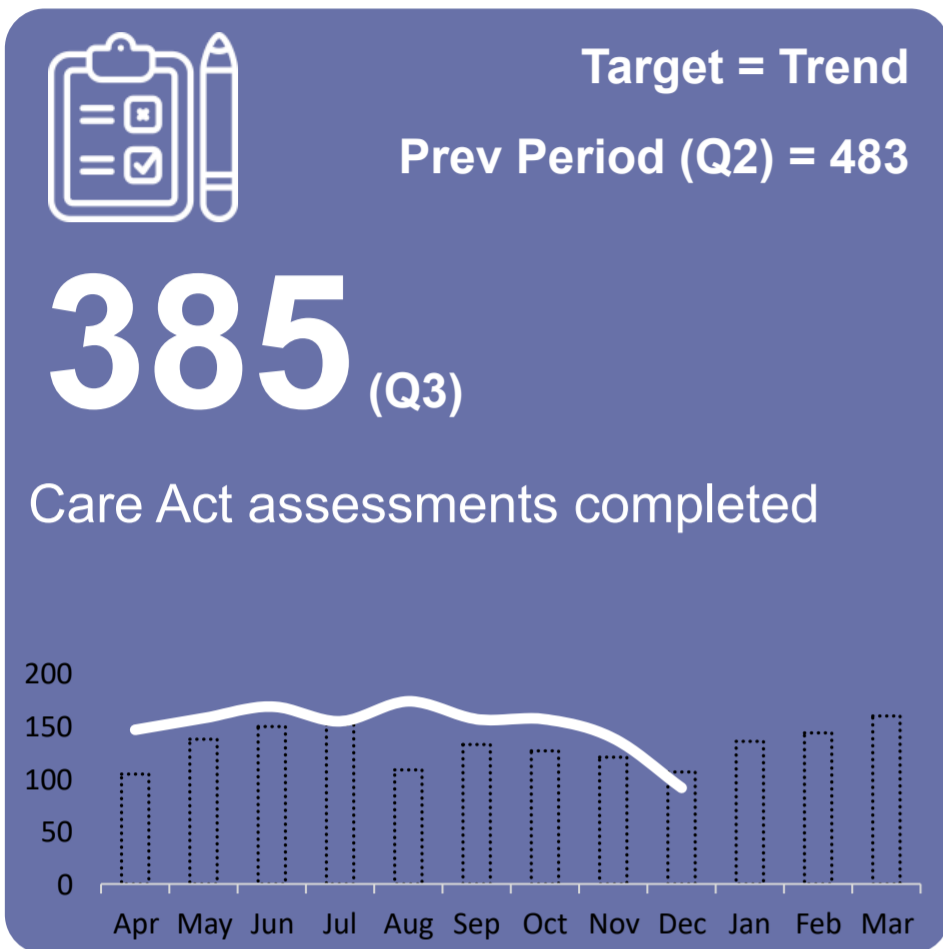
Admissions for those aged 65+

To the end of the third quarter there have been 427.3 people per 100,000 population admitted to residential or nursing homes, this relates to 318 individuals. This is a increase on the same point last year when 411.4 per 100,000 had been admitted.

This indicator measures the effectiveness of outcomes from safeguarding enquires where Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) questions were asked and if outcomes were fully or partially achieved.

Performance in this area has been good over the past 18 months since collection began with monthly performance regularly being above 89%, with April 2023 having 100% of enquires with outcomes achieved.

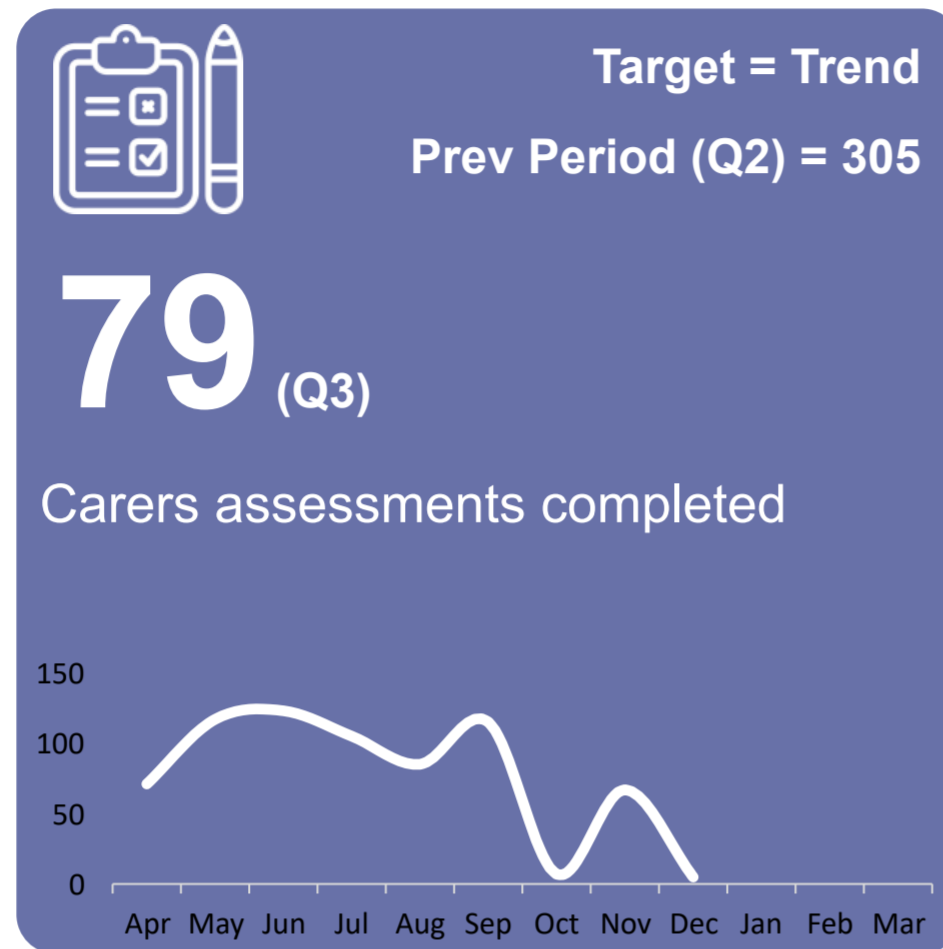
The outturn for quarter 3 which is based upon 218 enquires with 204 having outcomes achieved either fully or partly, representing an increase of 0.9% from the previous quarter.



Care Act assessments are undertaken to determine if a person is eligible and their needs have a significant impact on their lives that would require long-term support from social care.

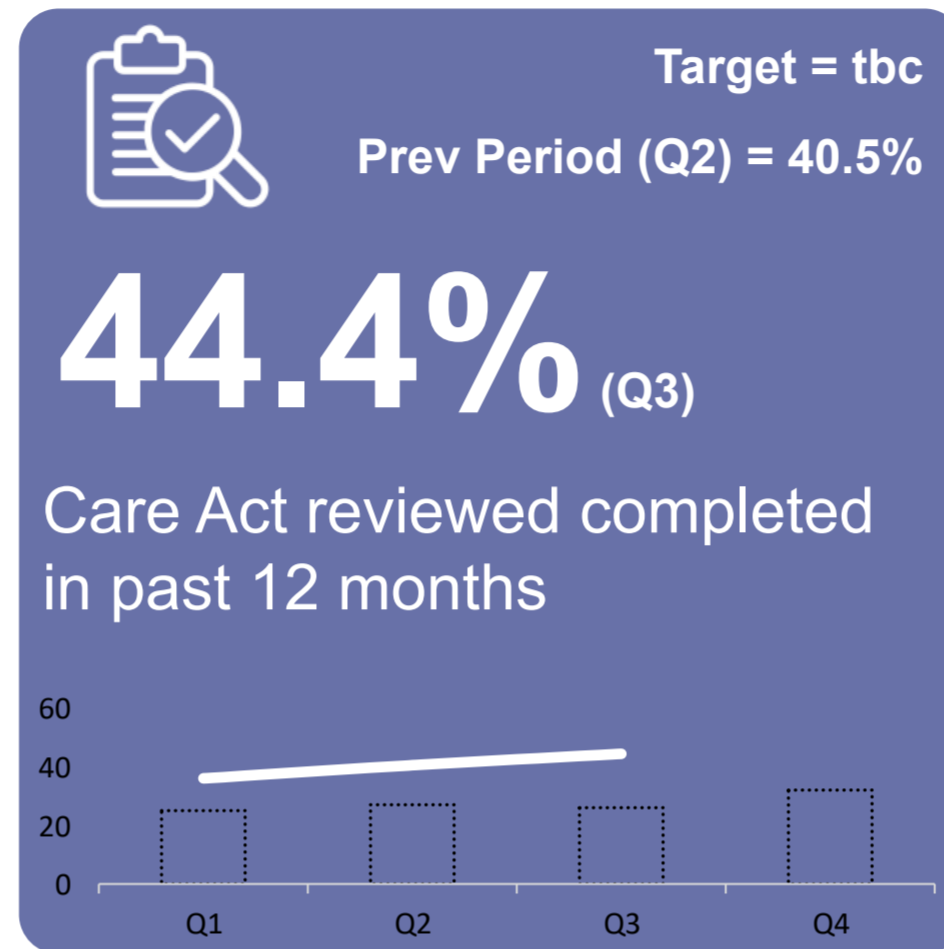
In the 3rd quarter of this year we have completed 385 assessments, a reduction of 98 from the previous quarter and compares to the 352 completed in the same period last year. This quarter's position is a provisional figure due to the lag in some workflow's completion, which will result in the figure being updated retrospectively in future periods.

Of the 385 Care Act assessments, 333 resulted in an outcome where the person was eligible for a service provision.



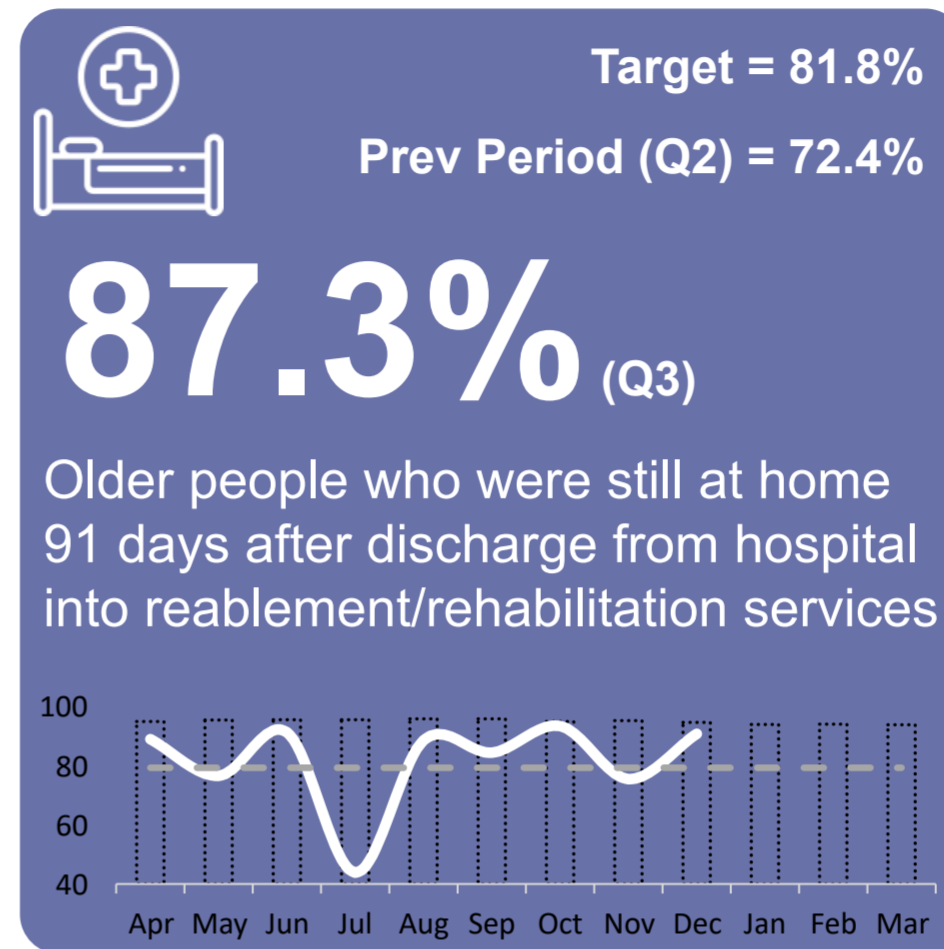
Carer assessments are undertaken to determine if a carer is eligible to receive services to support them in their caring role. These assessments are completed by Northamptonshire Carers on our behalf. Changes to the collection frameworks this year mean that this is the first year we are able to show assessments separate from reviews, previously the data showed a combination of both.

The data for the third quarter this year is appearing low, we believe this is a data quality challenge rather than a reduction in activity. We are working with Northamptonshire Carers to understand this area and support them in ensuring the data is an accurate reflection of activity, any changes will be updated in the next quarters report.



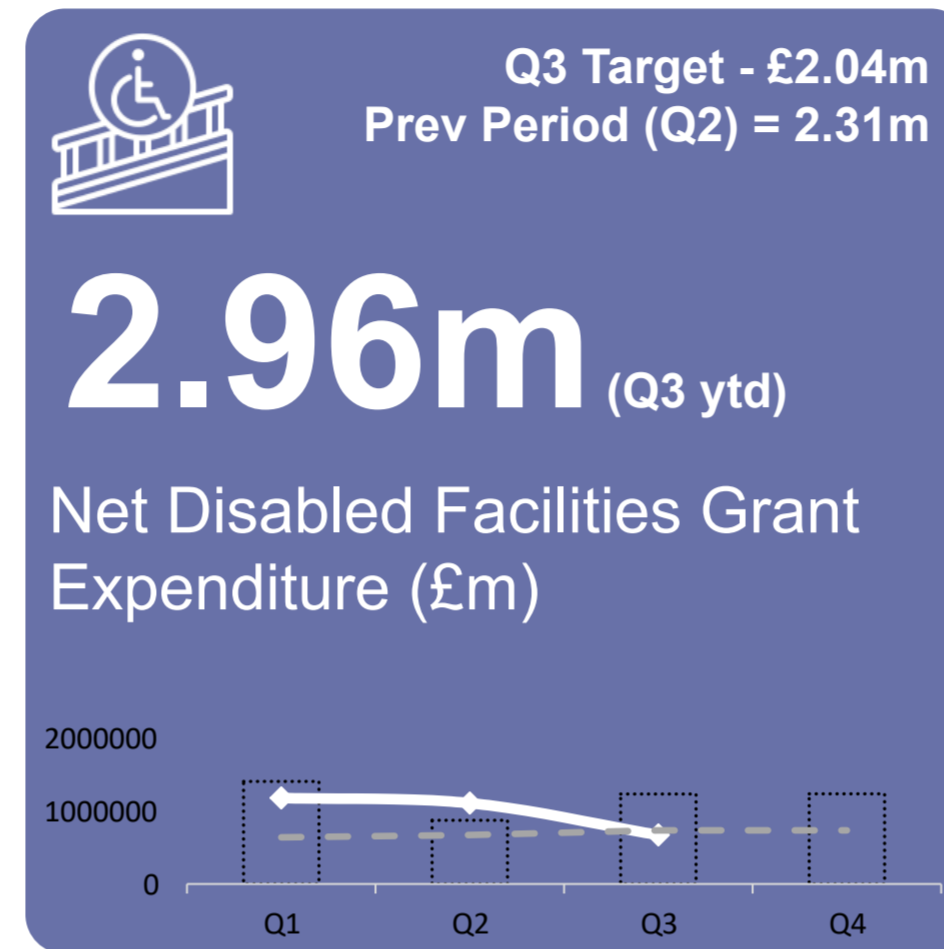
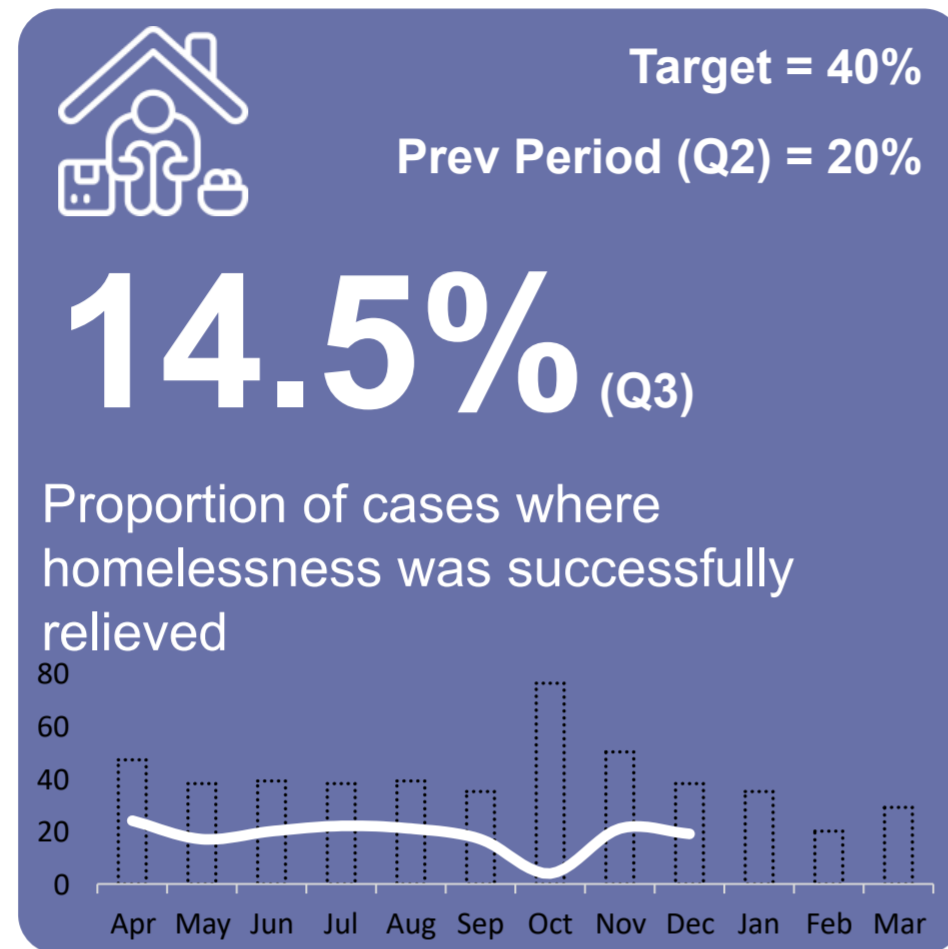
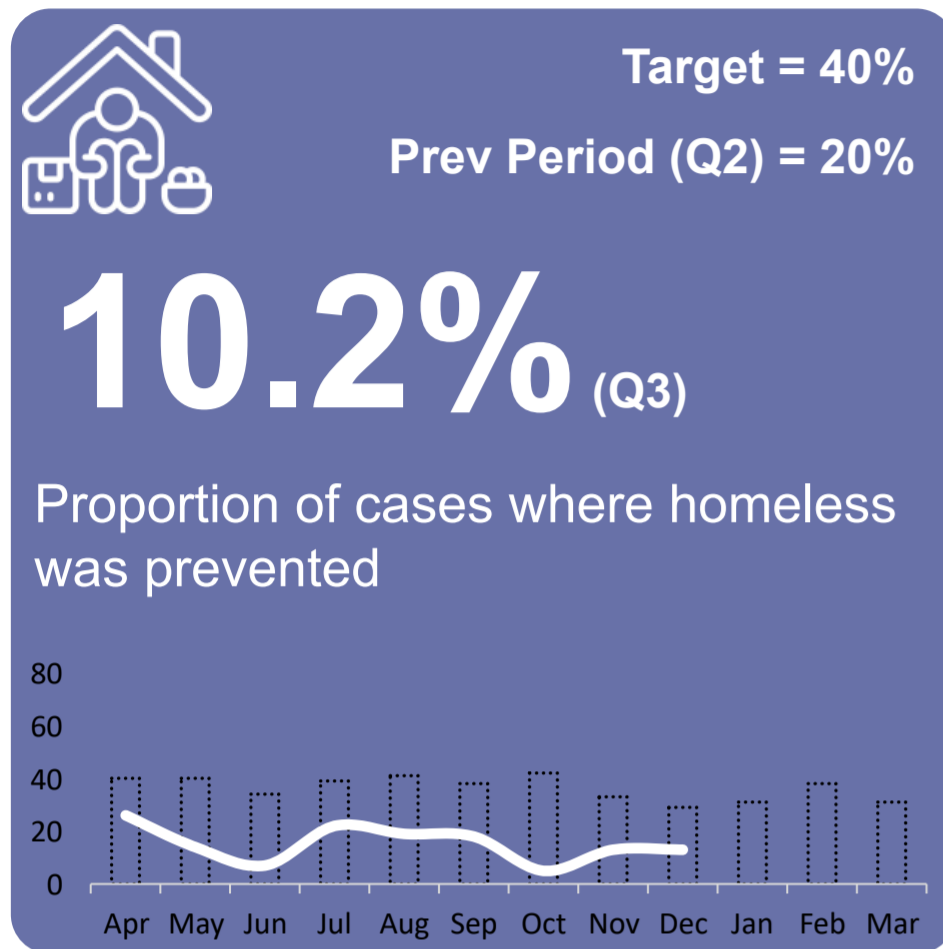
This indicator looks to monitor the timeliness of reviews for people who are in receipt of a long term service for 12 months or more following a Care Act assessment.

Although this indicator is not currently in the position we would like it to be, there have been improvement actions underway this has resulted in the performance increasing from 25% in Q1 of last year to 44.4% at the end of the 3rd quarter this year. Each of the 7 quarters in this period has seen a sustained improvement in performance, the most recent change being a +3.9% improvement in this indicator.



This indicator measures the proportion of older people who were still at home 91 days after they had been discharged from a hospital into a reablement or rehab services. Data for this indicator at the local authority level is available from the NHS Digital Secondary Uses Service (SUS) database. The SUS database is a repository for healthcare data in England that supports the NHS in the delivery of healthcare services.

The third quarter of the year has seen an increase in the level of people returning to their normal place of residence as the previous quarter, up by +14.9% from 72.4%. Performance across the first three quarters is 81%.



The Housing Solutions team are responsible for taking steps to prevent homelessness from occurring and to relieve homelessness where it occurs.

In quarter 3, 10.2% of households were prevented from becoming homeless, and 14.5% of households secured alternative accommodation to relieve their homelessness.

Actions are currently being undertaken to improve housing outcomes for households, and it is anticipated that this will improve performance in relation to prevention and relief outcomes.

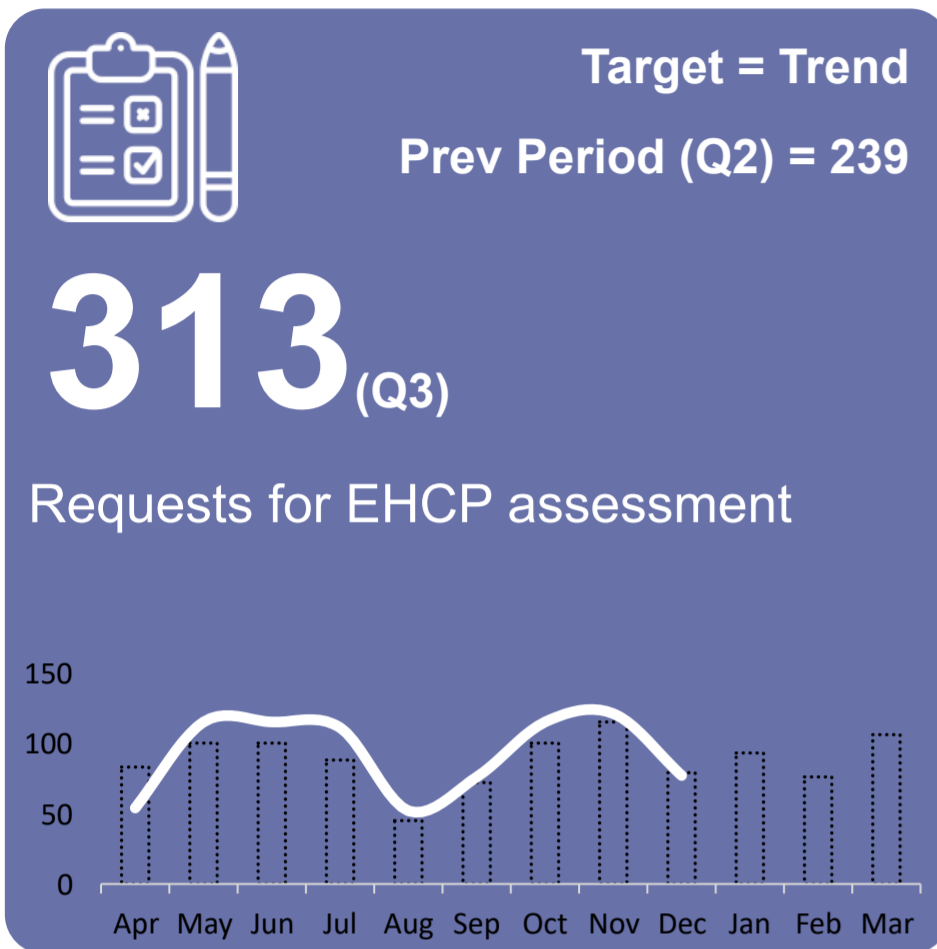
This is inclusive of a Housing Solutions service restructure which will improve efficiencies and create a focus on the prevention agenda; the implementation of the new Allocations Scheme and the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy; and the development of specific homelessness pathways for vulnerable groups, such as those who have approached due to domestic abuse, and those who are being discharged from hospital.

The Housing Solutions team will also embed and maximise key tools to prevent and relieve homelessness, including the Landlord Incentive Scheme and mediation with friends and family to enable households to remain together.

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a grant administered by the local council available to fund a range of work that will help a disabled person remain in their home. It has to be supported by an occupational therapist's recommendation. The maximum amount per grant is £30,000.

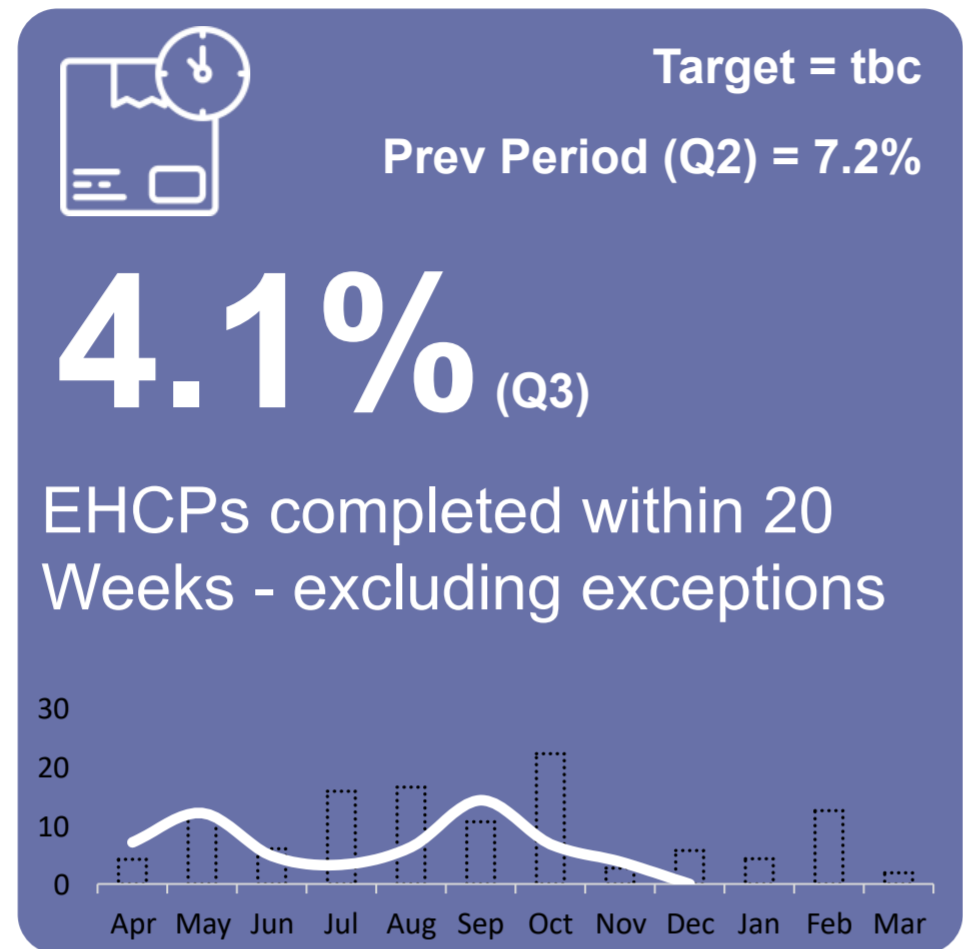
This measure seeks to monitor the expenditure against the DFG sum that the authority has to spend, we currently have an underspend from the Covid period which is now being utilised.

The Q3 position shows the total amount which includes committed spending, some of this may not be realised due to clients withdrawing from the grant approval or works being delayed into the next financial year.



Requests for statutory assessments have continued to rise since the COVID-19 pandemic and show no sign of slowing at the current time. Assessments can come from schools, other professionals, parents or a child and are made if a child's needs are beyond what the school can provide.

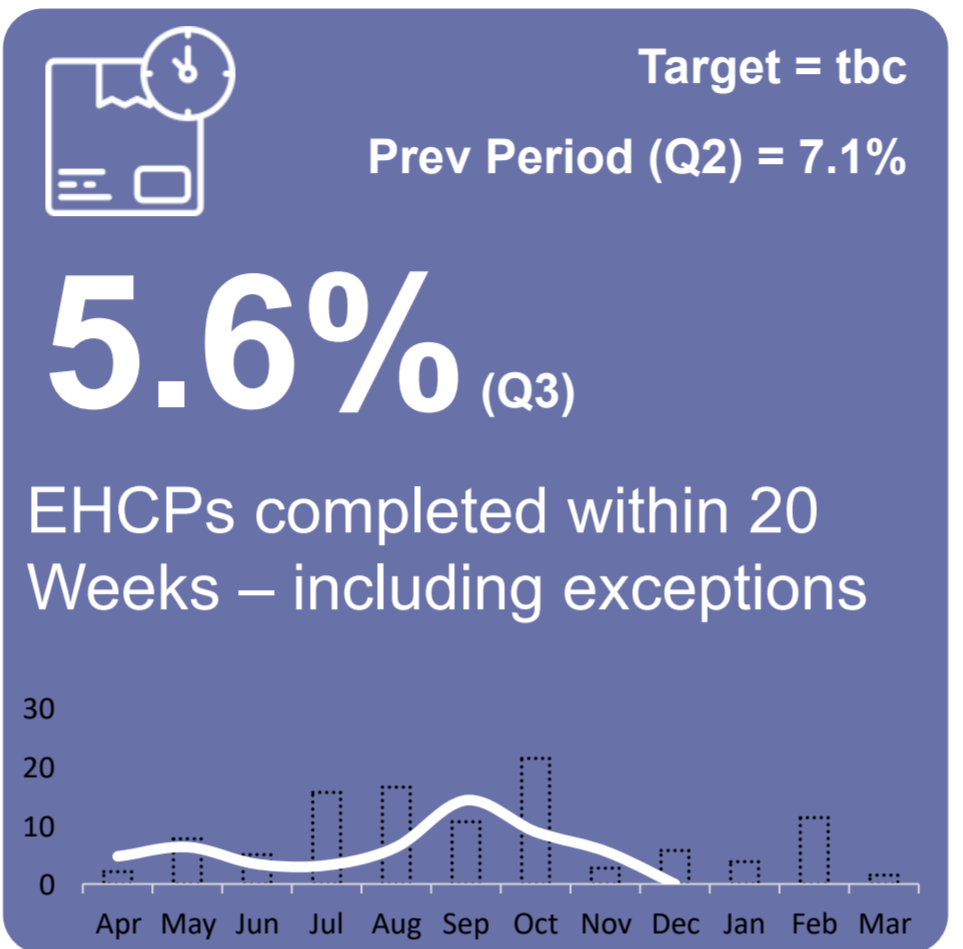
The third quarter of this year has seen 313 requests for assessment, and increase from 284 in the previous period. However, most requests come from schools and therefore periods of the year when schools are closed result in fewer requests – There has been 836 requests in the year to date, an increase of 13.5% when compared to the same period last year.



These two measures demonstrate performance between a request being received and an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) being completed, the national timeframe for this process is 20 weeks and the measure is split to show all assessments (including exceptions) and a separate measure that shows performance if those with exceptions are excluded from the calculation.

Performance in this area is affected by a number of different factors that contribute to the process of completing an EHCP, information is required from partner organisations as well as advice being received from professionals. In quarter 3 we issued 124 EHCPs (-45 from last quarter), of these 2 had exceptions. The resulting performance against these two indicators was 7 plans being completed within the 20 week timeframe.

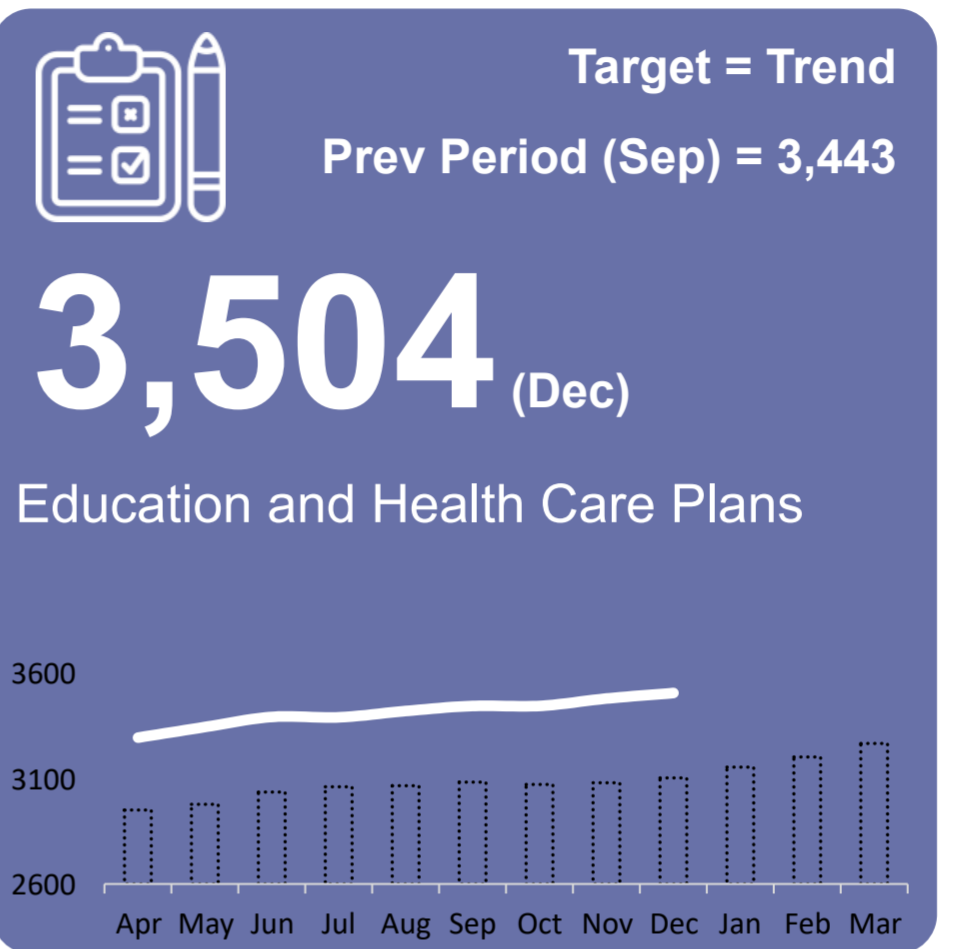
WNC has seen a significant increase in requests for EHCPs which is above the national increase. The main reason that EHCPs cannot be completed on time, is that professional advice is not received on time. This includes Educational Psychology assessments, social care assessments and specialist health assessments. The Council has commissioned additional EP capacity and is reviewing the efficiency of internal processes to help address this issue. It will take a number of months before the backlog is cleared and we see consistently improved performance in this area.



An education, health and care plan (EHCP) is for children and young people aged up to 25 who need more support than is available through special educational needs support that is ordinarily available.

EHCPs identify educational, health and social care needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs.

The number of children on EHCPs has continued to rise locally and nationally over recent years, the current number who are on a plan in West Northants is 3,504, this is an increase of 402 (13%) from the same point last year.

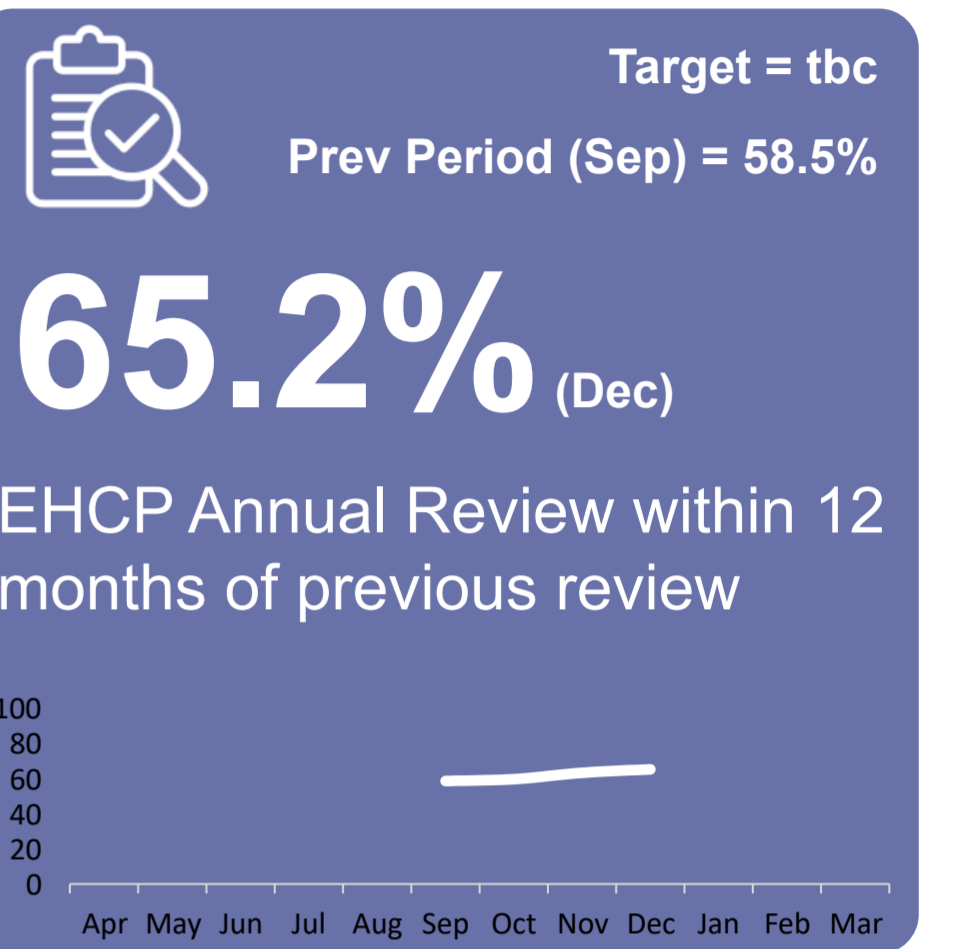


This indicator monitors our performance of our duty to complete an annual review of every EHCP within a year of either

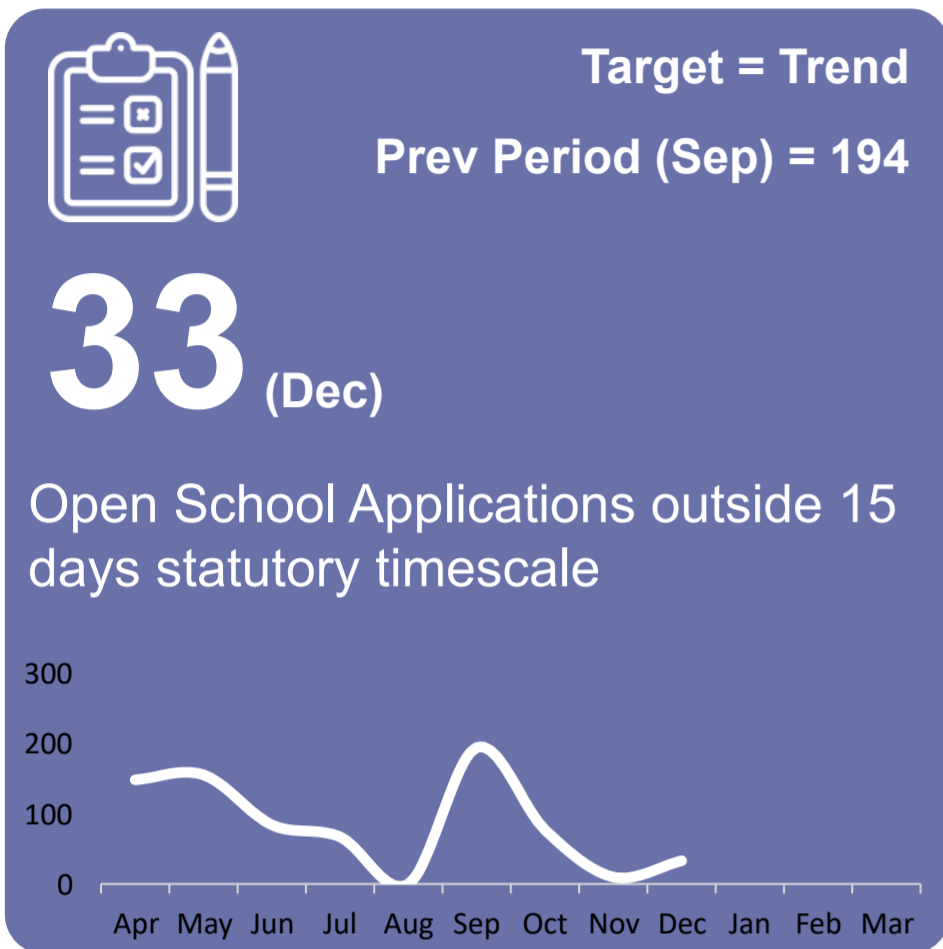
- the last review being concluded; or
- the issue of the plan for the first time

The increasing number of EHCPs in place increases pressure on the service to undertake reviews within appropriate timescales, despite the additional demand of increasing EHCPs performance of this measure improving, with the current performance showing 65.2% of reviews at the end of December had taken place within 12 months of the previous review, up from 58.5% at the end of Sept.

Additionally at the end of Dec 77.1% of children due a review had had one in the past 12 months.



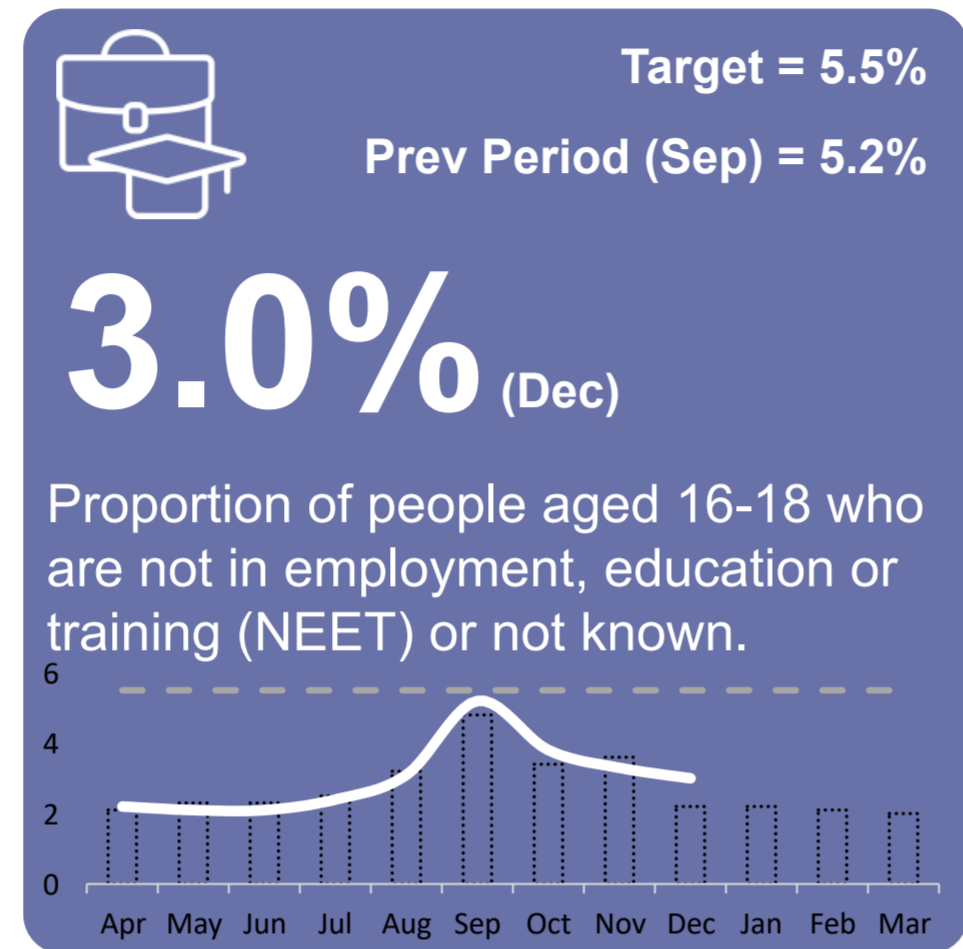
Additionally at the end of Dec 77.1% of children due a review had had one in the past 12 months.



This measure reports against those school applications which are currently open, relate to children without a school place and are outside of the 15 days statutory timescale for placement. This data does not include the normal Reception and Year 7 in-take application period or those applicants who are attending a WNC school currently and are seeking a transfer.

This indicator is impacted by two things, the volume of applications received and being processed and secondly the availability of school places to meet the in-year demand. The position at the end of September is a seasonal high point which will always show a high figure.

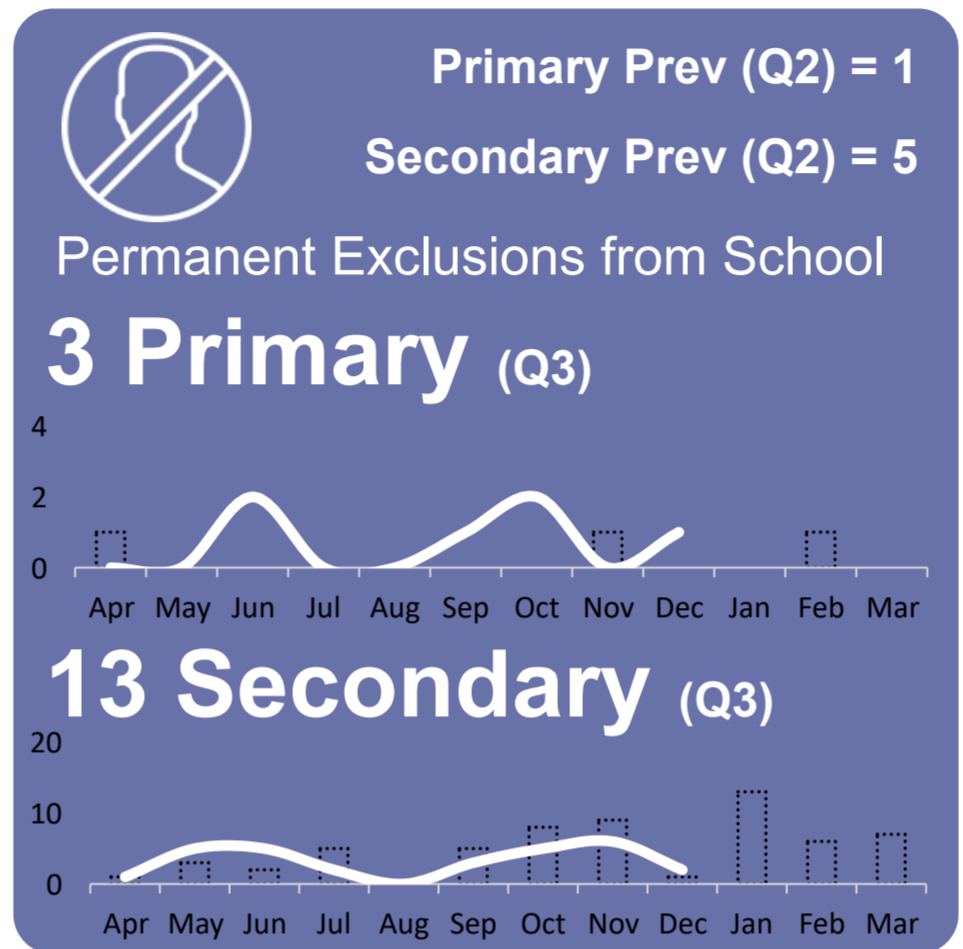
The position at the end of December shows there were 33 applications outside the time frame at that point in time, this is partly impacted by schools closing for the holiday period.



This indicator shows the proportion of young people (aged 16-18) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or their status is 'not known'.

The latest position at the end of December shows that 3.0% of young people are either NEET or not known, a decrease from 5.2% at the end of September and is 0.8% higher than the same point last year.

The high point recorded in September is a normal seasonal high due to a brand new cohort and initial reporting having to be collected from schools in Sept. The vast majority of the increase in this report is due to the 'not known' cohort which reduces over October and November as locations are identified.



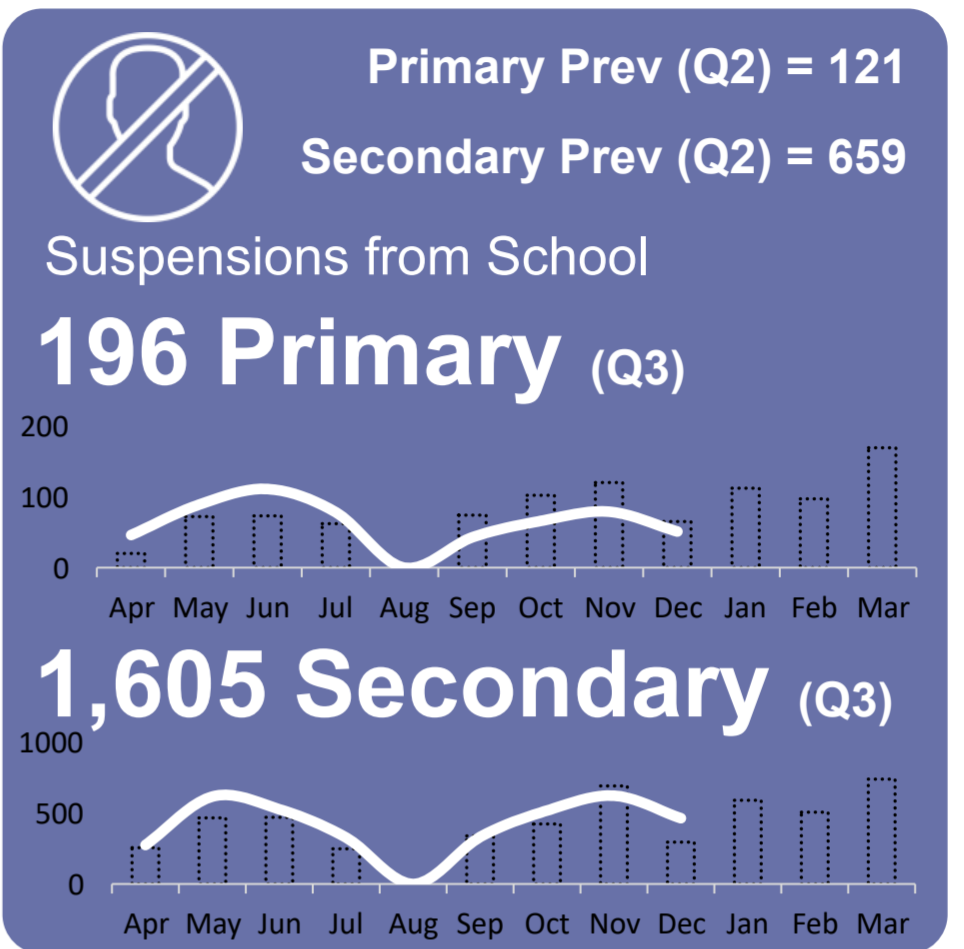
These metrics provide an overview of exclusions and suspensions across both the primary and secondary phases of education. For both measures, it is normal that secondary phases result in a greater number of exclusions and suspensions. The data being presented here is draft information covering October to December and is subject to change when the school census data with this information is received.

Exclusions: The third quarter this year has resulted in 3 primary (0.007 per 100 pupils) and 13 secondary (0.04 per 100 pupils) exclusions. However, it should be noted that during this period, five primary aged pupils were placed, as dual registered pupils, in The Spires Academy to prevent permanent exclusion.

The latest comparator information available for the 2022-23 academic year shows that the national rate per 100 pupils for exclusions is 0.02 (primary) and 0.20 (secondary).

Suspensions: the third quarter this year has seen 196 suspensions in primary (0.52 per 100 pupils), resulting in 345.5 days of education lost and 1,605 suspensions in secondary (5.3 per 100 pupils), resulting in 2,843 days of education lost. The most common reason for suspensions this quarter was disruptive behaviour.

The latest comparator information available for the 2022-23 academic year shows that the national rate per 100 pupils for suspensions is 1.72 (primary) and 17.74 (secondary).

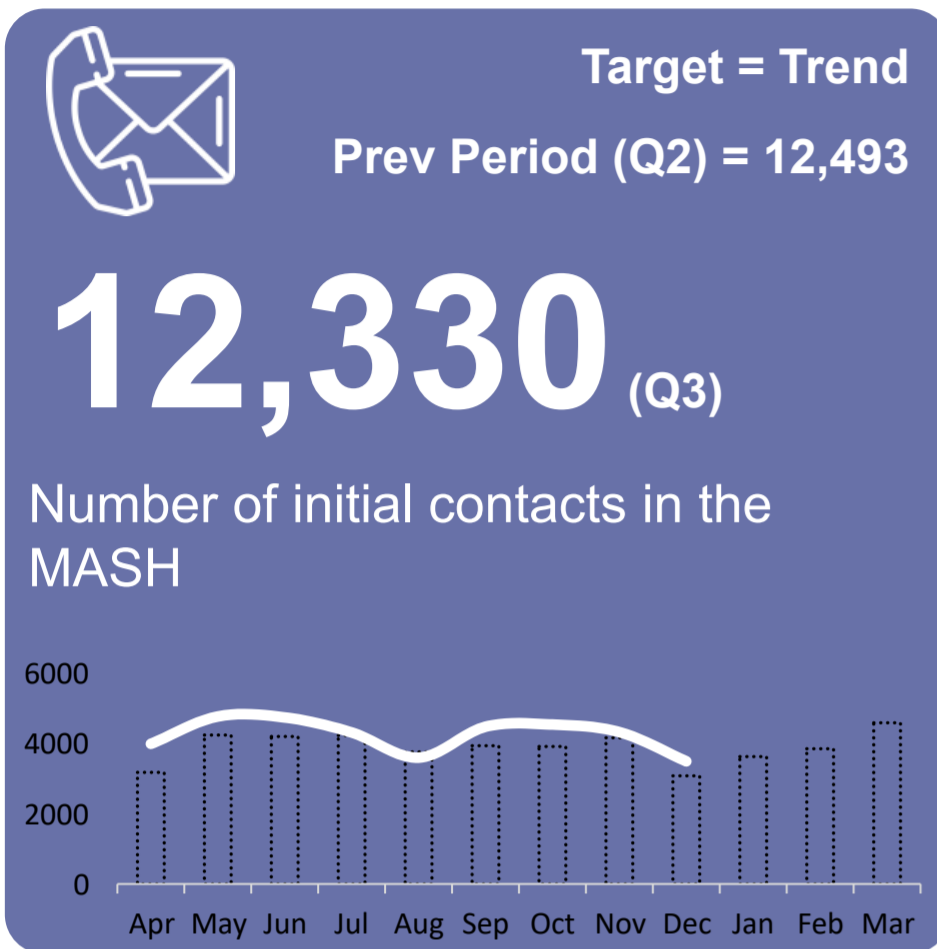


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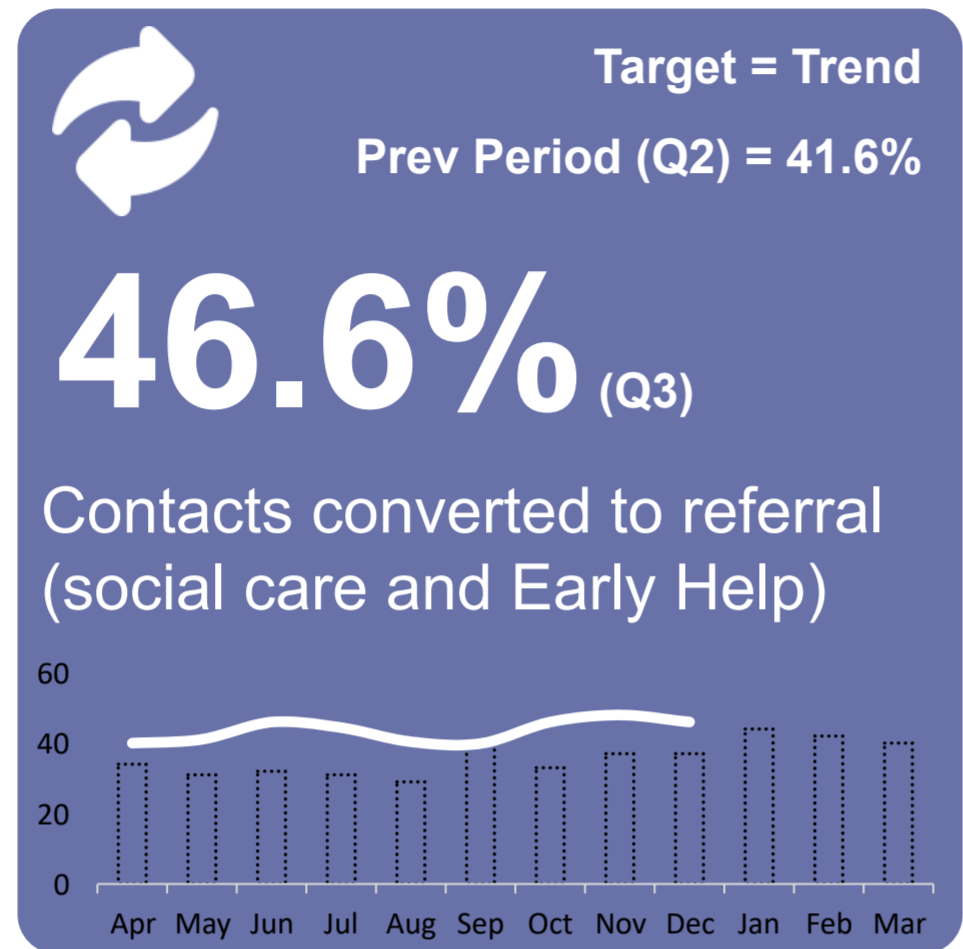
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This indicator monitors the volume of contacts that are received in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Contacts continue to be high with 12,330 contacts received in quarter 3, a similar number to the previous quarter, but is higher than the same period last year (+1,203). The first three quarters this year have resulted in 38,308 referrals, an increase of 3,699 from the same period the previous year (34,609).

Of the contacts received in the MASH the majority of these continue to have no further action (NFA) as the outcome, 57% of the contacts across the first nine months of the year.

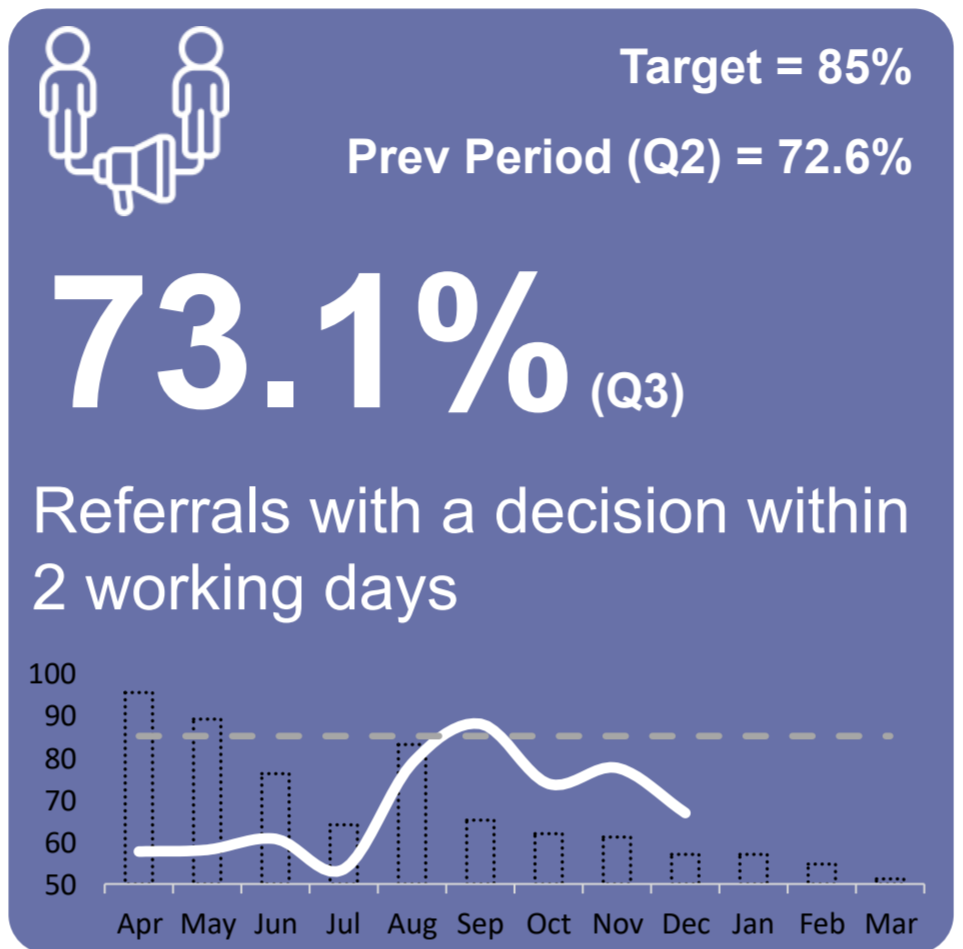


This measure shows the proportion of initial contacts that are converted to a referral to either social care or early help.

Social Care
From the 12,330 initial contacts received in the second quarter of the year 18.4% of those have been converted to a referral to social care, this relates to 2,272 referrals.

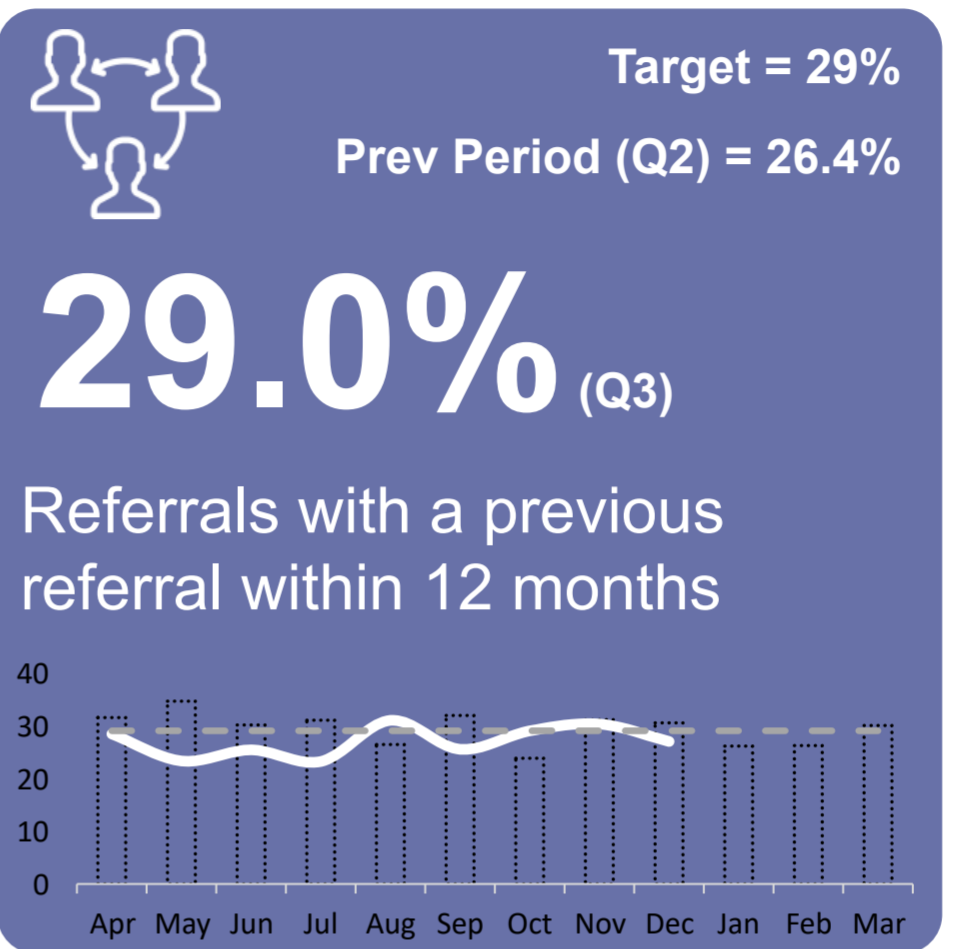
Early Help
28.2% of initial contacts from the second quarter resulted in a referral to Early Help, this relates to 3,471 referrals.

Combined the two areas increased the conversion rate by 5% from the previous quarter.



A referral is a request for assessment/ social care service and a contact is information given to social care about a situation which does not meet the threshold for referral, for example notifying that the child has gone missing or domestic violence notifications from police if a child was present. Contacts are logged to give a complete history of the child but only count as a referral where they have resulted in an assessment.

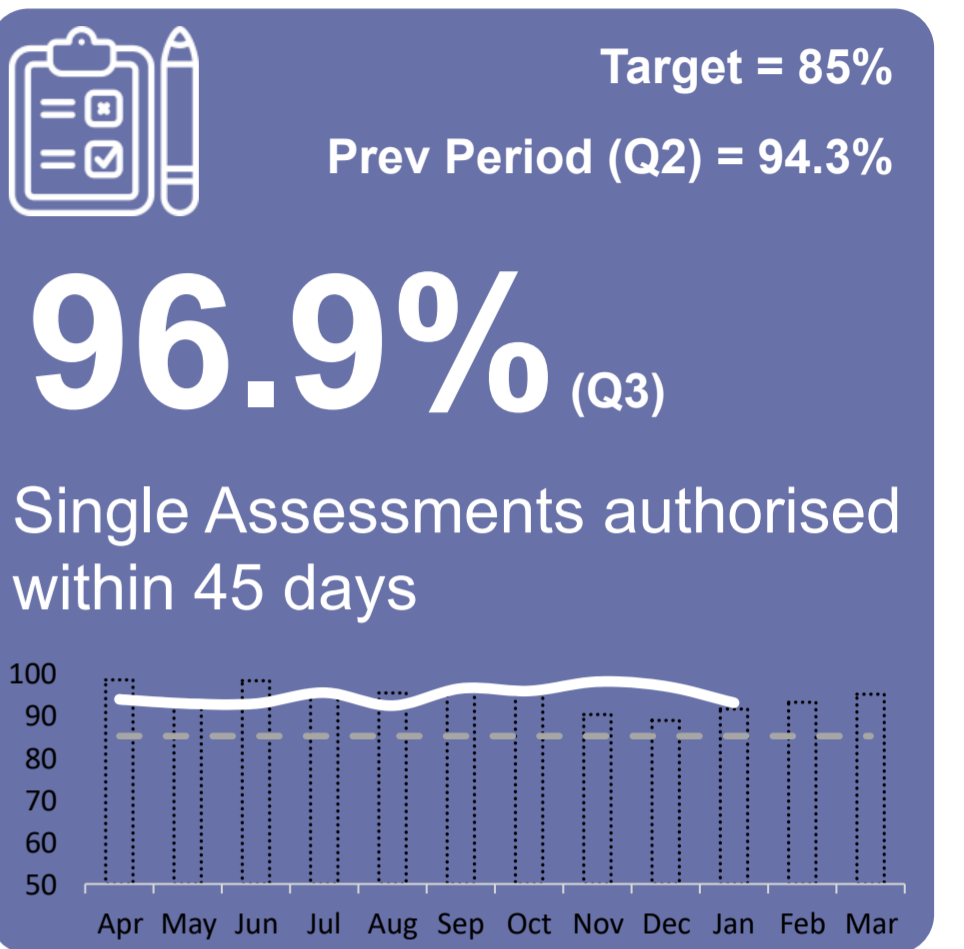
There is ongoing improvement work in the MASH to effectively manage timeliness and increase quality of the response. Recruitment and retention of staff is a priority focus and more recently recruitment to vacant positions has been successful.



Re-referrals have remained similar to the previous quarter and continue to fluctuate but remain better than target this year. It remains an area of ongoing focus with audit and review for learning.

The dedicated education roles in MASH are working positively with schools to ensure appropriate referrals and compliments from schools about their roles are increasing.

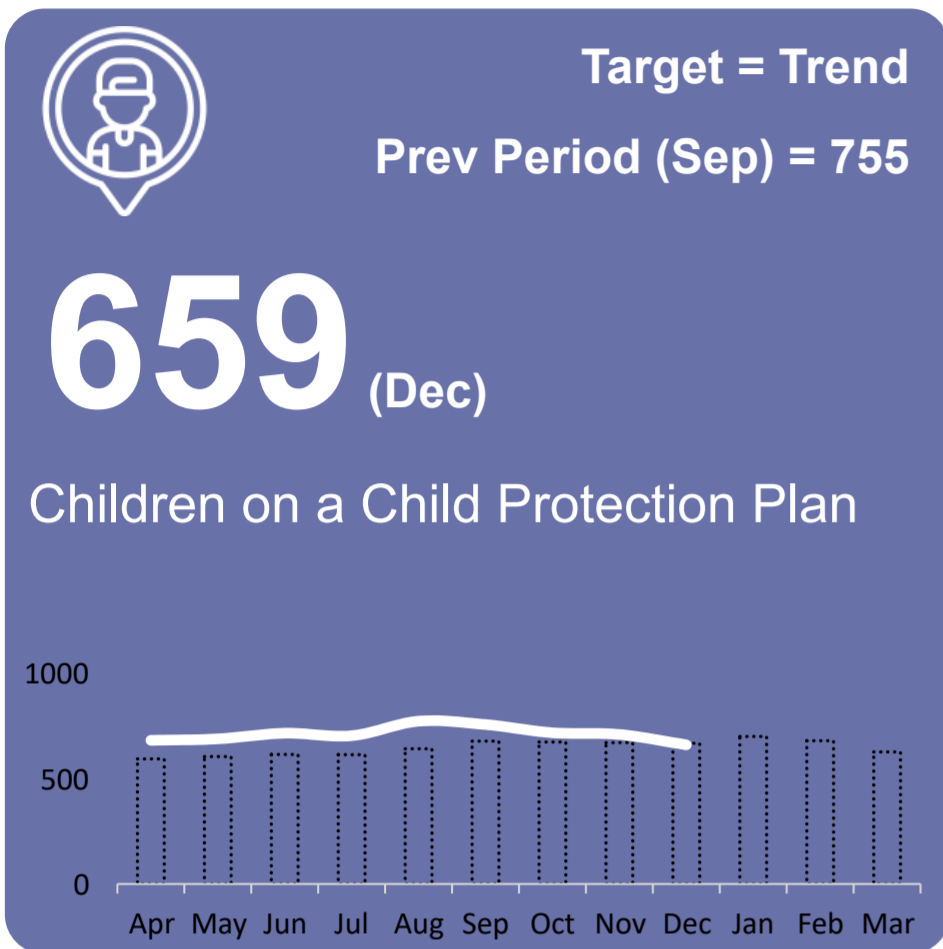
Steps have been taken to strengthen the Early Help partnerships with Partnership Support Team (Early Help MASH) being placed in the MASH pods and a leaner step down process. It is anticipated that the strengthened model in MASH and developments in CFSS/Early Help will continue to support appropriate reduction going forward.



Assessment timescales remain consistently above target and national average, decreasing slightly to 96.8% this month.

All managers monitor this very closely via daily reports. A narrative is provided for cases that go beyond 45 days and this remains a very small minority. More appropriate staffing levels being achieved and sustained in the DAAT.

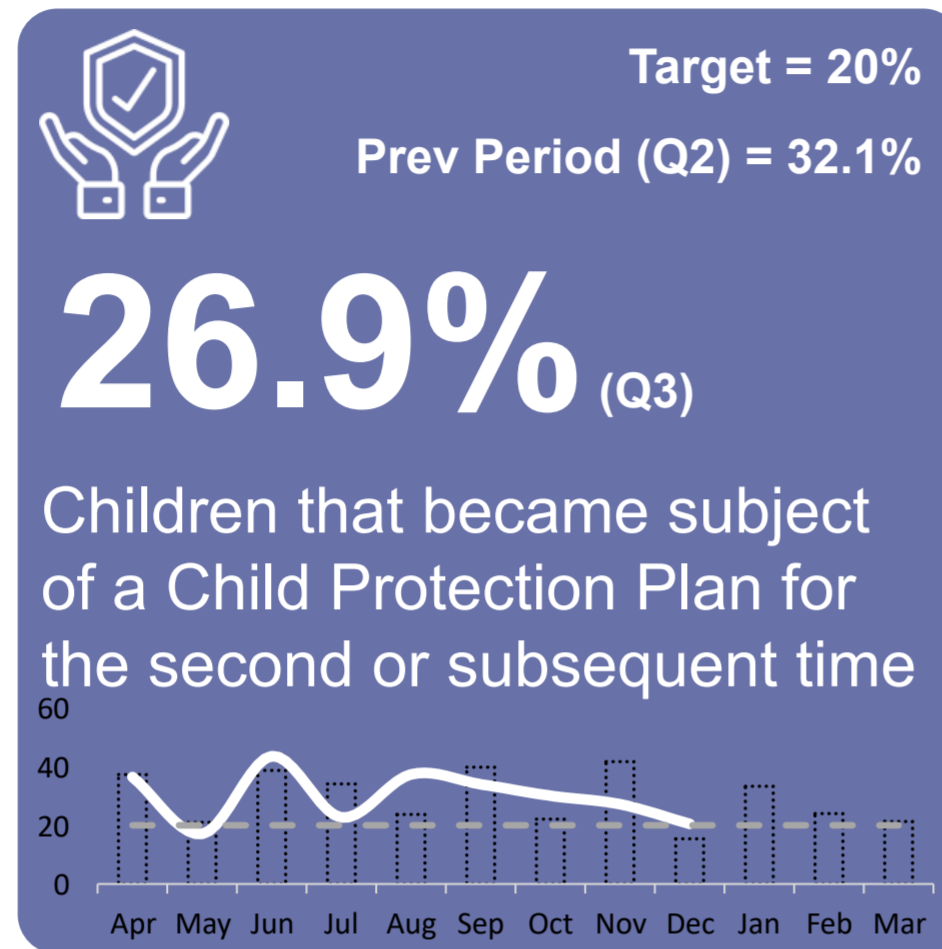
In addition to timeliness, we work on increasing the quality of assessments and more effective use of Signs of Safety in our interventions.



The purpose of a child protection plan is to facilitate and make explicit a co-ordinated approach to:

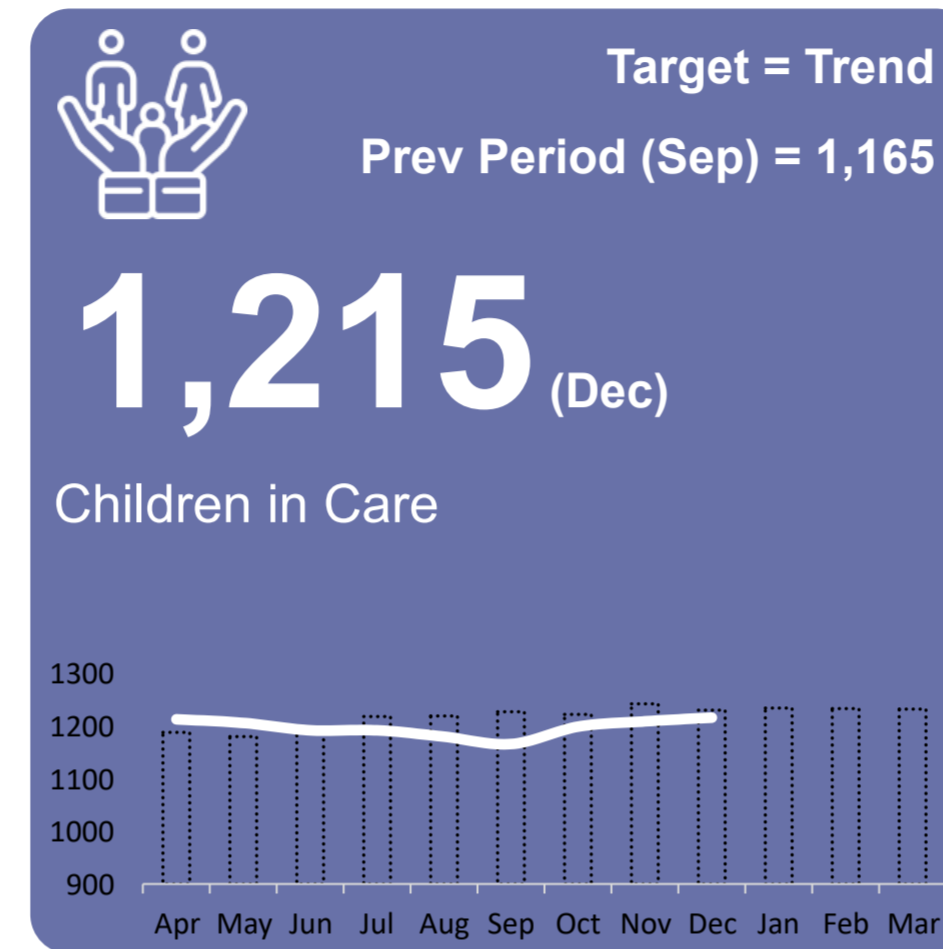
- Ensure that each child in the household is safe and prevent them from suffering further harm;
- Promote the child's welfare, health and development;
- Provided it is in the best interests of the child, to support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child.

The number of children on a plan has reduced each month this quarter after an overall increase in the previous 12 months. Currently there are 759 children on a plan, which is a decrease of 76 children from the end of the period quarter and is similar to the 666 at the same point last year.



This measure continues to be variable and, on occasion, too high although performance has improved for the last two months. 8 of 39 plans starting in December are for children who had been on a plan before. If looking at children repeating within 2 years, the figure is 15.4%.

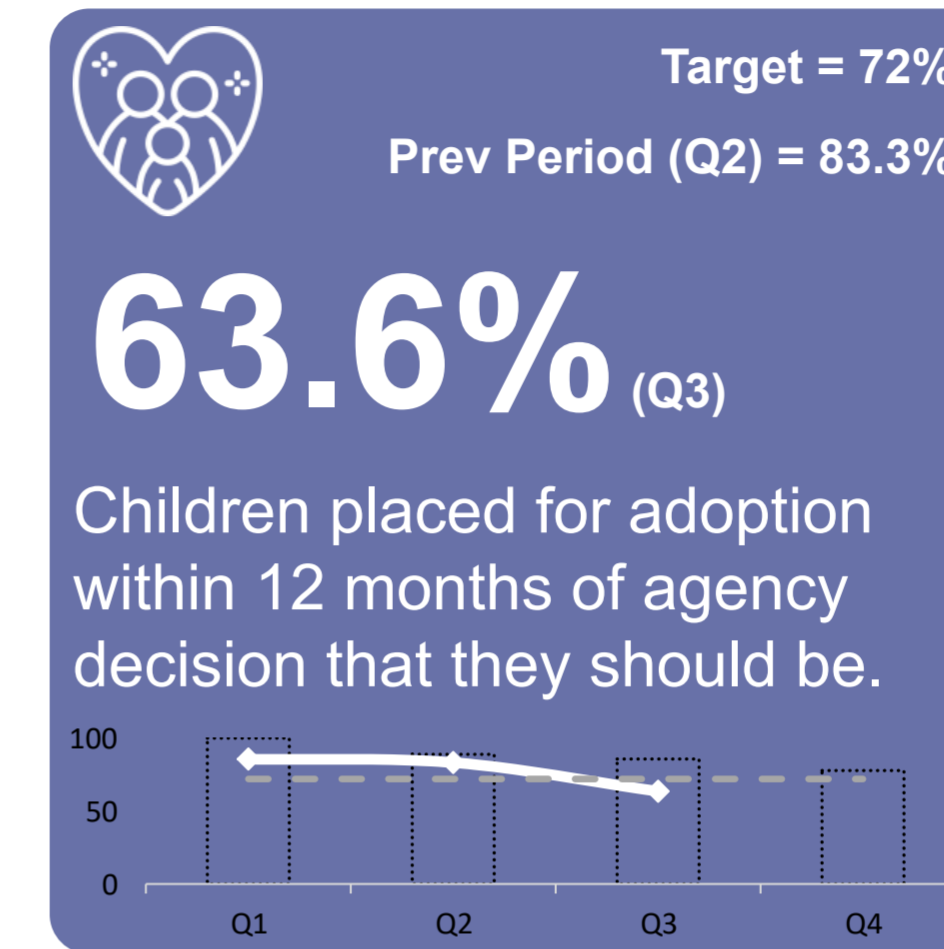
Cases are regularly reviewed and findings so far indicate that the pandemic and rising cost of living may have contributed to increased stresses and pressure for families, consequently escalating their needs. Presenting issues are mostly associated with neglect and varying degrees of disguised compliance. Neglect subgroup now operational and training in place for staff.



This measure monitors the number of children currently in care of the authority.

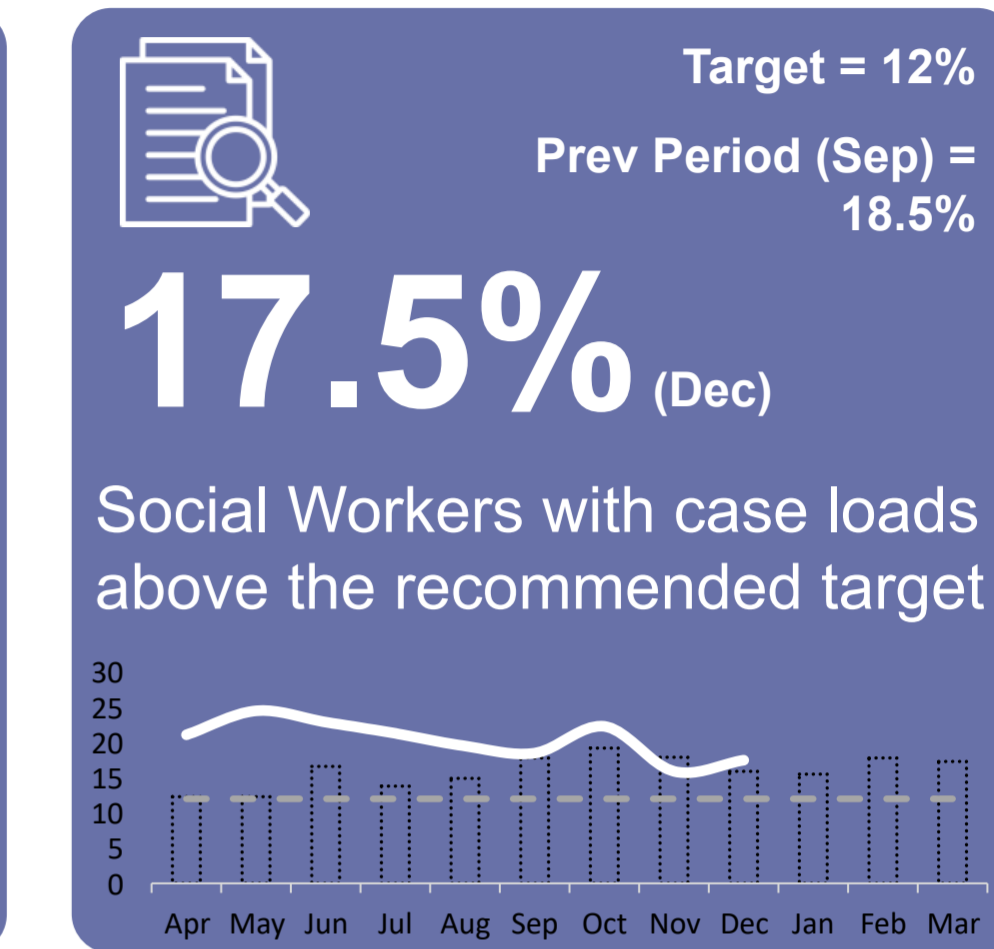
At the end of December there were 1,215 children in care, this number has increased each month this quarter after falling in the proceeding 3 months and is lower than the same point 12 months ago (1,229) and a reduction from a high point of 1,233 at the end of January.

When looking at the current number of children in care as a rate of the population, for Northamptonshire, at the end of September this is 68.1 per 10,000 population, this compares to the national average of 70 per 10,000.



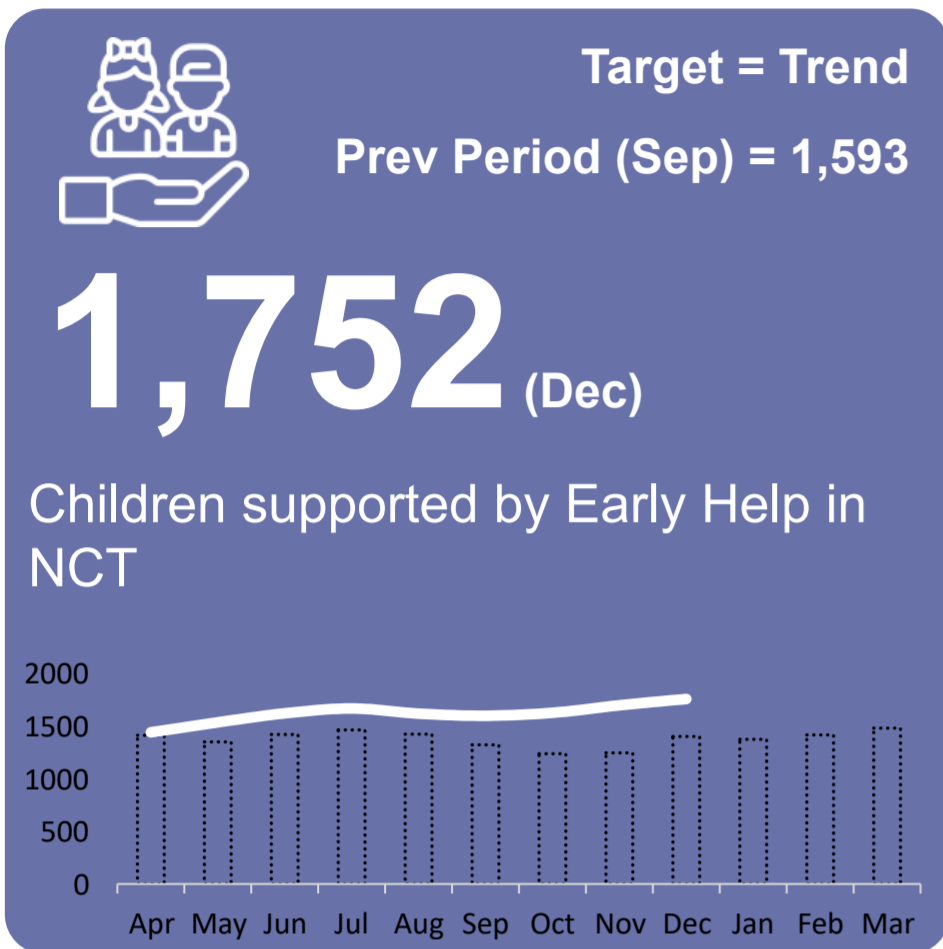
Strengthened family finding and matching processes have been implemented which alongside improved permanency tracking arrangements have supported timely decision making process and ability to progress adoption placements. The use of foster to adopt placements have also positively influenced this performance indicator.

Performance of this indicator can fluctuate considerably from period to period due to small numbers. This quarters performance relates to 11 children who have been placed for adoption, taking the total number this year to 25 adoptions with 75% being within 12 months of agency decision.



September sees another improvement in workers with caseloads above target to 17.5%, a 1.0% improvement in the position reported at the end of September.

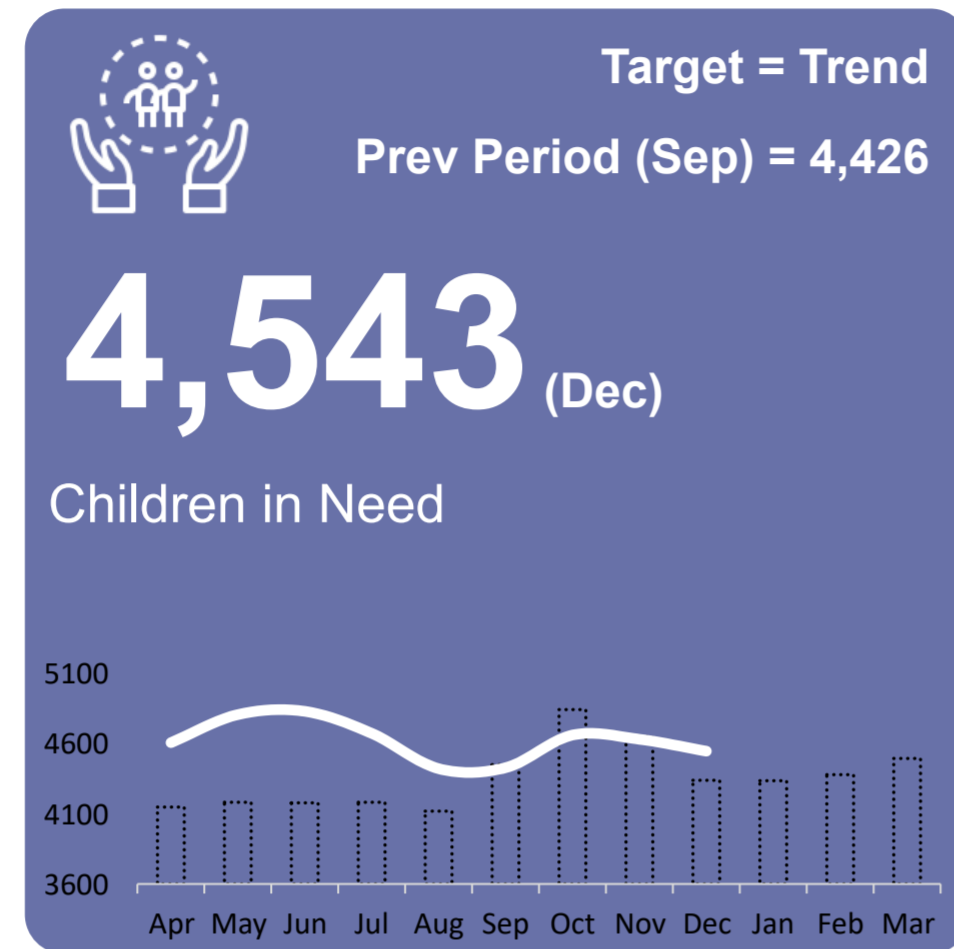
Three managed teams provide additional capacity in managing the cases open to the Safeguarding service to support business needs and ensure manageable caseloads, however, the pressure remains high. The recruitment drive remains central to implementation of the workforce strategy. The area with the issue continues to be Safeguarding where recruitment and retention has been an issue in recent months, with an action plan for recruitment and retention in progress. The last few weeks have seen additional social workers recruited.



This measure is in place to monitor the number of children being supported by Early Help service provision in NCT. Early help is in place to ensure that the right help and support is available to families as soon as it is needed, it is open and accessible to families with children and young people of any age.

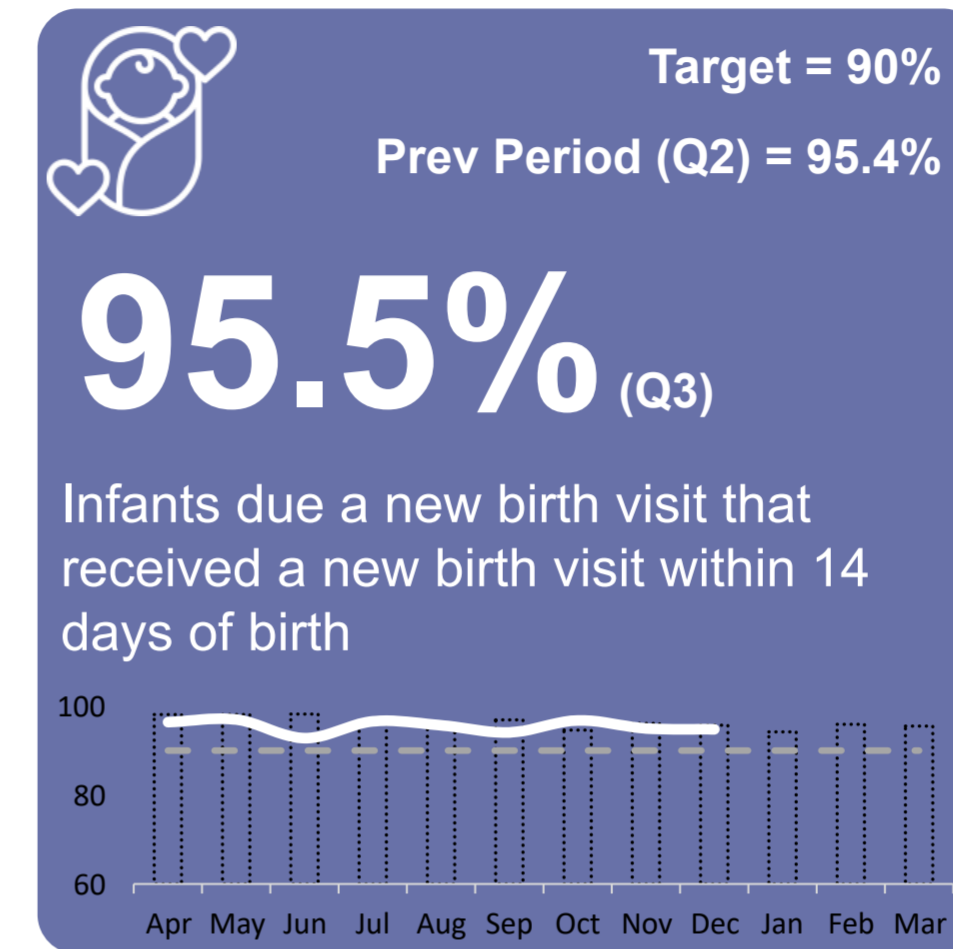
The number in the caseload has fluctuated over the past 12 months but has remained within a similar range, however this is now showing signs of sustained increase

At the end of December 1,752 children were being supported, which is higher than the same point last year and also the end the pervious quarter.



Children in Need are those assessed as needing help and protection as a result of risks to their development or health. This group includes children on a child in need plans, children on child protection plans, children looked after by local authorities, care leavers and disabled children. Children in need include young people aged 18 or over who continue to receive care, accommodation or support from children’s services and unborn children.

The current number of children in need in Northamptonshire is 4,543, an increase from the previous quarter of 117 and is higher than the same point last year when the CIN number was 4,336.

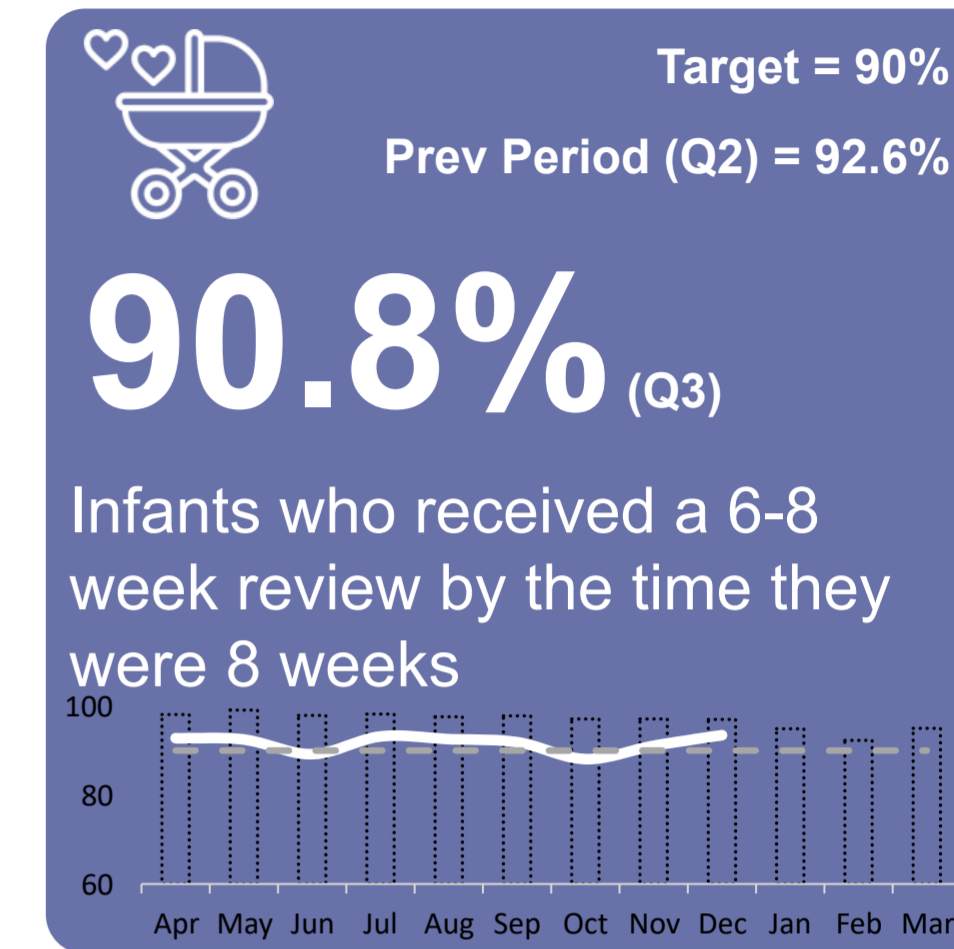


The health visiting service leads the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), which was set up to improve the health and wellbeing of children aged 0 to 5 years. This is achieved through health and development reviews, health promotion, parenting support, and screening and immunisation programmes.

The health visiting service consists of specialist community public health nurses and teams who provide expert information, assessments and interventions for babies, children and families, including first time mothers and fathers with complex needs. The indicators included here are for both new birth assessments and the check at 6-8 weeks.

There is a good performance in both of the measures reported here in the latest quarter with the new birth visits completed within 14 days reporting at 95.5% for quarter 3, similar as the previous quarter. The 8-week reviews completed measure has reduced performance this quarter to 90.8%, but remains above target.

Both of these indicators perform well in comparison to national averages of 82.7% for 14-day visits and 81.6% for the 8-week visits and are above our local target of 90% for each indicator.

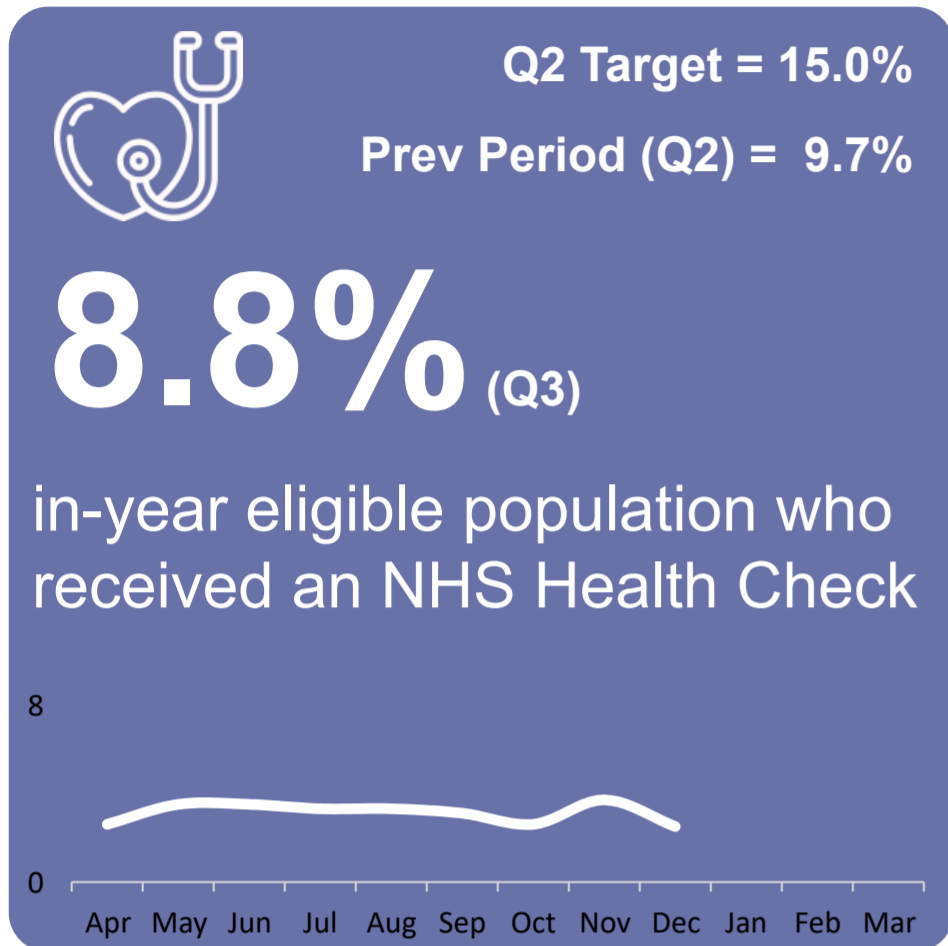


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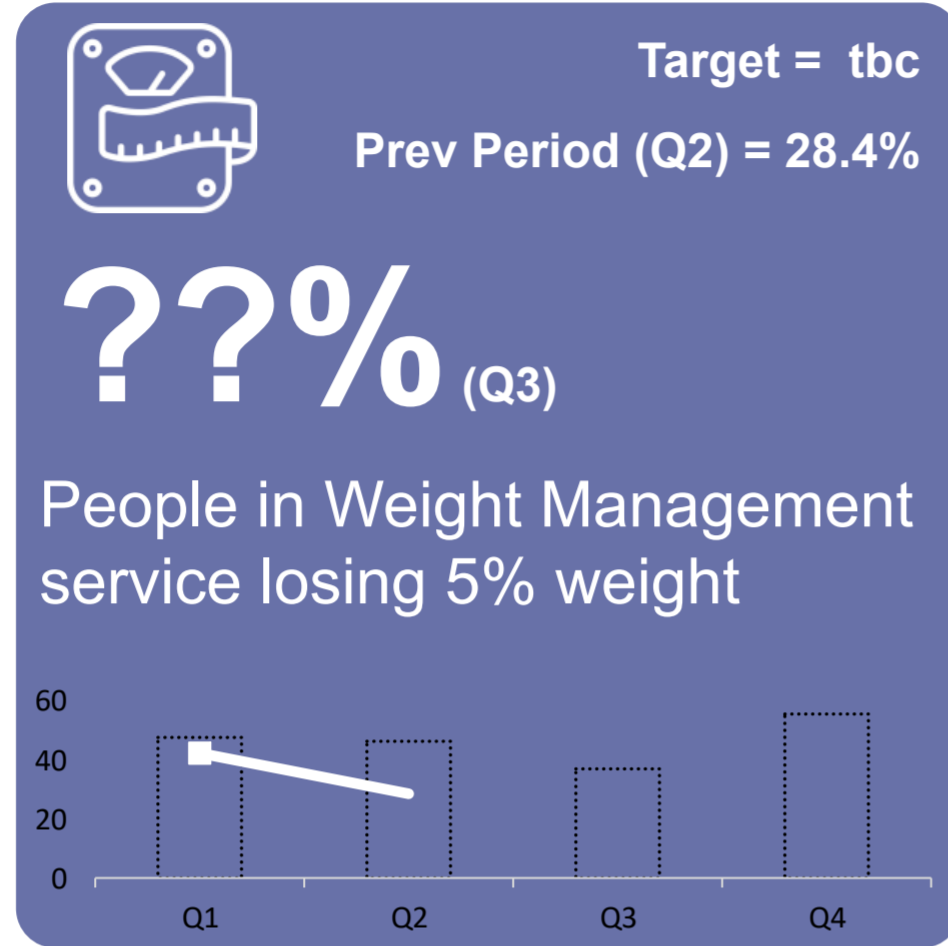
Both of these indicators perform well in comparison to national averages of 82.7% for 14-day visits and 81.6% for the 8-week visits and are above our local target of 90% for each indicator.



The NHS Health Check is a health check-up for adults in England aged 40-74. It's designed to spot early signs of stroke risk, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia.

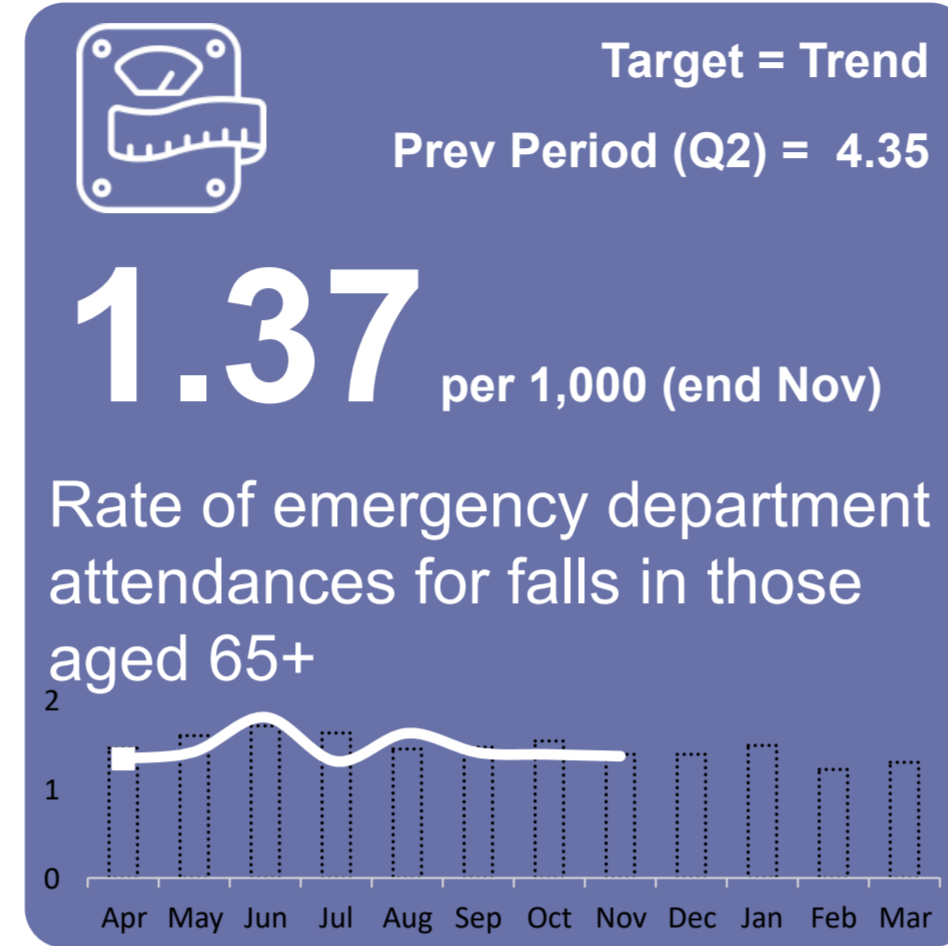
The performance of this indicator is looked at as a whole year and this number will grow as the year continues. The target for this year is 60% of the eligible in-year population have received a health check, the target has been profiled to 15% per quarter.

The performance for the third quarter shows that 8.8% of the eligible population have received their health check in this period and the total year to date performance is 28.1%.



Being overweight there is a higher risk of heart disease; stroke; type 2 diabetes; some types of cancer; arthritis and back pain and losing weight has many health benefits.

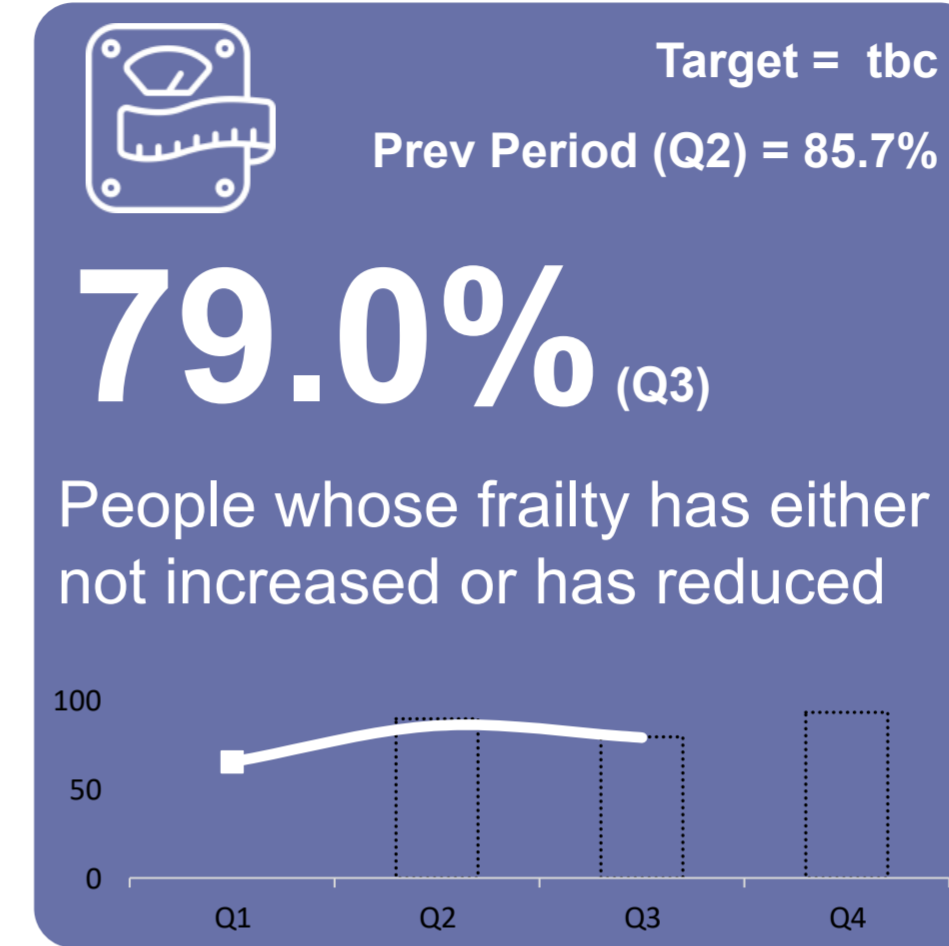
The data and reporting for this metric is produced by NNC colleagues, this remains outstanding as of 15th Feb and has been chased on multiple occasions.



This indicator is calculated by the Northamptonshire ICB and based upon emergency hospital admissions for the relevant primary diagnosis codes for falls and the patient's home address being in West Northants.

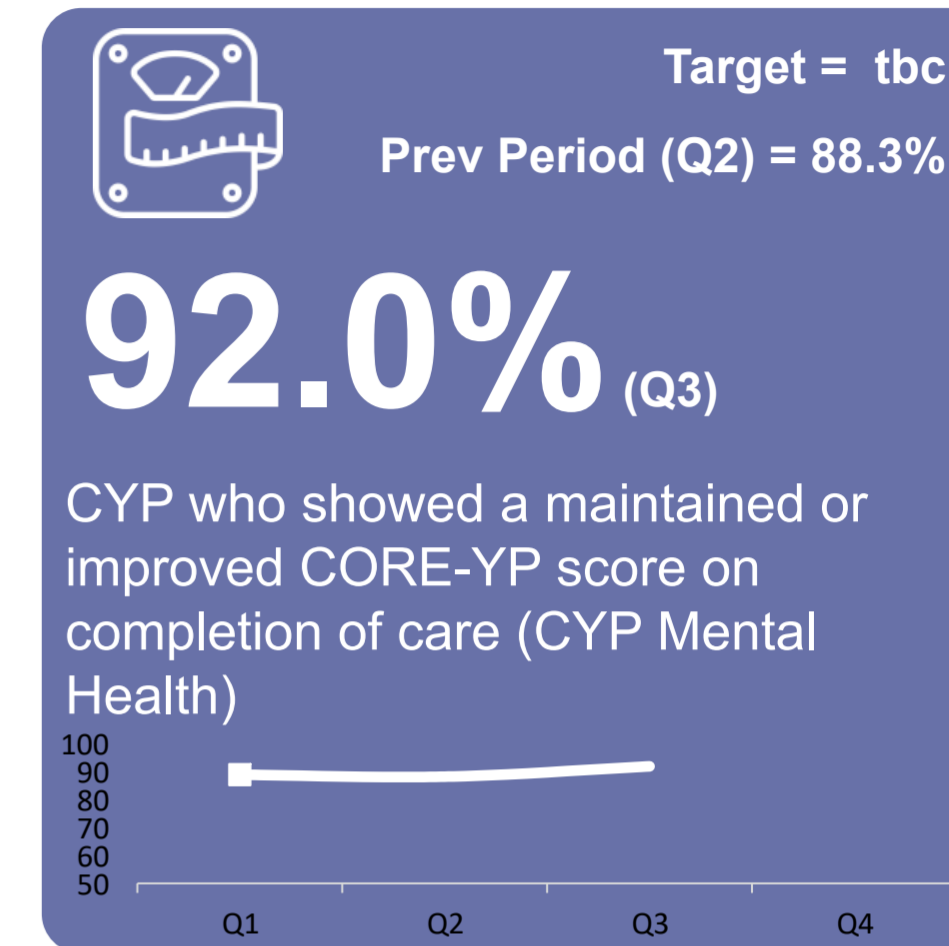
The full data for quarter 3 is not yet available so this position shows October and November combined only. In that period there has been 212 emergency admissions for falls resulting in a rate of 2.76 per 1,000 population (aged 65+).

This is a decrease from previous quarter which had 4.35 per 1,000 population.



This data demonstrates that 78.95% of customers coming through the service who completed both the Initial and Final Edmonton assessment, evidenced that their frailty level had either remained stable or reduced following up to 12 weeks of support with their Wellbeing Advisors through a variety of interventions in the community, to maintain their independence.

Support offered ranging from low level Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, to Walk and Talk's with the aim of becoming more active and increasing socialisation, to support accessing social opportunities to reduce isolation and advice on lifestyle issues such as nutrition or alcohol use.

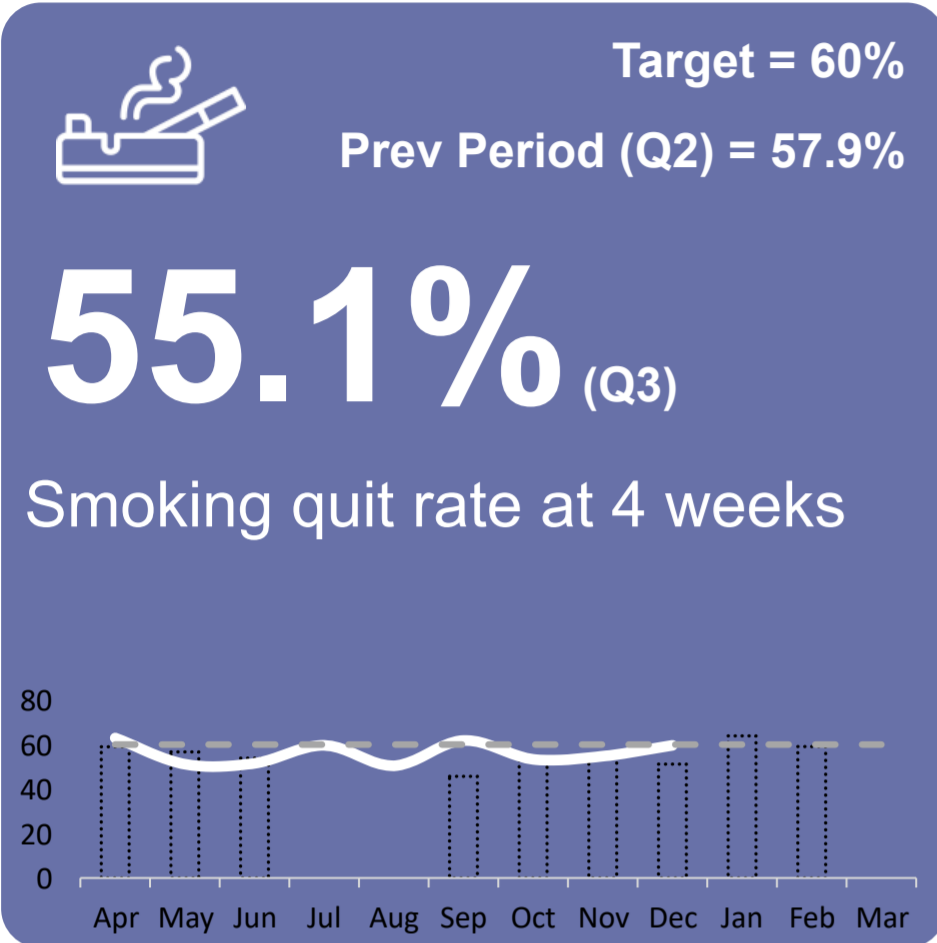


A 'Collaborative' of providers (REACH) deliver time-limited counselling sessions to young people aged 11-19 (up to 25 if SEND), offering support and information and signposting and referring to other appropriate services.

The indicator measures the percentage of young people who have maintained or improved emotional and mental wellbeing scores following counselling sessions.

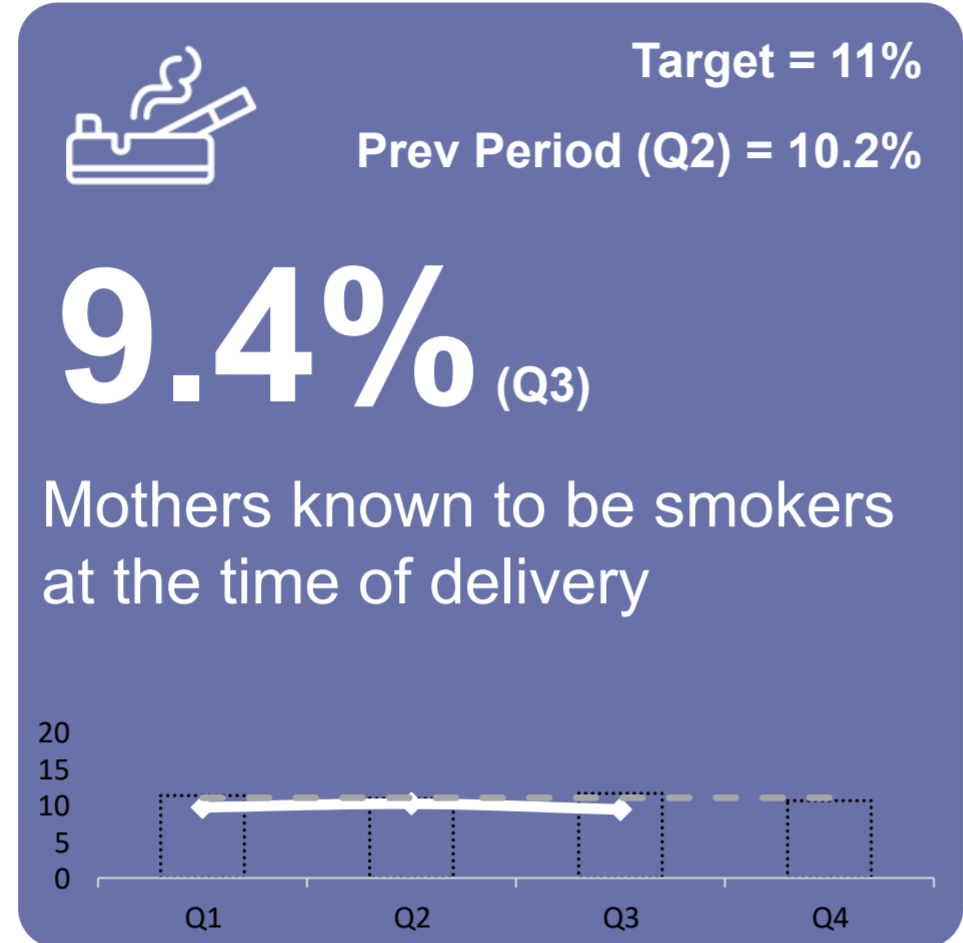
This quarter 92.0% of young maintained or improved emotional health and wellbeing score, an increase from 88.3% in the previous quarter.

This measure is Northamptonshire



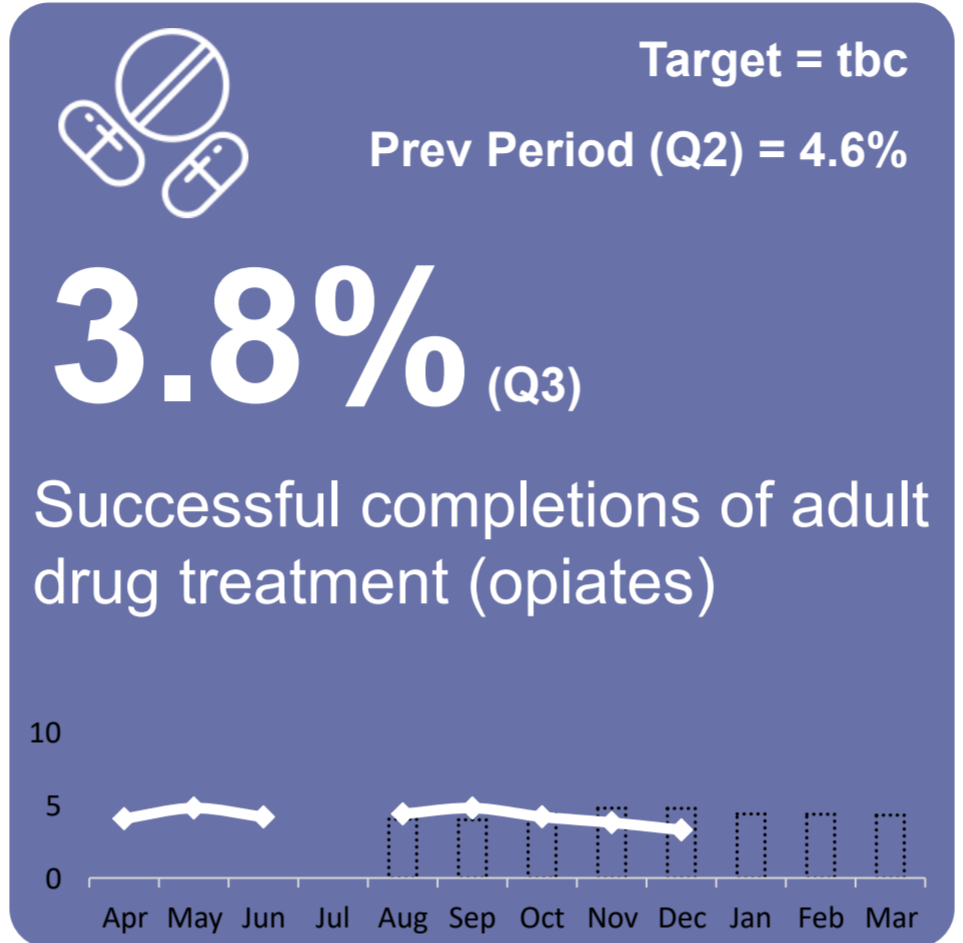
Our local performance data shows that 55.1% of clients who set a quit date have successfully quit at 4 weeks in the 3rd quarter of this year. This takes the year to date position to 55.5% to the end of December.

In comparison to the national quit rate for 2022-23 of 54% (latest available) West Northamptonshire is above the national average for those who quit smoking through the local service offer.



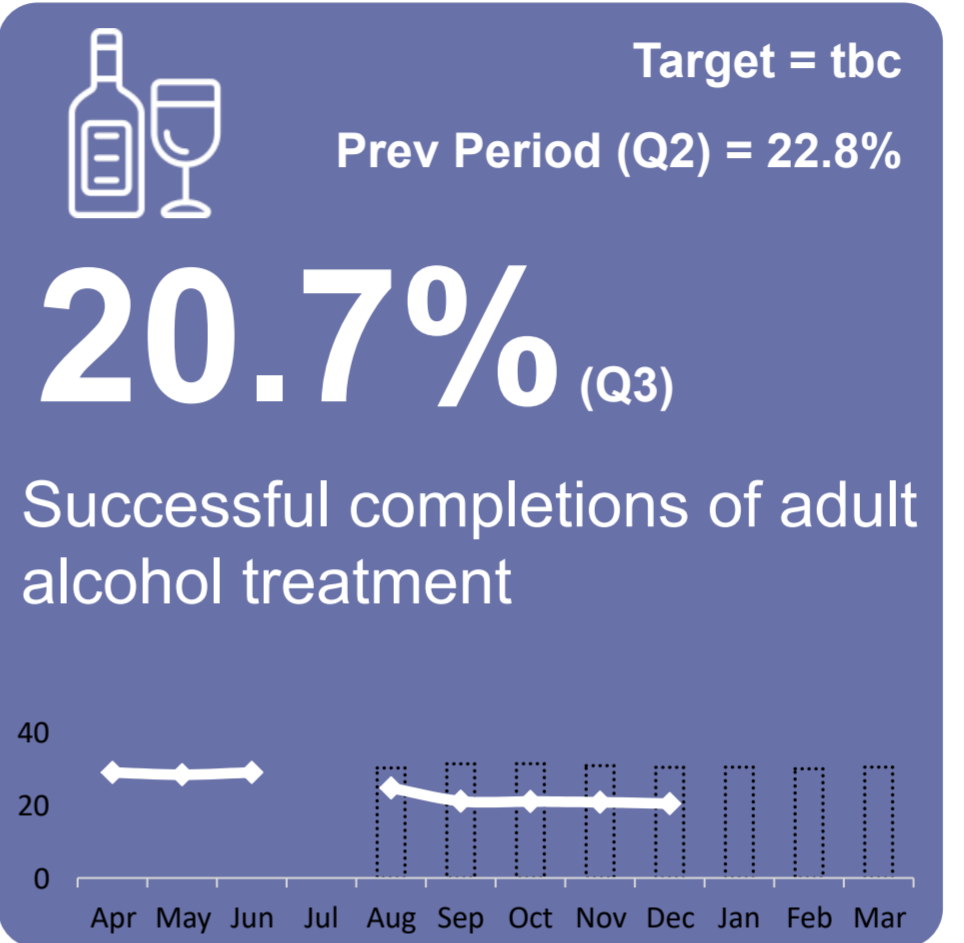
Smoking in pregnancy has well known detrimental effects for the growth and development of the baby and health of the mother. On average, smokers have more complications during pregnancy and labour, including bleeding during pregnancy, placental abruption and premature rupture of membranes.

Of the births this quarter 9.4% of mothers are known to be smokers at the time of birth, this is 0.8% improvement on the performance in the previous quarter and compares with a latest (2022-23) regional average of 11.4% and England average of 8.8%.



This indicator shows the percentage of opiate drug users that left drug treatment successfully and did not re-present to treatment within six months. Individuals achieving this outcome demonstrate a significant improvement in health and well-being in terms of increased longevity, reduced blood-borne virus transmission, improved parenting skills and improved physical and psychological health.

The current quarter's performance is 3.8% completions, this relates to 89 people who were successfully discharged and did not return to services within six months. The current performance is below the national performance of 5% which has been approximately the national rate since 2020, having seen a steady decline from nearly 9% in 2011.



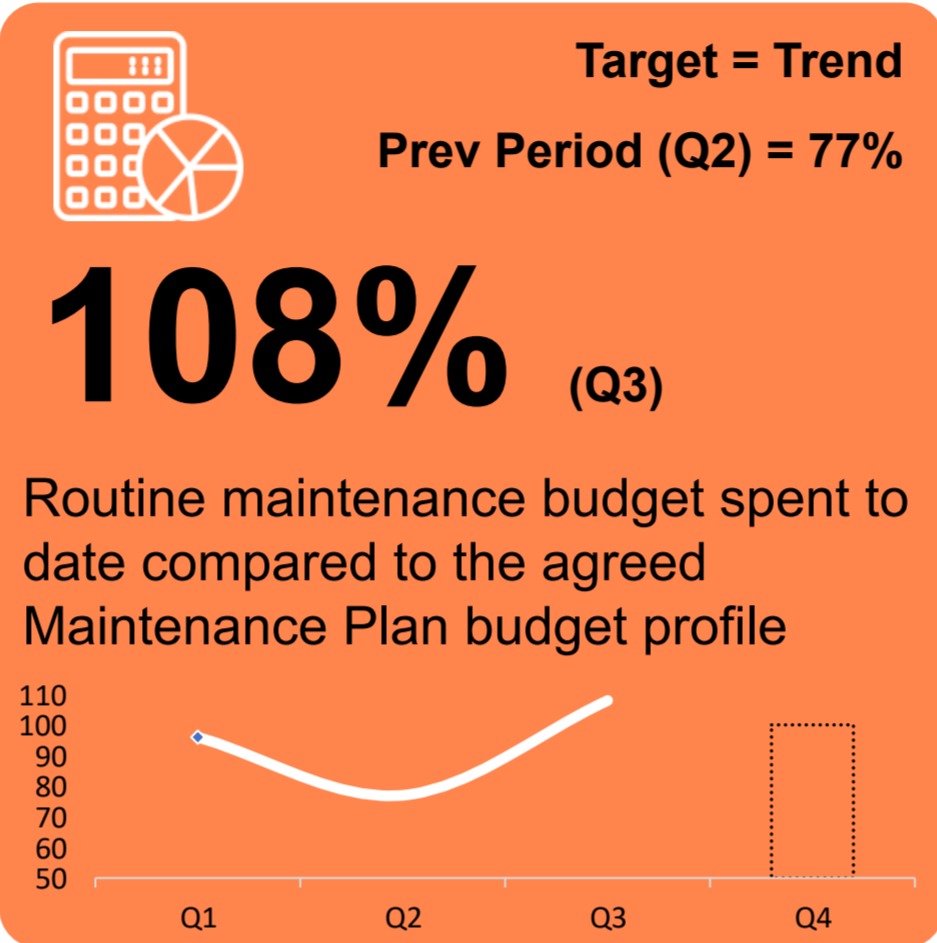
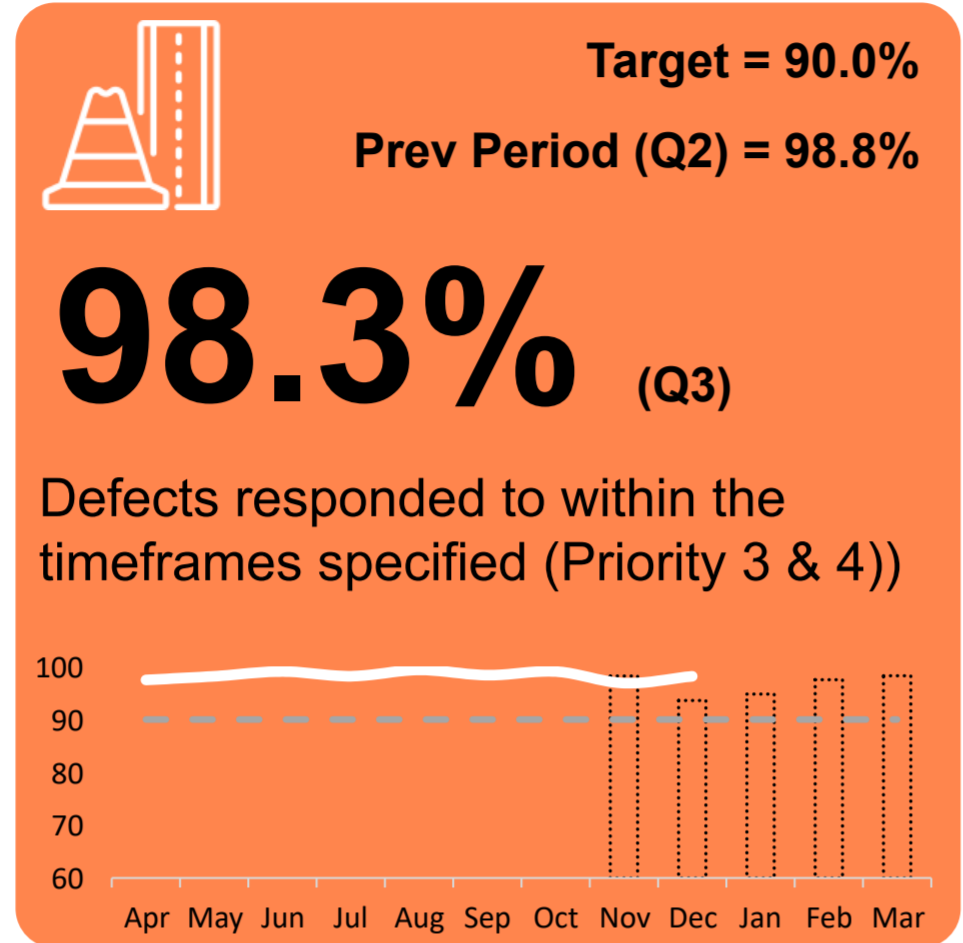
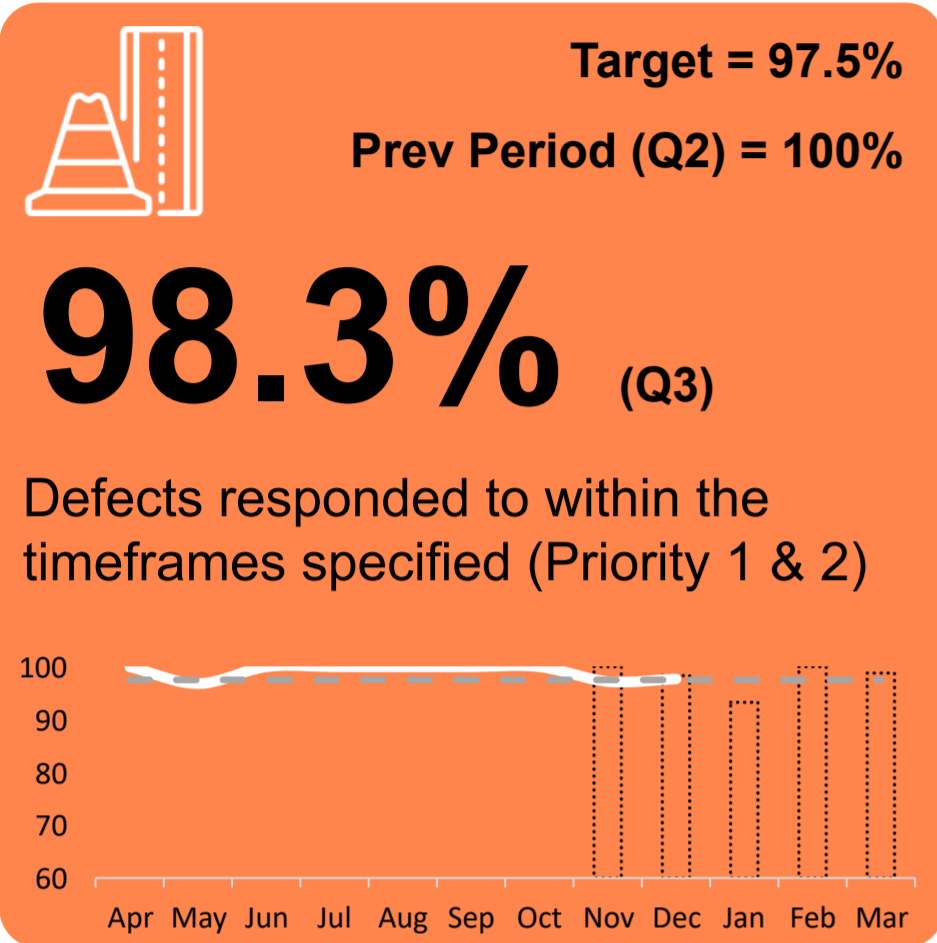
This indicator demonstrates the percentage of adults who successfully complete structured treatment for alcohol dependence in a year and who do not re-present to treatment within six months.

The latest published data shows that 20.7% of adults who received treatment achieved this outcome in this period, equivalent of 338. This is a reduction from 22.8% in the previous quarter (which reflects annual performance since 2021). The national average for the same period is 34.4% successful completions.

Significant additional investment has been made into the local treatment system over the last year and therefore we don't expect to see this trend continue.

Priority 3 – Connected Communities

Transport & Connectivity



Highways defects are split into 4 separate categories, depending on their severity, each of these categories has a different timescale for repair from the most severe (P1) to the least severe (P4). These indicators are split into two separate measures to report against the more and less severe repairs.

Data collection for these indicators commenced as part of the new highways contract for West Northamptonshire Council in November 2022, therefore trend information is not available for comparison prior to that period.

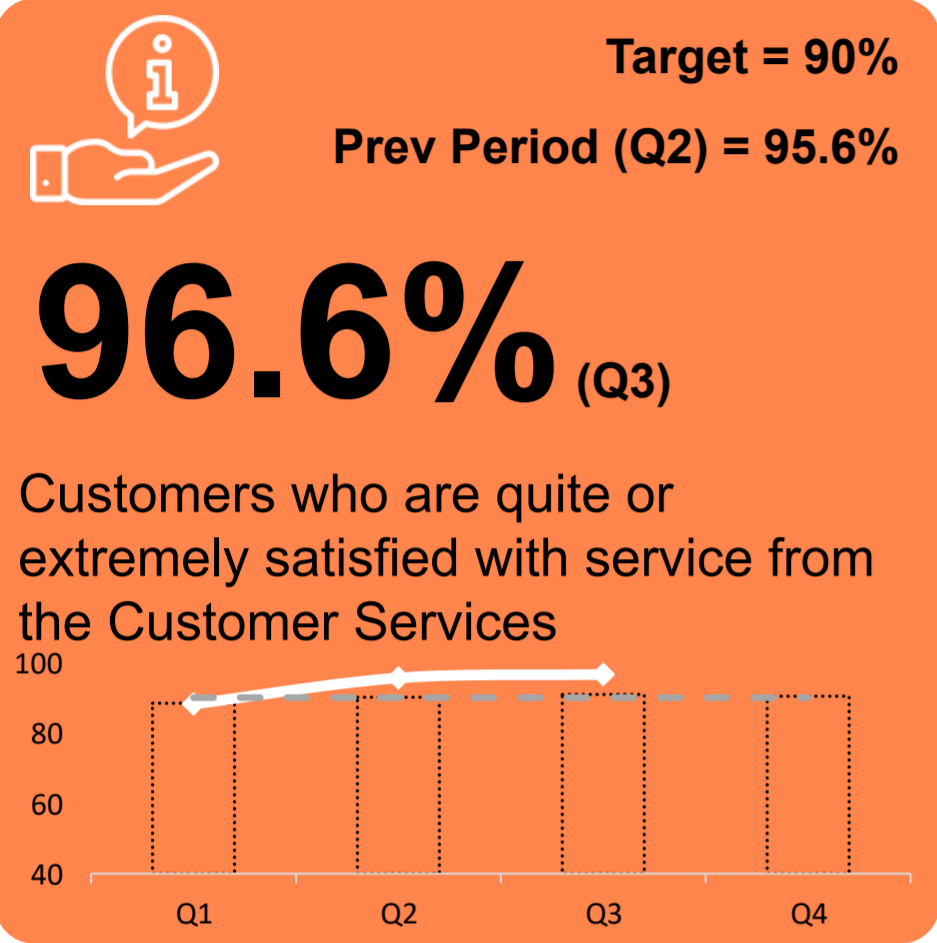
Performance data shows that the two indicators in the period are performing well against the targets that have been set as part of the contract in each month of this quarter, broken down we can see the monthly trend against these two indicators as follows;

- P1/ P2 repairs achieved 100% in October. 97.2% in November and 97.7% in December. A total of 115 repairs over the quarter
- P3/ P4 repairs achieved 98.4% in October, 99.1% in November and 96.9% in December. A total of 4,780 repairs over the quarter
- Both of the indicators continue to perform well and are above target and similar to the previous reporting period

The final measure above shows the percentage of the routine maintenance budget that has been spent to date compared to the agreed budget profile. For quarter 3 this is reporting as 108% of the budget profile has been spent, this position at more than 100% is due to some of the planned budget spend being moved from the previous quarter.

Priority 3 – Connected Communities

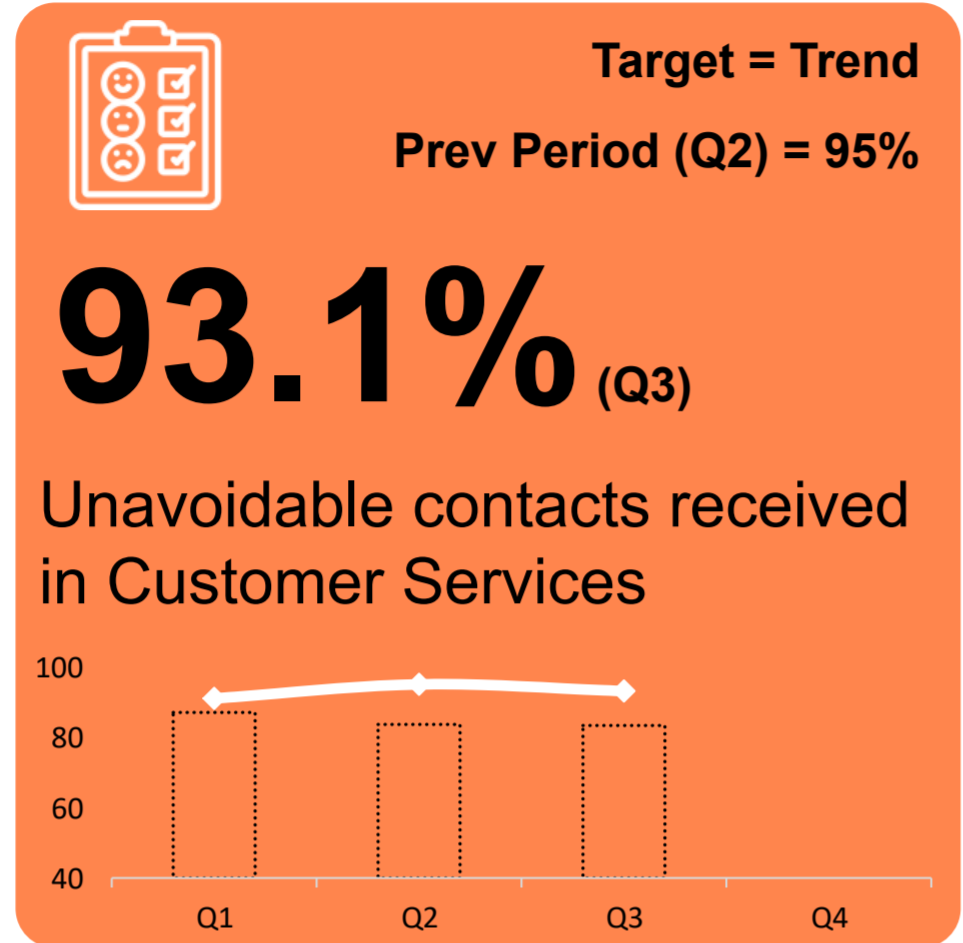
Transport & Connectivity



This indicator reflects the levels of satisfaction from residents who interact with our Customer Services function. Performance for this indicator is broadly consistent since collection began 18 months ago and within tolerances of the 90% target.

Quarter 3 has resulted in 205 surveys completed, and when asked how satisfied they were with the service received, of these 96.57% were satisfied with the service they received.

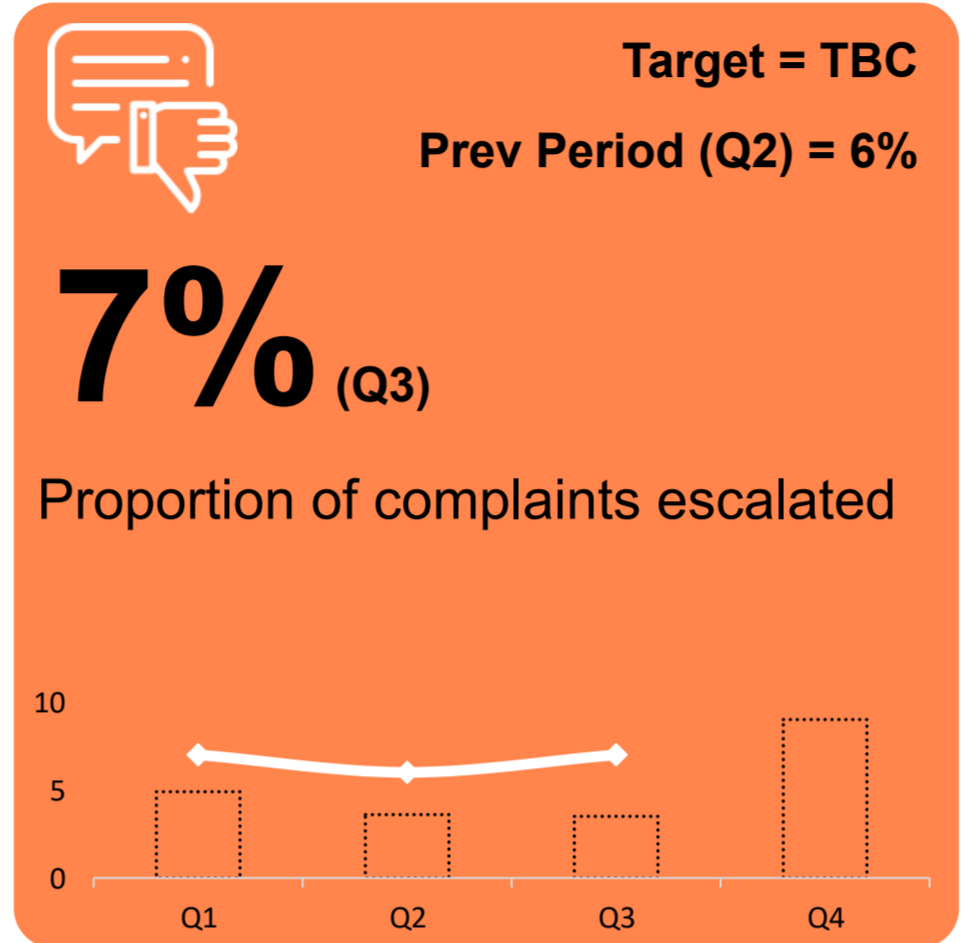
This is a similar position to the previous quarter and an increase of 5.7% when compared to the same period last year.



This indicator shows the percentage of unavoidable contacts received. The remaining proportion are repeat contacts, for example following-up on a previous request made to the council, or requests which could have easily been resolved through self-service.

This measure is trend-based, and we would like the vast majority of contacts into the Council to be unavoidable.

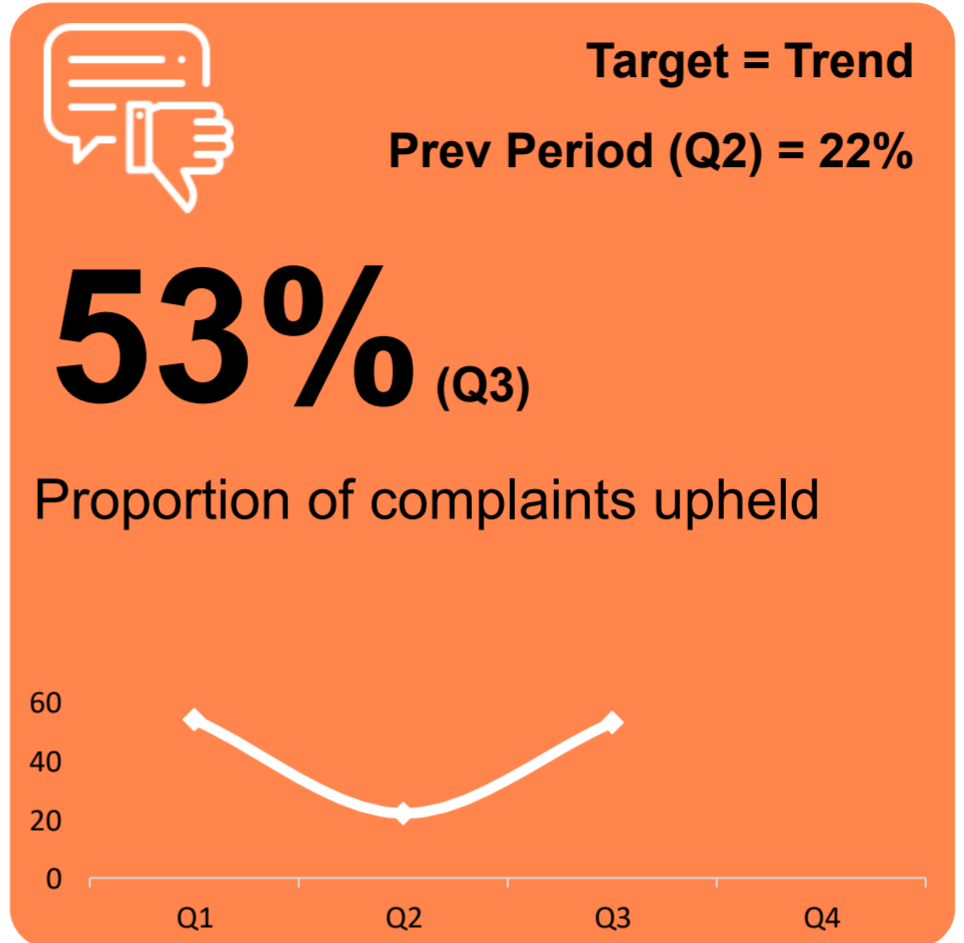
The current quarter reports 93.1% of calls being unavoidable into the CSC, this is a decrease on the previous period of 1.9% and is based upon 57,856 contacts into Customer Services.



These two measures look to capture complaints that are escalated to stage 2 and also a trend based measure to monitor and record the proportion of complaints that are upheld, the latter is a newly recorded measure that has no previous trend before April.

The third quarter of the year has seen 629 complaints received by the corporate complaints team, a decrease from the previous quarter's complaints (794). The majority of complaints are around delays in actioning repairs, issues relating to temporary accommodation and delays in responding to communications.

- 43 complaints escalated to stage 2 within the quarter this represents a small percentage of the overall complaints received in the period and is similar to the 41 in the previous quarter.
- Based upon complaints closed within quarter three the proportion of complaints either fully or partially upheld is 53%, an increase from the 22% in the previous quarter.
- Additionally, 84% of complaints closed in the period were done within agreed timescales, a decrease from 94% in quarter two.

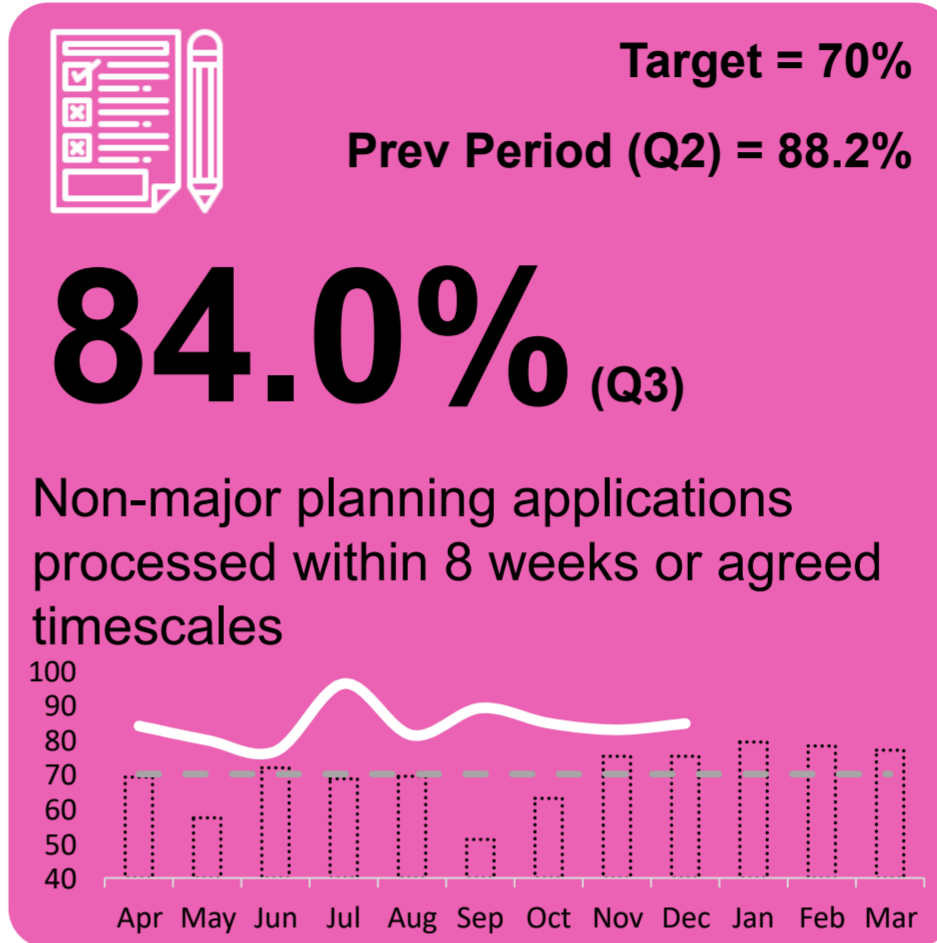
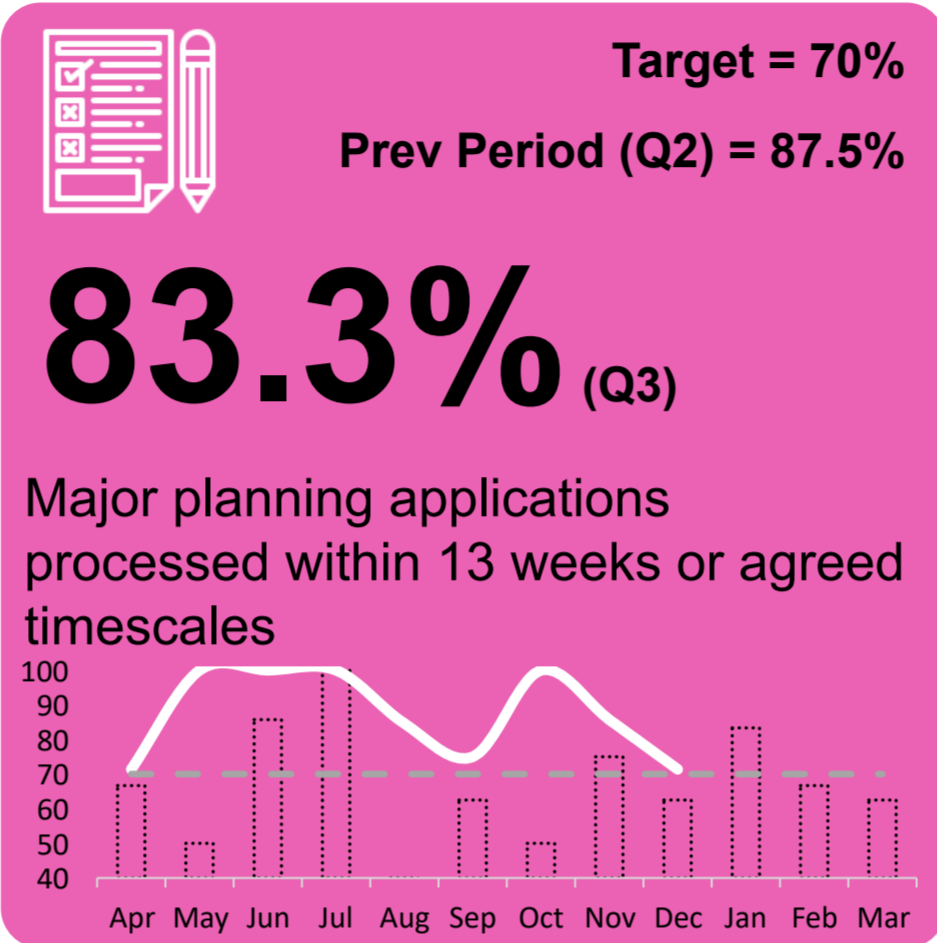
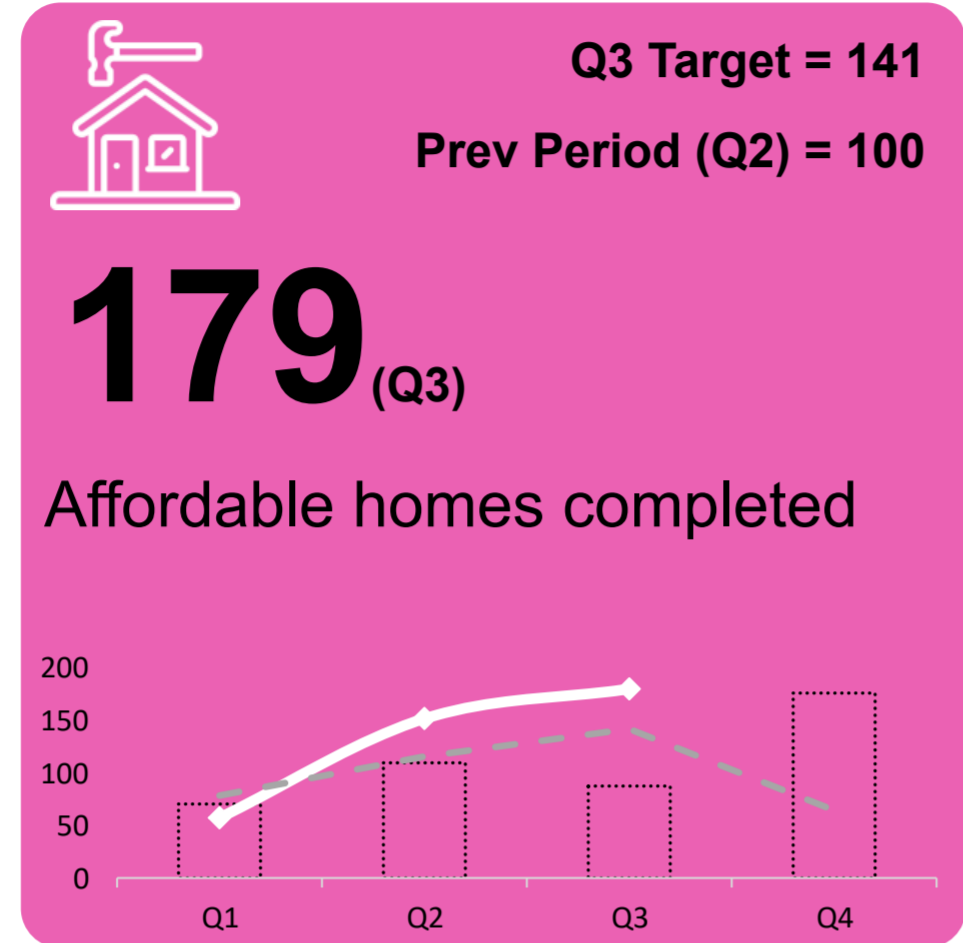
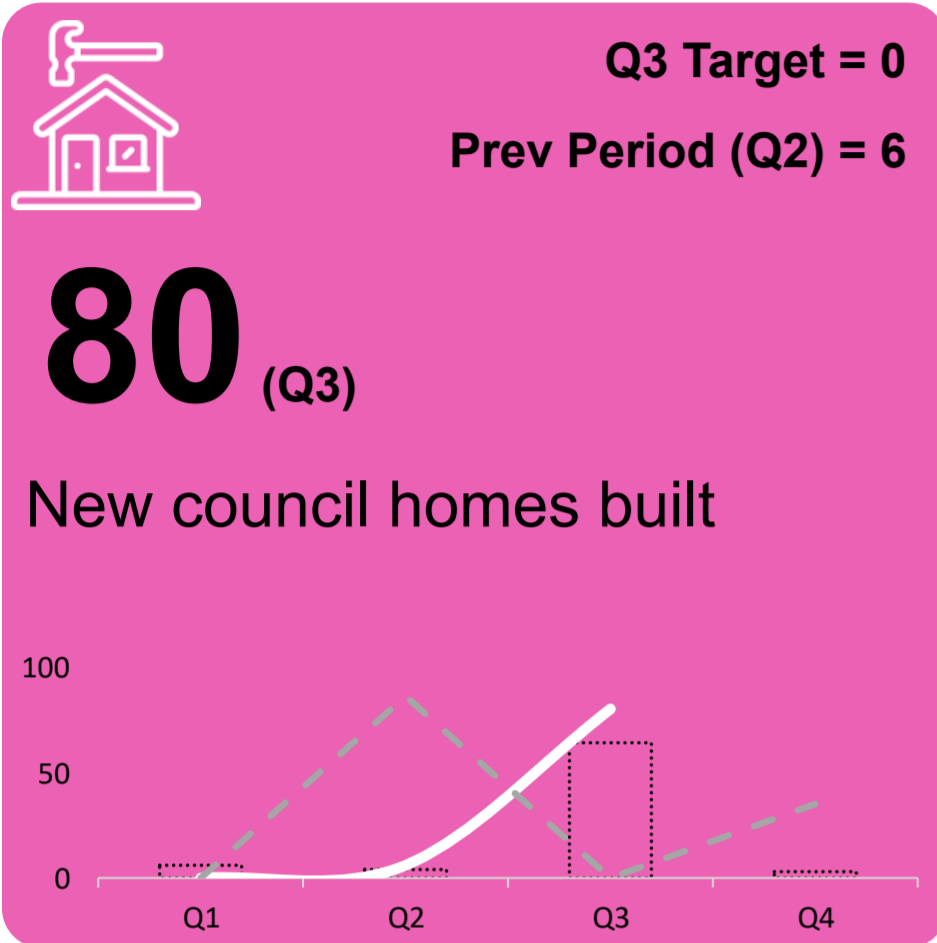


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Priority 4 – Thriving Villages & Towns

Place Shaping & Homes



The West Northamptonshire Council corporate plan commits to building 500 council homes over the lifespan of the current corporate plan. Currently, in West Northamptonshire, the Northamptonshire Partnership Homes (NPH) are the only builder of council homes that is contributing to this indicator.

There were no Council Homes originally expected for this quarter, however due to the delay in completions in the previous quarter due to handover quality assurance and snagging there has been 80 council homes completed in quarter 3. Those properties handed over in this quarter are the previously delayed units at Riverside House (60 units), Dover Court (10 units) and Billing Road (10 units)

In addition to council homes, we have also seen 179 affordable homes delivered. Overall 246 units were expected to completed, this is because of lack of information coming forward from a number of Registered Providers as well as some delays elsewhere that are expected to be completed in the next quarter.

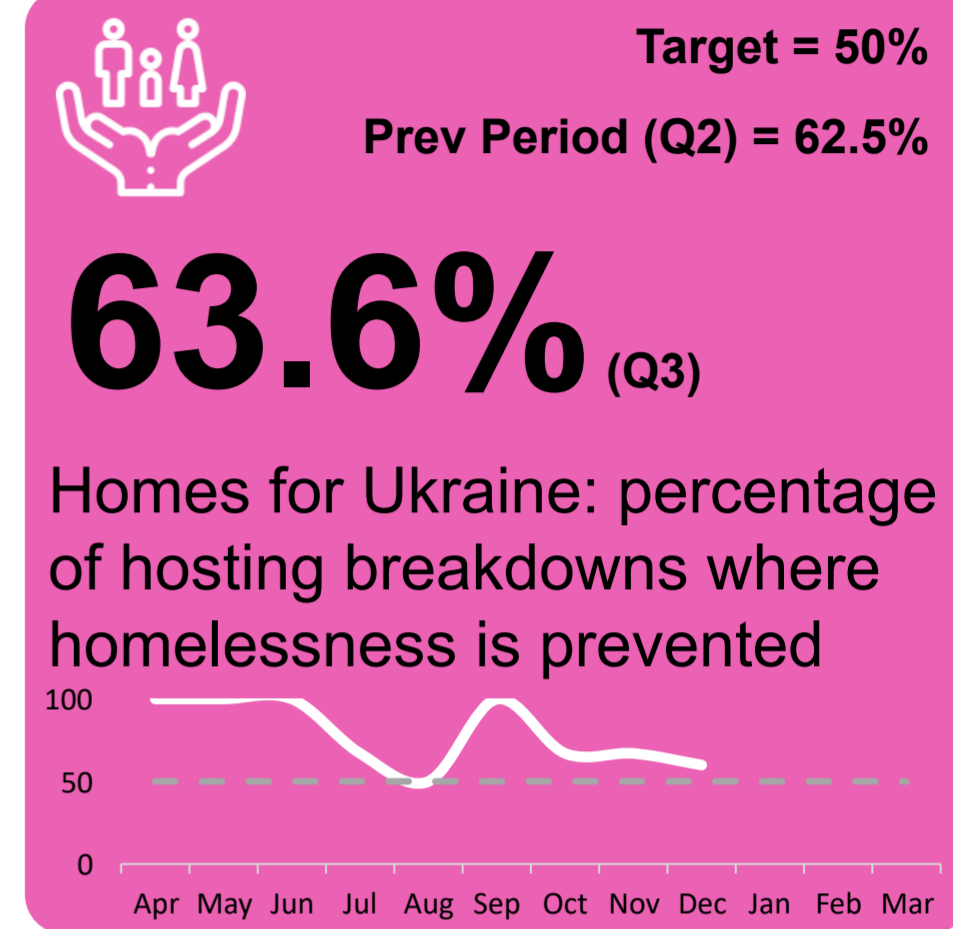
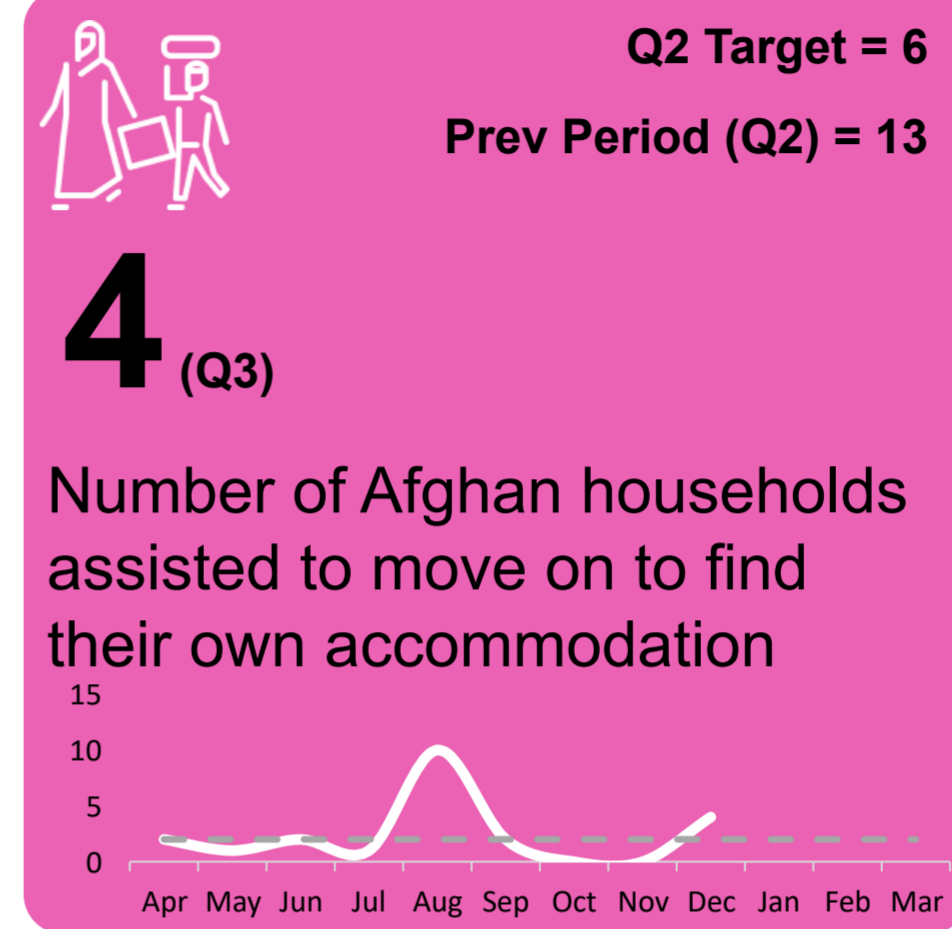
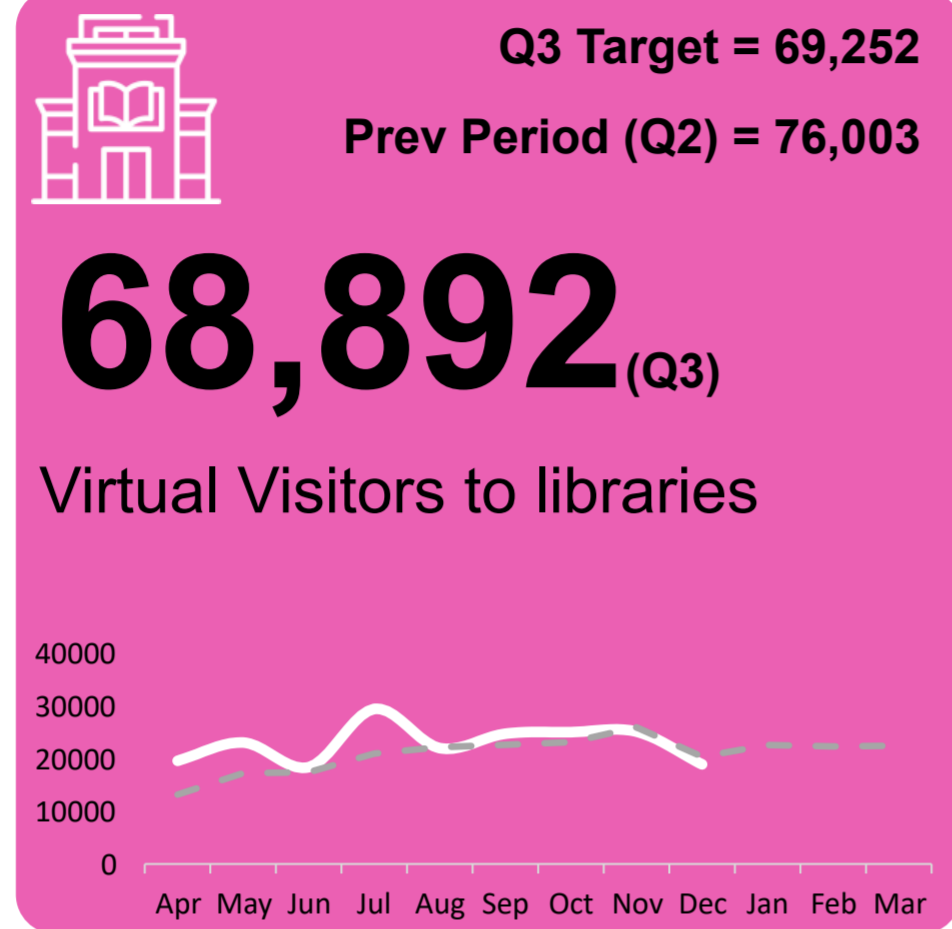
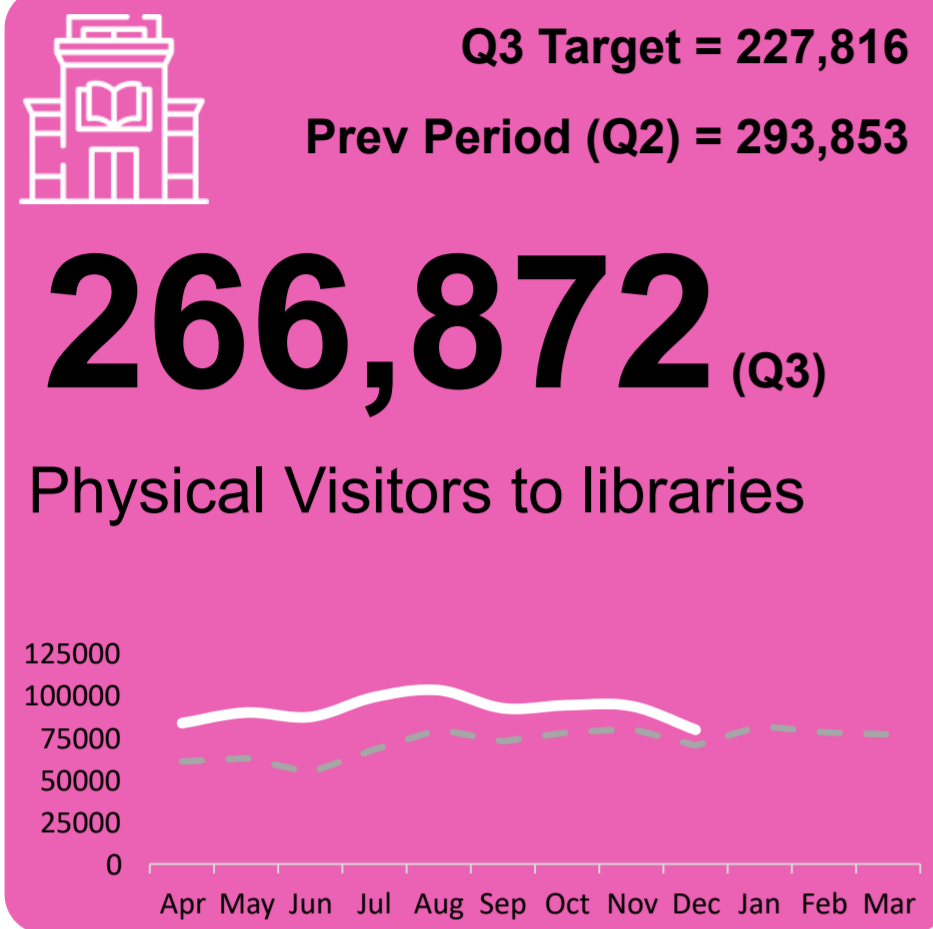
Planning applications of an area of current key focus for the authority, as we look to improve on the timeframe that we are processing decisions within, the two measures will show how we are performing against the two key measures that central government will judge our performance against, these are around the processing of planning applications for both major and non-major applications.

- There were 18 major planning applications processed in the third quarter of this year, of these 15 were processed within the agreed timescales
- There were 470 non-major planning applications processed in the third quarter of this year, of these 395 were processed within the agreed timescales

Both these measures have improved performance over the last quarters outturn and have continually shown an improving overall trajectory over the past 12 months.

Priority 4 – Thriving Villages & Towns

Place Shaping & Homes



This measure counts the number of visitors, but physical visitors and virtual visitors into our libraries across West Northamptonshire.

The data for last year was collected and reported as a combined measure, for comparison purposes the combined number for Q3 last year was 225,570 and the same period this year total across both measures is 335,764 which shows a rise in visitors when compared to last year.

Physical Visitors

There was an expected dip in visitor numbers in December, due to seasonal closure around the Christmas holidays. Current performance is in line with overall targets for the year.

Virtual Visitors

This year is a baseline year for collection and monitoring of virtual visitors, the second quarter as continued to show above the target that was profiled and a similar pattern to physical visits with a drop in numbers across December.

This metric covers two sites, the Northampton Museum & Art Gallery and the Abington Park Museum.

The third quarters performance is below the performance target set, however overall across the year visitor numbers are 12,000 ahead of target and 13,000 ahead of the position at the end of December last year,

Part of the reasons for the overall increase has been the Lego and The BFG exhibitions proved strong draws over the summer holiday period.

West Northamptonshire Council have been supporting people from the Ukraine and Afghan countries via hotel accommodation and also placing in households who are able to support. The two measures reported this year against this area of work have shifted from last years indicators that showed resettled and supported families to show those assisted to move onto find their own accommodation and where risk of homelessness was prevented.

- Through the Afghan relocations and assistance policy (ARAP) and Afghan citizens resettlement scheme (ACRS) we have supported 4 households this quarter to move on into their own accommodation either in West Northants or further afield.
- The team worked with 11 households over the course of the first quarter were there was a risk of homelessness, in 7 cases prevention was success through either continuing with current arrangements, supporting into private sector housing, through mediation or re-matching.

Supporting the Local Visitor Economy

The EGII Team finalised the content of the Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy in order to submit to Cabinet for adoption. The strategy sets out the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to enhance and amplify the visitor economy across the County. Also included is a draft action plan which is intended to be taken forward in partnership with private sector stakeholders as an accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), which is a public-private partnership to nurture and support tourism and the visitor economy, accredited by Visit England.

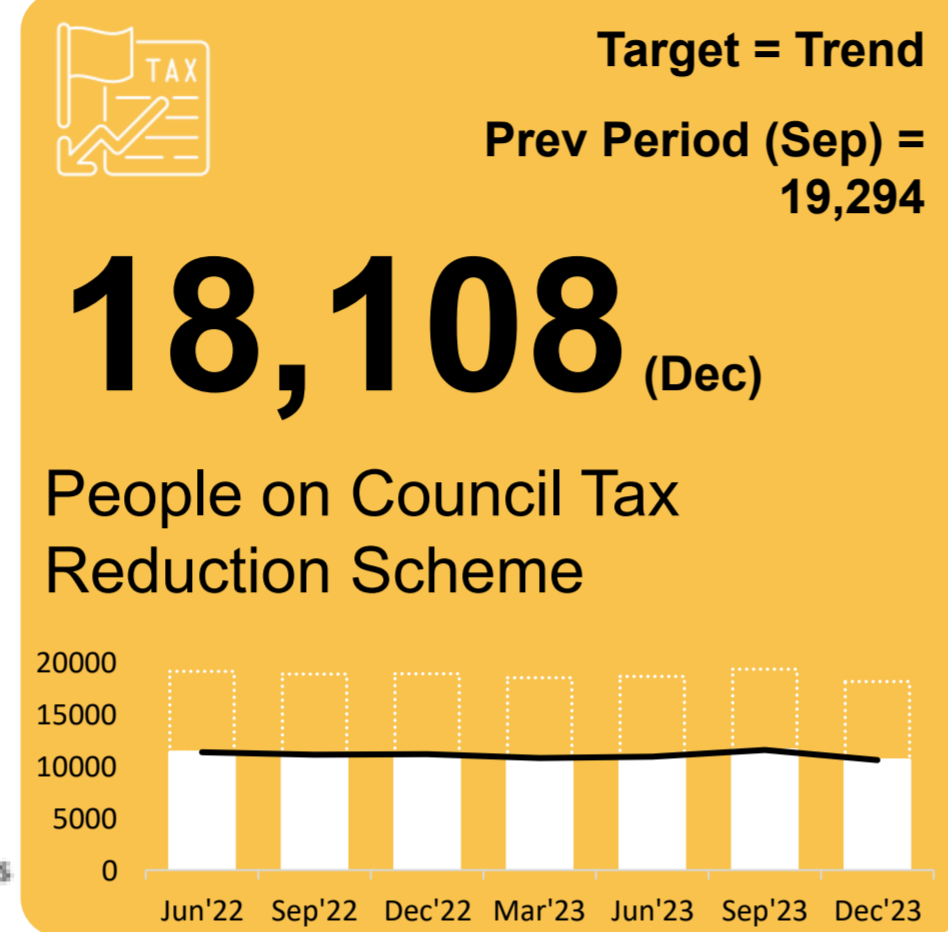
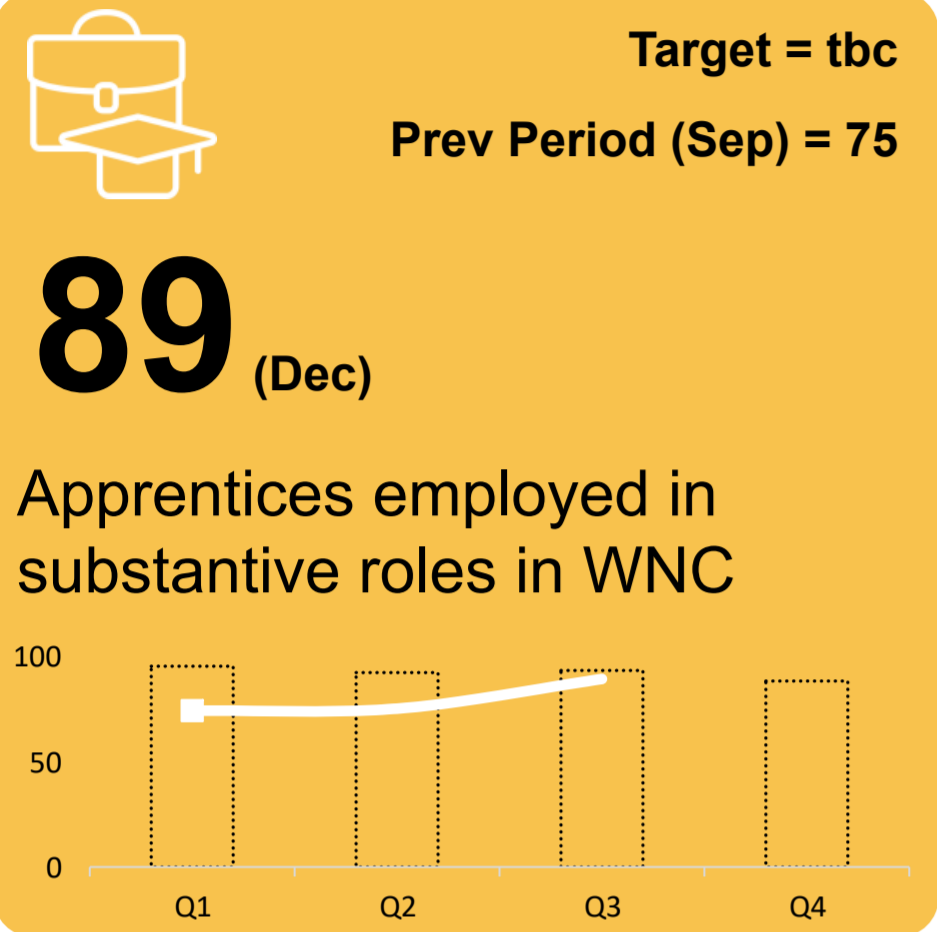
To inform next steps once the strategy became adopted by both West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council, a partner workshop was held in December to discuss potential options of what an LVEP could look like for Northamptonshire and gauged appetite for a partnership approach working collaboratively.

In order to shine a spotlight on our local businesses, the EGII Team worked closely with the Communications Team for Small Business Saturday, the national day to think local and support small businesses. The campaign included a diverse range of marketing initiatives and resources to promote all local businesses and the high streets and villages to residents and to visitors to utilise and support the local economy. Support was also provided to retailers and local businesses to grow, plan for 2024, engage more customers and increase footfall and spend locally. The EGII Team are dedicated to showcasing every local business to a local, regional, national and international audience in order to deliver economic prosperity for West Northants, whereby visitors stay and spend time and time again, spreading the word about everything that makes West Northants a must-visit destination.

Work has been undertaken to develop a Think Local social media and marketing campaign for 2024 to engage local businesses and attractions in promoting the West Northamptonshire retail and heritage offer. Alongside this, the ground is being prepared to move forward the area's tourism offer following Cabinet approval of the tourism strategy earlier this month. We have also contacted local businesses and attractions to understand to what extent they will be commemorating the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in June.

Priority 5 – Economic Development

Growth & Prosperity



The government introduced a number of changes to encourage employers to offer more apprenticeship opportunities to both their current employees and to new staff joining their organisations. The council currently supports a variety of different apprenticeship schemes in order to offer opportunities and development to new and existing members of staff.

At the end of December, West Northamptonshire Council had 89 apprentices employed within the authority who are undertaking the following levels of qualifications: 4 x Level 2, 15 x Level 3, 13 x Level 4, 12 x Level 5, 33 x Level 6 and 12 x Level 7.

The workforce headcount for the West in December 2023 is 2,782 employees. This gives a percentage of 3.2 % of the current workforce undertaking apprenticeships. Up to April 2022, the Government target was 2.3% of the workforce, which equates to 63 apprentices

In addition to this there have been 10,710 new apprenticeship starts in the 2022-23 period (latest data available) and 4,700 people have completed their apprenticeship in this period.

Each Local Authority is required to agree to a Council Tax Reduction Scheme each year. The scheme applies only to working-age claimants as the government provides a prescribed scheme for those of pension age.

As the scheme is a local one there is a financial impact on the authority and moving forward, we plan to report on the number of both working-age and pension claims to enable us to forecast any possible impact.

As of Dec'23, the number of LCTRS working-age claimants was 10,563, a decrease from 11,531 at the end of September. There are currently 7,545 pensioner claims and again this figure has also decreased from the end of September (7,763).

Hosting the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) Activities

WNC were successful in our expression of interest to take on hosting the SEMLEP Activities on behalf of the other Local Authorities in the South East Midlands, with services including the Growth Hub and the Careers Hub. This is a great opportunity and puts West Northamptonshire Council in the role of hosting regional activities and will deliver closer working relationships with the Hubs, as well as stronger liaison with the 5 neighbouring authorities.

We were extremely keen to secure this role, as the largest unitary authority in the area with the highest number of residents and employers. It was of particular importance to safeguard the SEMLEP functions and maintain their momentum in terms of delivering impactful initiatives benefiting the regional economy. We are also involved with the wider Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership activities and the Central Area Growth Board. Hosting the SEMLEP activities showcases our dedication to driving economic growth in this area.

Supporting West Northamptonshire Businesses

Activities these quarter are varied, including attending events and forums such as the Northamptonshire Logistics Forum to develop this vital industry to joining SEMLEP Growth Hub's Network & Learn to fly the West Northants Council flag and champion our business support services and funding.

A key success for local businesses was the Chamber of Commerce Business Awards, of which West Northamptonshire Council sponsored two categories, *West Northamptonshire Business of the Year* (won by Acorn Analytical Services based in Moulton Park) and *West Northamptonshire Sustainability Award* (won by Sedgebrook Hall based in Northampton). Out of the total sixteen categories, West Northants businesses were successful in nine overall.

The team has also been supporting the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team with their largescale expansion which has recently secured planning permission, increasing their workforce by an estimated 500 new employees. The Team have been meeting with Mercedes to discuss social value and local recruitment, ensuring maximum economic benefits from this exciting development. This has included working with the South East Midlands Careers Hub to explore how Mercedes can build on their extensive social activities to benefit as many local schools as possible and inspire the future workforce to consider careers in motorsport and engineering

Supporting Local Employment

Members of the EGII Team have worked closely with Public Health colleagues and wider teams to inform a bid to Government's Work Well Partnership Programme (WWPP), which was led by the Integrated Care Board for Northamptonshire. The WWPP is a dedicated fund initially going out to around 15 vanguard locations as a pilot to address the health barriers preventing residents to start, stay and succeed in work. Supporting local residents to overcome barriers, enabling them to live their best lives and secure local, sustainable employment is a top priority for the EGII Team. The outcome of the bid will be confirmed in April 2024.

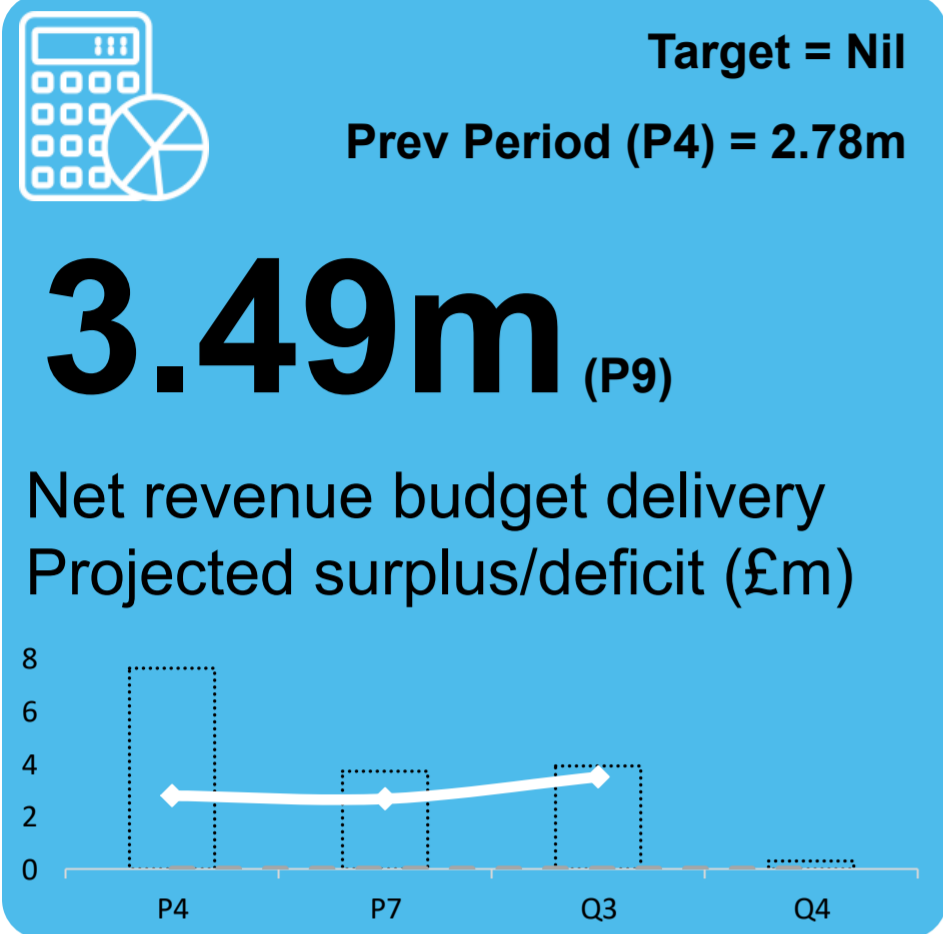
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

We have £5.4M of UKSPF and £1.3M of REPF Funding for building pride place and increasing life chances. Projects continue to progress, such as:

- Northamptonshire Partnership Homes to enable households realise the instant and long-lasting benefits of improved home energy efficiency and supporting to combat fuel poverty and climate change, project delivering much needed support to West Northants residents
- Rural England Prosperity Funding launched the Transport Grant Programme; a capital grants scheme specific to eligible rural areas to address Transportation & Rural Business Growth both programmes launched late last year
- Launch for the Business Growth & Innovation and Supporting Businesses to Decarbonise, both tendering processes were completed late December 2023 and are currently awaiting the announcement of the winners aimed at the end of Jan 2024.
- NGAGE Solutions Limited was appointed to administer and manage the Rural Business Growth grant process and applications, a total pot of £820k on behalf of West Northants Council. Businesses will be required to provide 50% of equal match funding to access grants from £2500 - £100,000. Over 45 businesses have sent Expressions of Interest and are now being invited to submit full applications, to be assessed by a Rural Business Grant Panel, with expertise drawn from different sectors. The Panel aims to have its 1st meeting early March 2024.
- Rural Transport Scheme launched late last year, with a total pot of £950k open to eligible Voluntary Sector Organisations in West Northants to support expansion and current grant funded transport projects and services,
- A community Transport expression of interest opened end of November 2023 and closed on the 08/01/2024. Currently the project has attracted over 13 expressions of interest from existing providers and new projects. A review process aims to complete by the end of Jan 2024 with projects and informed of outcomes by the end of Feb - March 2024.
- A UKSPF partners & Stakeholder Meeting took place at Vulcan Works, Monday 30th October representing the different sectors of the community, this enabled participants to contribute invaluable suggestions and feedback in regards to helping in progressing the UKSPF and Rural Funds forward to address the pertinent needs of our communities and bring growth our local economy
- UKSPF quarter 1 & 2 Reports have now been completed and submitted to DLUHC and evaluation of current funded projects continue to be monitored quarterly which includes expenditures and agreed milestones to ensure projects are working towards targets
- People & Skills funding of £1.5m for 2024/25 to upskill the local labour market, address economic inactivity and address the barriers that poor health can impact on employment continues to take shape with the aim to launch this funding scheme in April 2024.
- Full details of live and upcoming initiatives can be found on our website – www.westnorthants.gov.uk/funding

Priority 6 – Robust Resource Management

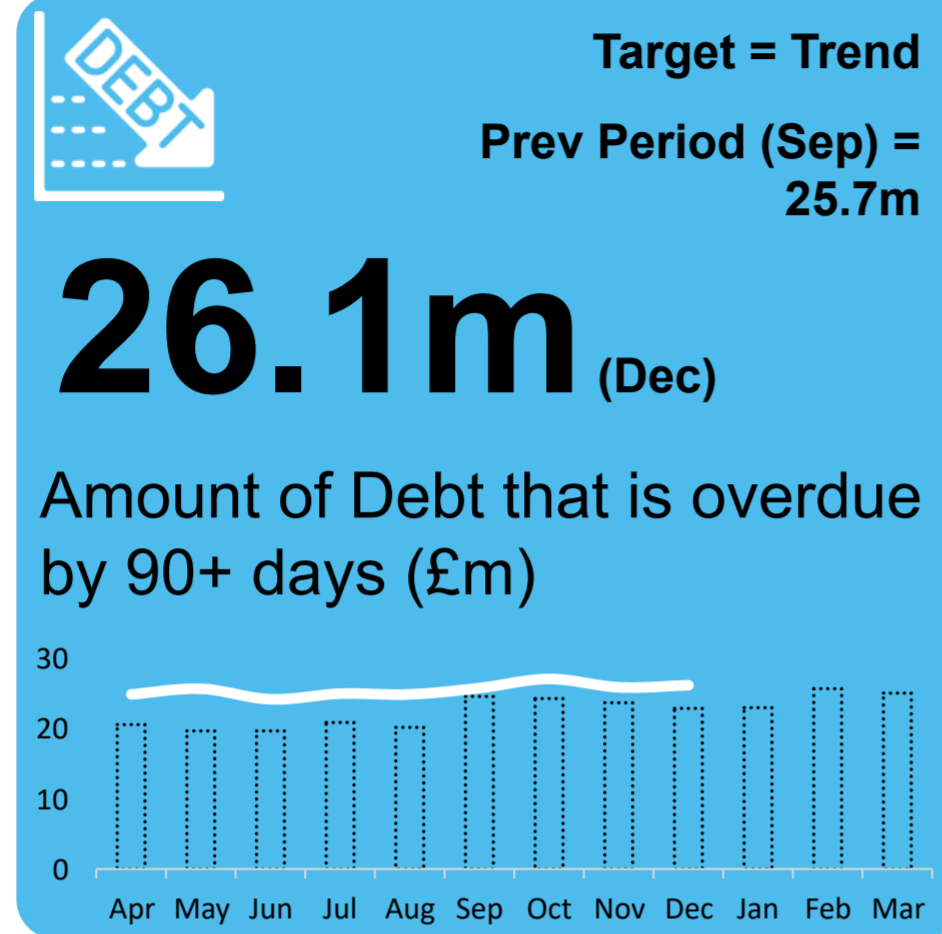
Transparency & Financial Probity



The forecast outturn position for 2023-24 is an overspend of £3.5m after the use of £8.2m of general budget contingencies, which were set aside in the budget for risks that may crystallise in the current financial year. This equates to less than 1% of the net budget.

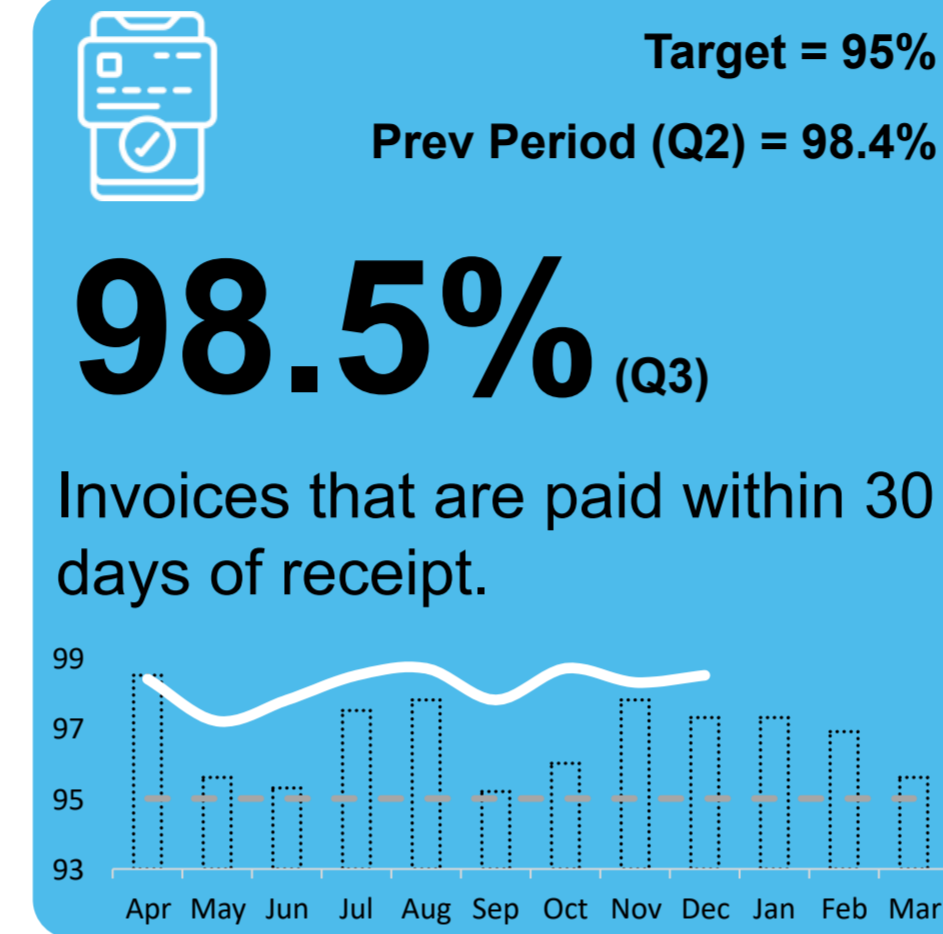
The main reasons for the underlying pressures are as follows:

- Continued demand and cost pressures within the Children's Trust contract.
- Pressures within housing and temporary accommodation.
- Demand and cost pressure on Adult Social Care independent care budgets.
- Demand led pressure in the delivery of Home to School Transport
- The cost of the 2023-24 pay award being greater than forecast at the time of setting the budget.



The latest performance of this metric shows that £26.1m of debt owed to the authority is currently overdue by at least 90 days.

This is an increase from the £25.7m reported at the end of September 2023. However reductions can be seen in 7 of the 12 directorate areas from the same point in 2022-23.



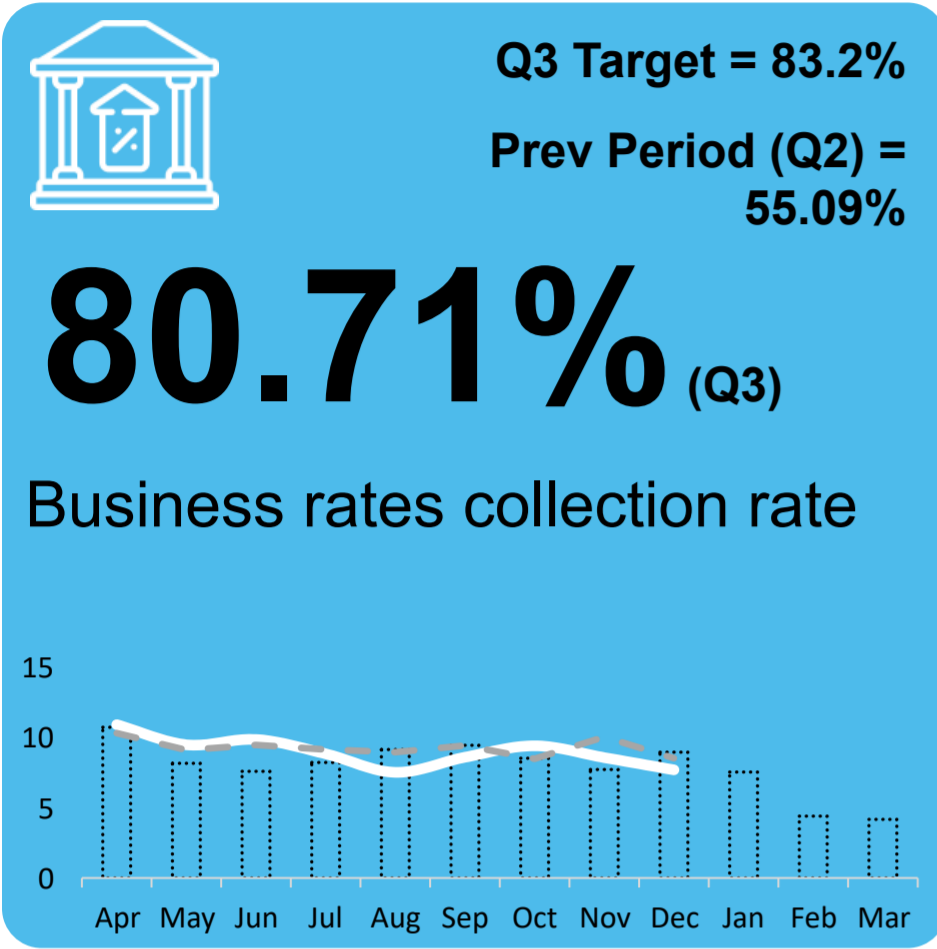
5,737 of the 5,824 invoices paid during the third quarter this year were processed within 30 days resulting in an outturn of 98.5% of this quarter. October was a particularly high-performing month with 98.7% paid on time, the highest performing month in the past 2 years.

Total invoices processed on time for the first 3 quarters of this year is 17,008, or 98.2% of invoices paid.

Performance improved over the last 18 months as staff familiarised themselves with the new system in which to raise Purchase Orders and pay invoices for WNC. This is evident with every month over the past 2 years above the 95% target.

Priority 6 – Robust Resource Management

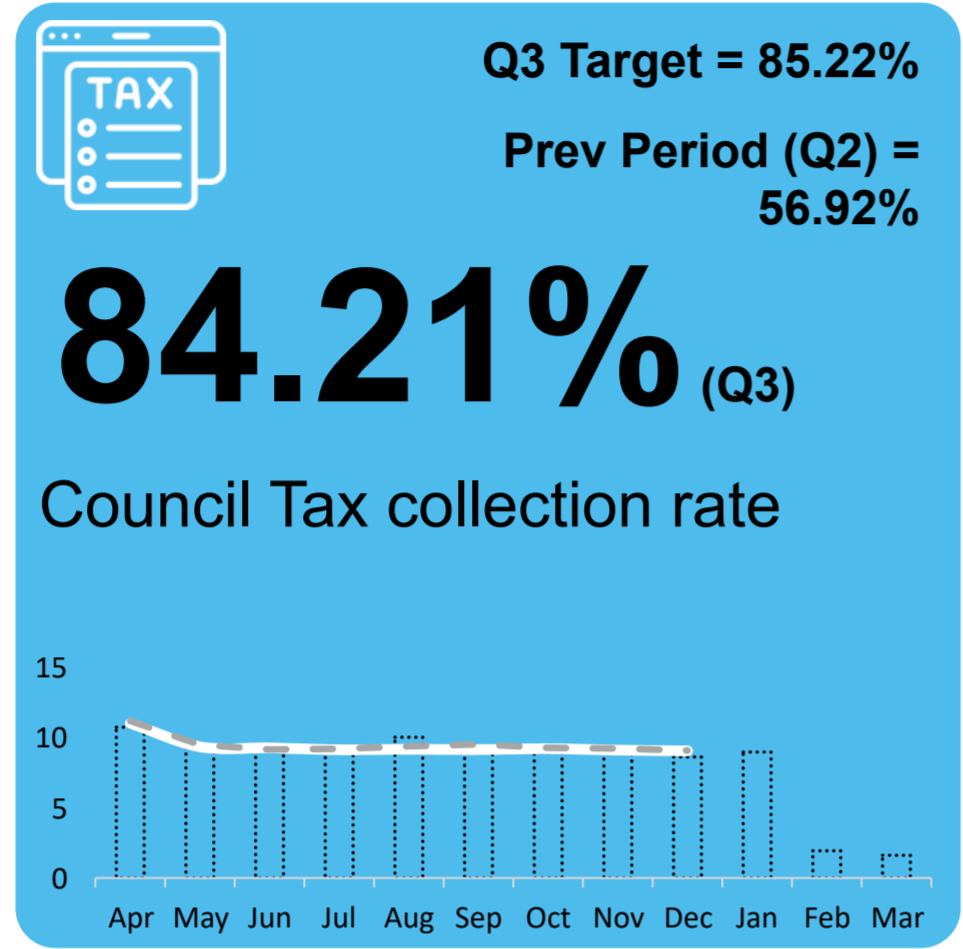
Transparency & Financial Probity



The latest quarter has resulted in a performance of 80.71% against a target of 83.22% which is a shortfall of £5.1m.

Collection rates were in a similar position at this point in 2022-23. We now have more 12 monthly payers which will be impacting on collection at this point, but the team are on track to achieve collection.

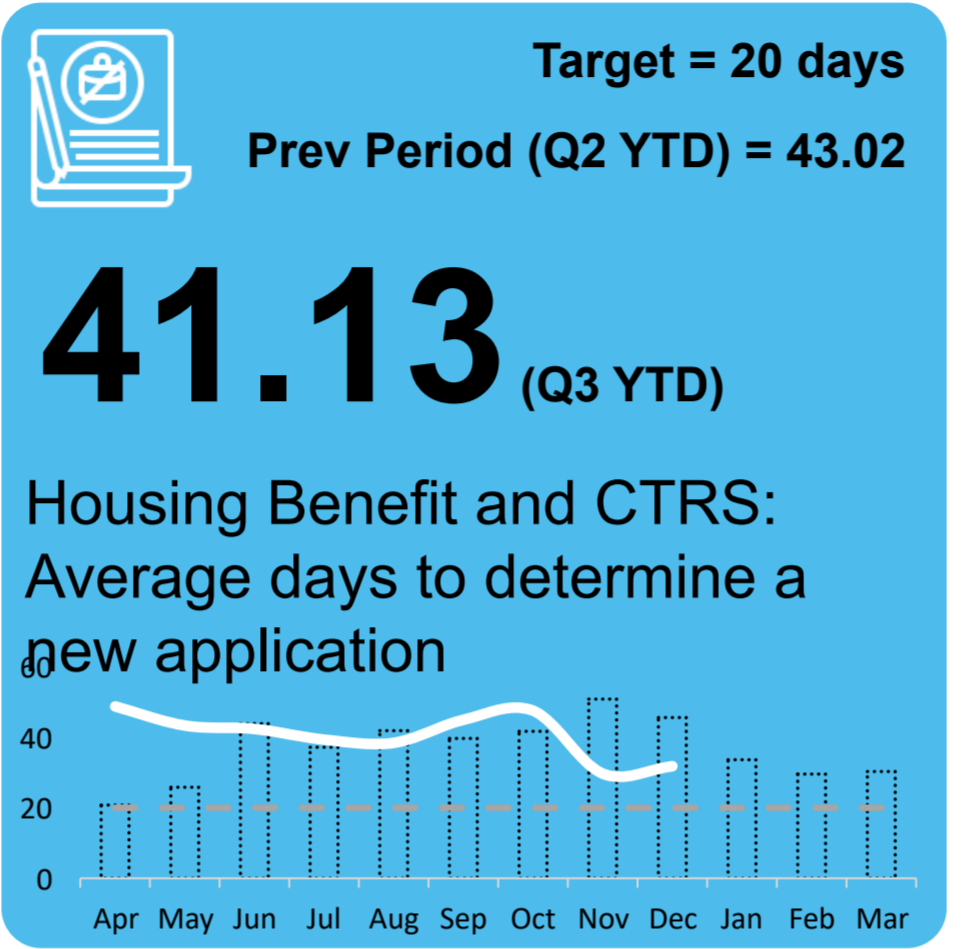
We will be reviewing the profiled targets in 2024-25.



84.21% against a target of 85.22%. We are currently 1% under target which is around £3.15m in monetary terms.

Phase one of the single system project has just been completed and the loss of systems for a period of time will have impacted on collection.

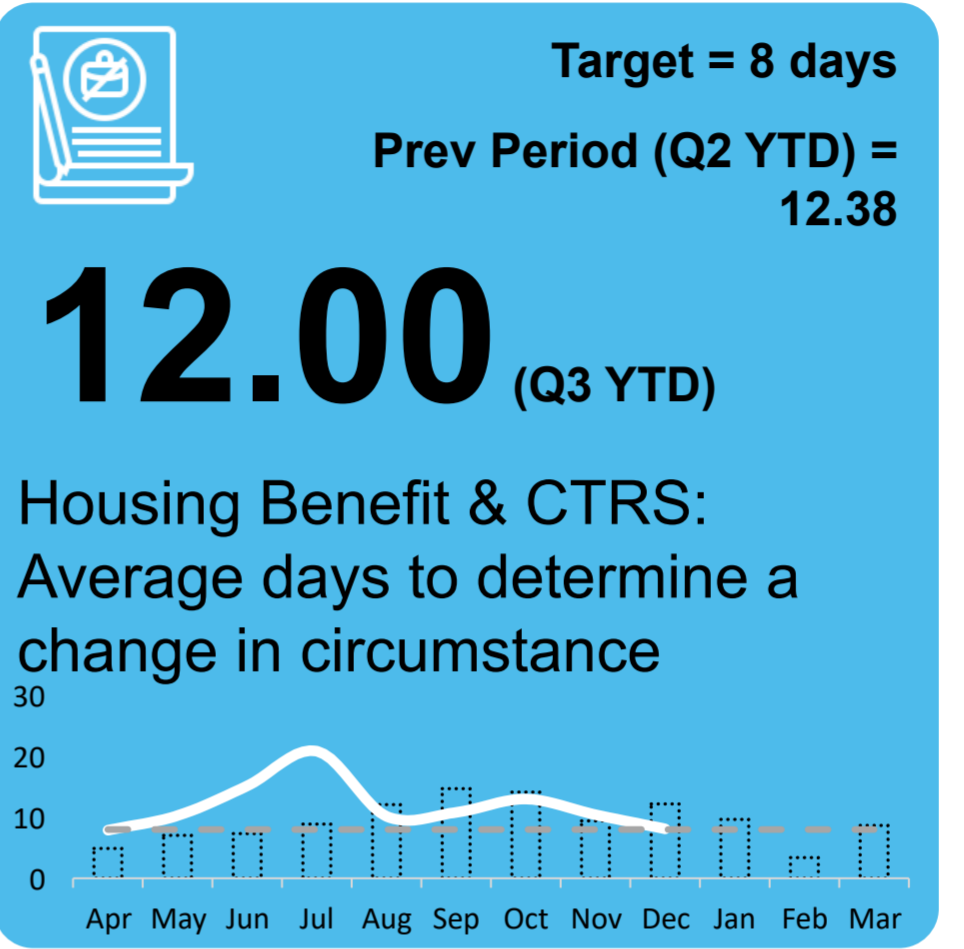
The team are actively taking steps to maximise collection for 2023-24.



Up to the end of the 3rd quarter of this year, the time taken to determine a new application is 41.13 days, this is against a target of 20 days and a national average of 22 days.

The current performance against a target of 20 days is below target, but is an improvement from each of the past two quarters.

Phase one of the single system project has just been completed and the loss of systems for a period of time will impact on this performance indicator moving forward as we tackle the backlog.

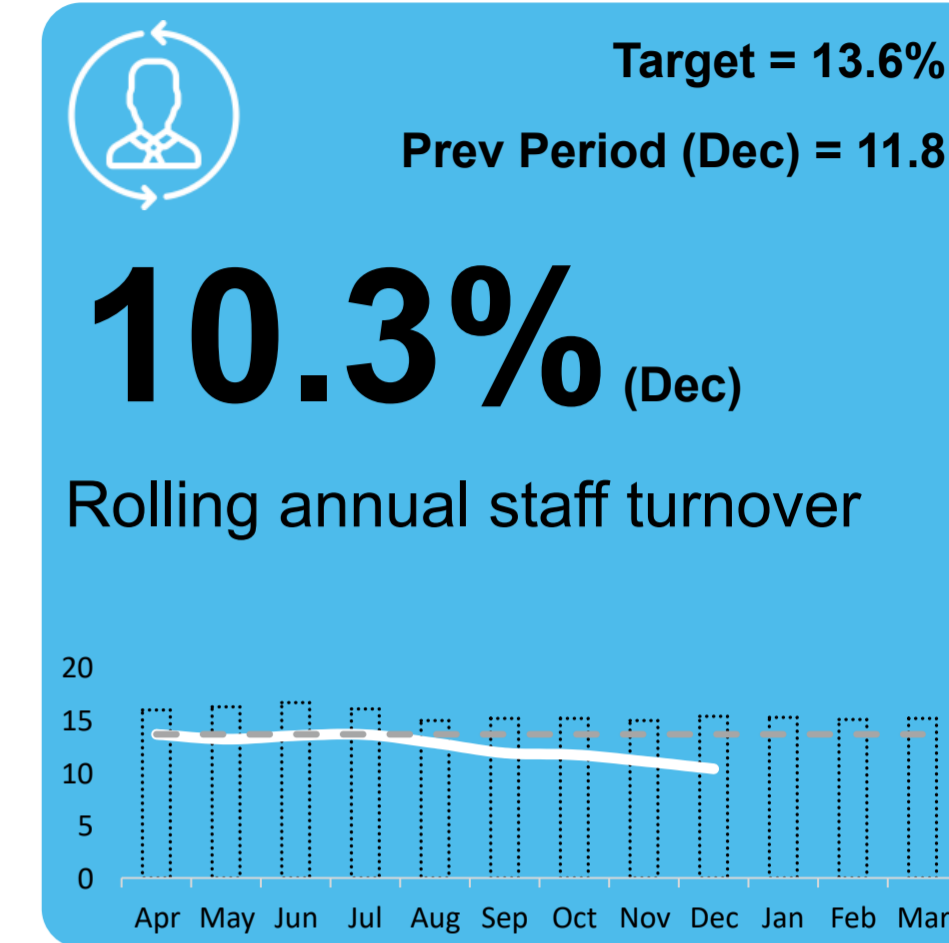
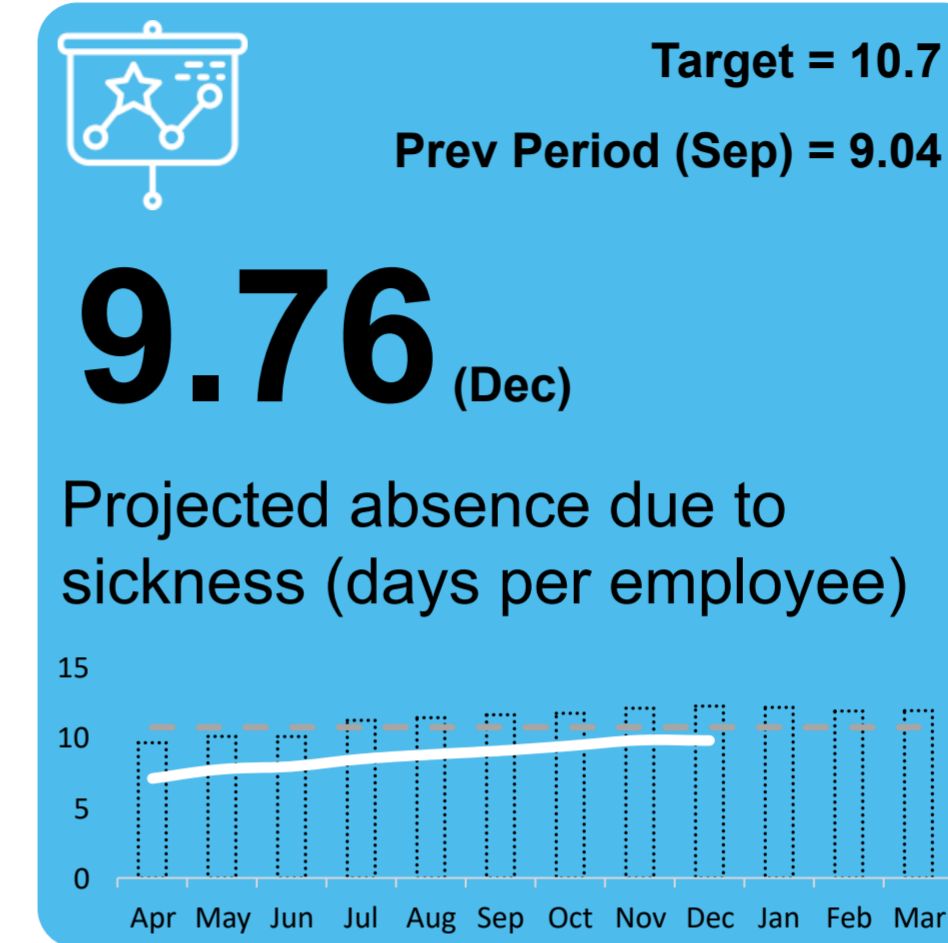
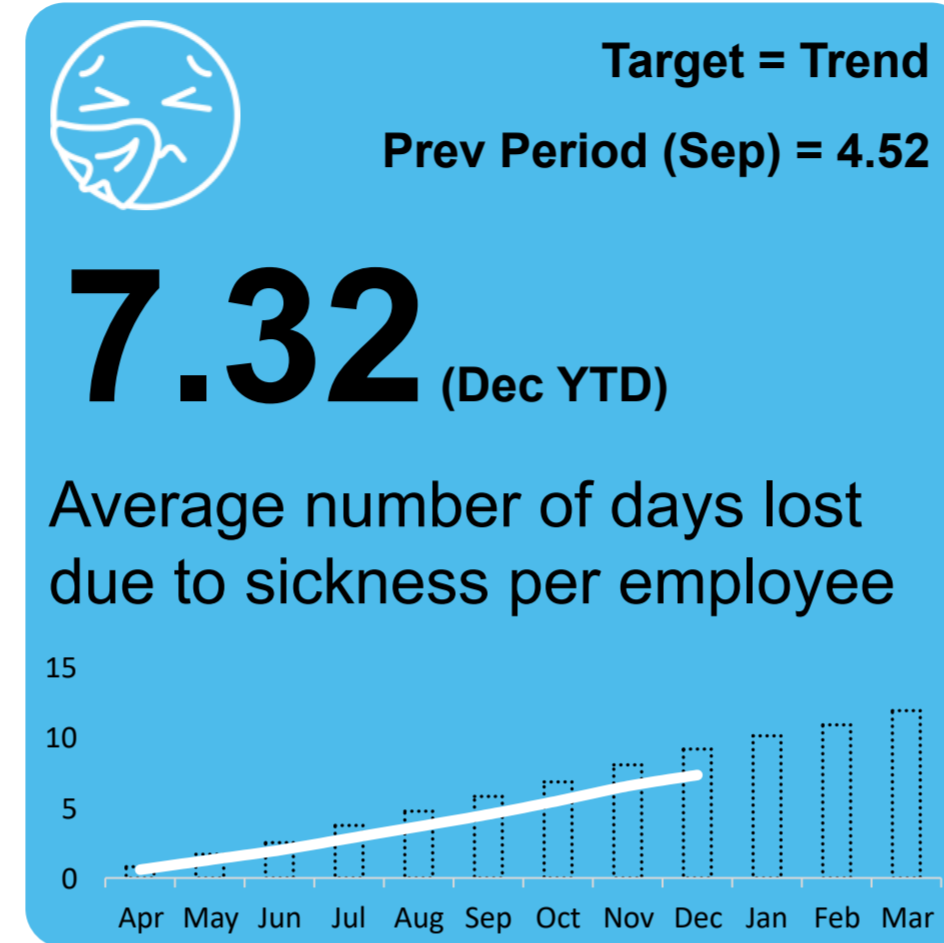
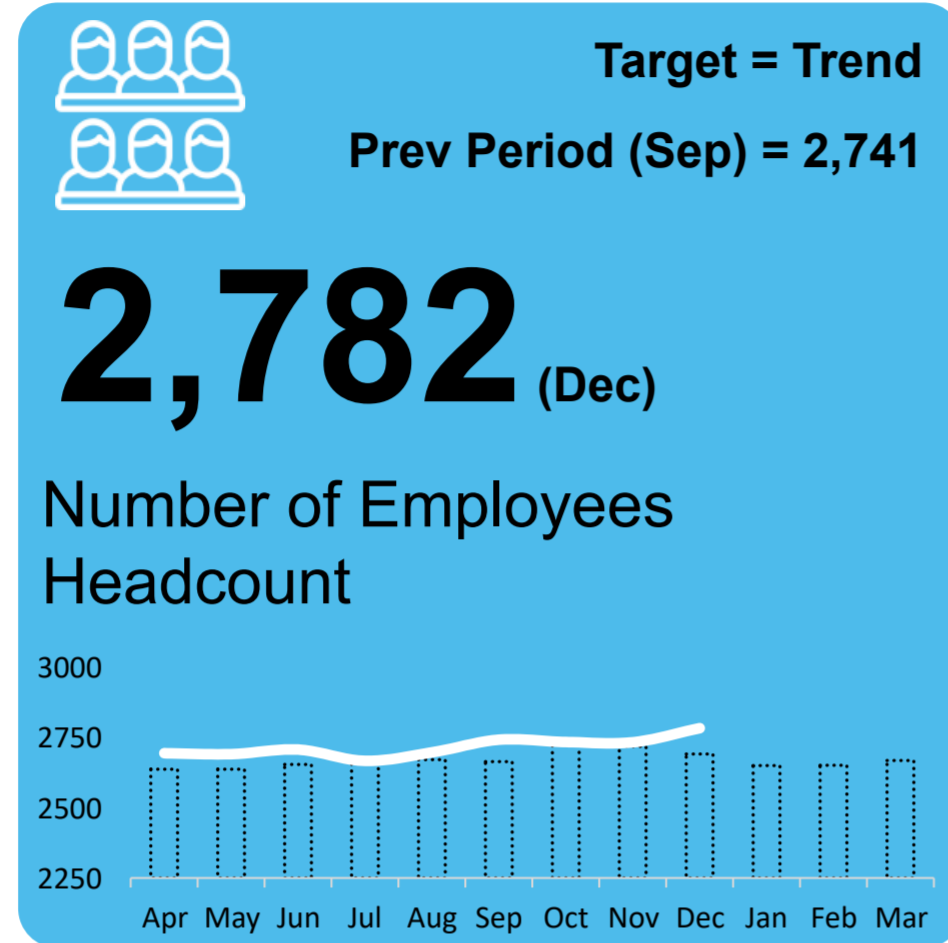
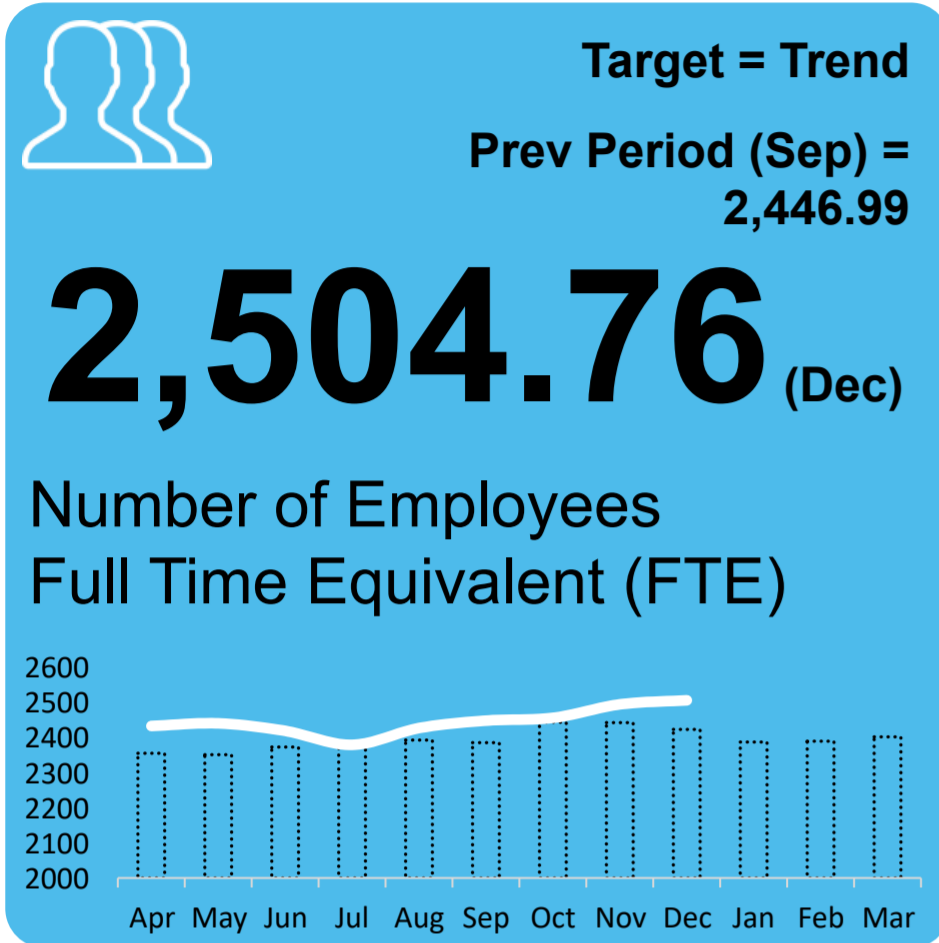


Across the first three quarters of this year the team has processed 48,937 changes to circumstances and for these, the average number of days to deal with changes in circumstances in this year is 12.00 days. This is an improvement on the previous quarters position.

Phase one of the single system project has just been completed and the loss of systems for a period of time will impact on this performance indicator moving forward as we tackle the backlog of changes that came in during system closedown.

Priority 6 – Robust Resource Management

Transparency & Financial Probity



These two indicators provide detail on the number of employees within the council, both individual people (headcount) and the full-time equivalent, which for West Northamptonshire Council refers to 37 hours per week.

The current establishment shows 2,782 employees at the end of December 2023, an increase of 41 when compared to the position reported at the end of September (2,741), there is a similar trend in the number of FTEs with an increase to 2,504.76 at the end of December 2023.

Comparing the position at the end of September last year we employ 92 more people now than we did at the same point last year, this also resulted in an increase in the full-time equivalent of 82.9. Over the course of the last 12 months, there have been numerous service disaggregation's from NNC resulting in a rising headcount alongside a greater success in filling vacancies as the post covid employment market eases combined with the impact of our work on building our employer brand.

These two indicators provide both an actual absence average per month across the year and the second indicator is the projected absence due to sickness by the end of the year, each of these indicators is an average per employee.

Current sickness absence from work continues to be impacted by Covid-19 which will be directly impacting the ability to attend work in parts of the organisation, typically those front-line services. But also the current working arrangements with office-based staff continuing to work from home for at least part of the week is likely to be resulting in less staff absence in parts of the organisation.

The average number of days projected to be lost due to sickness at the end of the year is 9.76 days per employee, which represents a reduction when compared to the outturn from last year of 11.88 days per employee. Sickness reporting currently looks low when compared to last year and work is being undertaken to ensure that all sickness absence is being recorded on ERP as would be expected.

Sickness trigger reporting takes place monthly within HR and managers are then contacted and supported in managing sickness absence cases to support individuals to return to work.

It is healthy for any organisation to have a level of staff turnover through staff moving on to other organisations and the council attracting new staff into the organisation.

The latest figures show that in the past 12 months, there has been a turnover figure of 10.3%, a reduction of 1.5% from the position at the end of Sep and also a decrease of 5% when compared to the same point last year.

The reduction is expected because we are seeing a less buoyant recruitment market and this may also be some evidence of WNC starting to establish its culture and values and people are opting to remain with us.

Appendix – Scorecard Detail

Ref	Metric Title	Priority	Lead Directorate	Better to be?	2022-23 Q4	2022-23 Outturn	Apr	May	Jun	Q1	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	YTD	Stat Neighbour	Regional	National	Comparator Period
WAS-01	Percentage of waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	43.6%					50.5%				48.0%							42.2%	42.5%	2021-22
WAS-02	Percentage of residual waste treated	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	86.9%					92.6%				89.3%									
WAS-04	Fly-tips cleared	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	4,806	17,301				4,103				4,122				3,555	11,780				
EC-01	Fixed Penalty Notices issued for Environmental Crime	1. Green & Clean	Place	No Tolerance	764	3,092	121	130	96	347	110	132	142	384	168	229	204	601	1,332				
SLC-01	Number of visitors to leisure centres	1. Green & Clean	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	565,831	2,158,761	186,761	193,040	188,670	568,471	195,317	201,174	131,547	528,038	191,923	184,646	147,497	524,066	1,620,575				
3.5a	Number of charging points - WN area (all)	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	177	177				160				200				238			2,462	46,374	Jan-24
3.5b	Number of charging points - WN area (Fast Chargers)	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	66	66				56				84				105			834	8,428	Jan-24
3.5c	Charging Points per 100,000 population - WN area	1. Green & Clean	Place	Higher	41.5	41.5				37.5				46.9				55.8			50.4	82.0	Jan-24
ASCOF-2D-CLD	Older people (65+) who were still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher	88.9%	88.9%	88.9%	76.5%	91.2%	85.3%	43.8%	88.5%	84.3%	72.4%	93.3%	75.4%	90.7%	87.3%	80.8%		82.0%	81.8%	2021-22
ASCOF-04-SALT	Admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100k (aged 18-64)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher	-	8.8	0.8	0.0	1.5	2.3	0.0	1.5	2.3	3.8	1.9	2.3	0.8	5.0	11.1		18.4	13.9	2021-22
ASCOF-05-SALT	Admission to residential and nursing care homes, per 100k (aged 65+)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher	-	434.8	34.4	37.1	37.2	108.7	37.2	57.8	39.9	134.8	48.2	49.6	86.0	183.7	427.3		562.0	538.5	2021-22
CORP-02	Care Act Assessments completed	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher			146	157	168	471	154	173	156	483	156	138	91	385	1,339				
CORP-03	Carers assessments completed	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher			71	117	123	311	105	85	115	305	7	67	5	79	695				
CORP-04	Concluded safeguarding enquiries where (MSP) questions were asked and outcomes were expressed	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher	91.3%	-	100.0%	94.2%	90.7%	94.4%	94.8%	89.7%	93.3%	92.7%	91.6%	95.6%	94.0%	93.6%	93.5%				
CORP-05	Care Act reviews completed in past 12 months	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Adult Social Care	Higher	32.0%	32.0%				36.0%				40.5%				44.4%			65.0%		2022-23 Q4
2.2a	Percentage of all referrals with a decision within 2 working days	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Higher	-	67.5%	57.7%	58.1%	60.7%	57.7%	53.5%	78.6%	87.9%	72.6%	73.7%	77.5%	66.8%	73.1%	67.8%	-	-	-	-
2.2b	Percentage of referrals with a previous referral within 12 months	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Lower	-	29.5%	28.4%	23.3%	25.4%	25.5%	23.2%	31.0%	25.5%	26.4%	29.0%	30.3%	27.0%	29.0%	26.9%	22.0%	23.1%	21.5%	2021-22
2.2c	Percentage of Single Assessments authorised within 45 days	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Higher	-	93.9%	93.7%	92.7%	92.7%	92.9%	95.3%	92.2%	96.3%	94.3%	95.7%	97.9%	96.8%	96.9%	94.7%	85.8%	92.3%	84.5%	2021-22
2.2d	Percentage of children that became the subject of a Child Protection Plan for the second or subsequent	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Lower	-	29.7%	36.5%	17.1%	43.6%	33.3%	22.7%	37.4%	34.0%	32.1%	30.1%	27.2%	20.5%	26.9%	31.2%	23.3%	26.9%	23.3%	2021-22
2.2e	Percentage of children in care who were placed for adoption within 12 months of an agency decision that	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Higher	77.8%	86.7%				85.7%				83.3%				63.6%	75.0%	72.5%	-	74.0%	2020
2.2f	Number of contacts in the MASH	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	No Tolerance	11,658	46,624	3,981	4,760	4,744	13,485	4,392	3,633	4,468	12,493	4,529	4,315	3,486	12,330	38,308				
2.2g	Contacts converted to referral (social care and Early Help)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Higher	-	-	40%	41%	46%	43%	44%	40%	40%	42%	46%	48%	46%	47%	43%				
2.2h	Number of children supported by Early Help in NCT	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	No Tolerance	-	1,475	1,436	1,531	1,616	-	1,638	1,595	1,593	-	1,621	1,692	1,752	-	1,752				
2.2i	Number of children open under Children in Need (CIN)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	No Tolerance	-	4,491	4,604	4,803	4,826	-	4,670	4,419	4,426	-	4,658	4,628	4,543	-	4,543	294.7 per 10,000	285.9 per 10,000	334.3 per 10,000	2021-22
2.2j	Number of children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	No Tolerance	-	625	680	687	714	-	702	771	755	-	716	708	659	-	659	35.04 per 10,000	43.0 per 10,000	42.1 per 10,000	2021-22
2.2k	Number of children looked after	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	No Tolerance	-	1,231	1,212	1,205	1,191	-	1,191	1,179	1,165	-	1,198	1,208	1,215	-	1,215	63.4 per 10,000	65.0 per 10,000	70.0 per 10,000	2021-22
2.2m	Social Workers with case loads above the recommended target	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Children Social Care	Lower	-	17.3%	21.1%	24.5%	22.9%	-	21.3%	19.5%	18.5%	-	22.3%	15.9%	17.5%	-	17.5%				

Appendix – Scorecard Detail

Ref	Metric Title	Priority	Lead Directorate	Better to be?	2022-23 Q4	2022-23 Outturn	Apr	May	Jun	Q1	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	YTD	Stat Neighbour	Regional	National	Comparator Period
2.2n	Proportion of young people (aged 16-18) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or Not Known	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	-	2.0%	2.2%	2.1%	2.1%	-	2.4%	3.1%	5.2%	-	3.8%	3.3%	3.0%	-	3.0%	5.6%	4.5%	4.8%	2022
SEN2	Number of Requests for EHCP Assessment	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	No Tolerance	275	1,057	54	115	115	284	111	52	76	239	115	121	77	313	836				
SEN1	EHCPs completed within 20 Weeks - excluding exceptions	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Higher	6.9%	10.2%	7.1%	12.1%	4.8%	7.8%	3.3%	6.3%	14.3%	7.2%	6.8%	3.8%	0.0%	4.1%	7.3%	44.8%	32.1%	50.7%	2022
SEN1a	EHCPs completed within 20 Weeks - including exceptions	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Higher	5.2%	9.1%	4.7%	6.3%	3.4%	4.8%	3.2%	6.3%	14.3%	7.1%	8.9%	5.6%	0.0%	5.6%	6.3%	44.3%	31.8%	49.1%	2022
SEN0	Number of EHCPs	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	No Tolerance	-	3,265	3,293	3,343	3,391	-	3,389	3,419	3,443	-	3,443	3,478	3,504	-	3,504				
SEN1f	EHCP Annual Reviews within 12 months of previous review	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Higher	-	42.4%	46.8%	47.9%	44.8%	-	12.5%	58.5%	58.5%	-	59.6%	63.2%	65.2%	-	65.2%				
NI14e	Number of Exclusions - Primary Phase	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	1	3	0	0	2	2	0	-	1	1	2	0	1	3	6				
NI14f	Number of Exclusions - Secondary Phase	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	60	26	1	5	5	11	2	-	3	5	5	6	2	13	29				
LS6	Number of Suspensions - Primary Phase	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	378	966	46	89	111	246	78	-	43	121	66	79	51	196	563				
LS7	Number of Suspensions - Secondary Phase	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	1,835	5,023	275	617	527	1,419	327	-	332	659	518	623	464	1,605	3,683				
LS14n	Open school applications outside 15 days statutory timescale	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Education	Lower	-		148	155	84	-	67	0	194	-	77	10	33	-	33				
PH8	Percentage Smoking quit rate at 4 weeks	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher	54.6%	-	63.0%	51.2%	51.6%	53.7%	59.7%	50.5%	61.9%	57.9%	53.4%	54.8%	59.7%	55.1%				54.0%	2022-23
PH9	Percentage of mothers known to be smokers at the time of delivery (Northamptonshire)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Lower	10.6%	-				9.7%				10.2%				9.4%			11.4%	8.8%	2022-23
PH1	Infants due a new birth visit that received a new birth visit within 14 days of birth	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher	95.2%	-	96.4%	97.0%	92.8%	95.4%	96.6%	95.7%	94.1%	95.4%	96.8%	95.0%	94.8%	95.5%	95.5%			82.7%	2021-22
PH2	Infants who received a 6-8 week review by the time they were 8 weeks	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher	94.1%	-	92.8%	92.5%	89.1%	91.5%	93.2%	92.6%	91.9%	92.6%	88.1%	91.1%	93.5%	90.8%	91.6%			81.6%	2021-22
PH3	In-year eligible population who received an NHS Health Check	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher			2.6%	3.5%	3.5%	9.6%	3.3%	3.3%	3.1%	9.7%	2.6%	3.7%	2.5%	8.8%	28.1%			2.3%	2022-23 Q4
PH11	People whose frailty has either not increased or has reduced	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher	New	New				65.2%				85.7%				79.0%				-	-
PH10	People in Weight Management service losing 5% weight	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher	55.3%					42.1%				28.4%								-	-
PH5	CYP who showed a maintained or improved CORE-YP score on completion of care (CYP Mental Health)	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher										88.3%				92.0%				-	-
PH6	Successful completions of adult drug treatment - opiate users	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher			4.1%	3.8%	4.2%	4.0%		4.4%	4.8%	4.6%	4.2%	3.8%	3.3%	3.8%	4.1%			5.0%	2023-24 Q2
PH7	Successful completions of adult alcohol treatment	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	Higher			29.0%	28.3%	29.0%	28.8%		24.7%	21.1%	22.8%	21.0%	20.8%	20.4%	20.7%	25.5%			35.0%	2023-24 Q2
PH12	Rate of emergency department attendances for falls in those aged 65+	2. Improved Life Chances	People - Public Health	No Tolerance	4.01		1.34	1.42	1.81	4.57	1.31	1.63	1.41	4.35	1.39	1.37	0.17	2.93	11.84				
HS-08	Proportion of cases where homeless was prevented	2. Improved Life Chances	Communities & Opportunities	Higher			26.0%	14.0%	17.0%	19.0%	21.7%	19.1%	18.0%	20.0%	4.8%	13.2%	13.5%	10.2%					
HS-09	Proportion of cases where homelessness was successfully relieved	2. Improved Life Chances	Communities & Opportunities	Higher			24.0%	17.0%	20.0%	21.0%	22.3%	21.0%	17.0%	20.0%	3.7%	22.4%	19.1%	14.5%					
PSH-01	Net Disabled Facilities Grant Expenditure	2. Improved Life Chances	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	1,236,454	4,750,175	274,087	645,317	261,001	1,180,405	467,160.0	411,387.0	231,472.0	1,110,019.0	108,277.0	257,258.0	307,373.0	672,908.0	2,963,332.0				

Appendix – Scorecard Detail

Ref	Metric Title	Priority	Lead Directorate	Better to be?	2022-23 Q4	2022-23 Outturn	Apr	May	Jun	Q1	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	YTD	Stat Neighbour	Regional	National	Comparator Period
HW-04	Percentage of routine maintenance budget spent to date compared to the agreed Maintenance Plan budget	3. Connected Communities	Place	Higher	-	-				96.0%				77.0%				108.8%					
HW-07	Percentage of defects responded to within the timeframes specified (Priority 1 & 2)	3. Connected Communities	Place	Higher	98.8%	-	100.0%	96.8%	100.0%	98.7%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	97.2%	97.7%	98.3%					
HW-08	Percentage of defects responded to within the timeframes specified (Priority 3 & 4)	3. Connected Communities	Place	Higher	98.3%	-	97.5%	98.2%	99.1%	98.2%	98.2%	99.4%	98.4%	98.8%	98.4%	99.1%	96.9%	98.3%					
3.1a	Percentage of customers who are quite satisfied and extremely satisfied with the service received from	3. Connected Communities	Corporate Services	Higher	90.4%	90.7%				88.2%				95.6%				96.6%					
3.1b	Percentage of contacts received within Customer Services for the first time (unavoidable contacts)	3. Connected Communities	Corporate Services	Higher						91.0%				95.0%				93.1%					
3.1c	Proportion of complaints escalated	3. Connected Communities	Corporate Services	Lower	9.0%	-	-	-	-	7.0%				6.0%				6.8%					
3.1d	Proportion of complaints that are upheld	3. Connected Communities	Corporate Services	Lower	New	New	-	-	-	54.0%				22.0%				53.0%					
HSP-05	Number of new council homes built	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Place	Higher	3	77	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	80	86				
HSP-01	Number of affordable homes completed	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Place	Higher	175	441	-	-	-	57	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	179	336				
LIB-01	Visitors to libraries - Physical Visitors	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	New	New	83,381	89,632	87,011	260,024	98,823	102,854	92,176	293,853	93,985	93,443	79,444	266,872	820,749				
LIB-02	Visitors to libraries - Virtual Visitors	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	New	New	19,553	23,008	18,328	60,889	29,372	21,939	24,692	76,003	24,975	25,058	18,859	68,892	205,784				
LIB-05	Visitors to Museums	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	27,362	138,114	13,412	10,991	13,773	38,176	14,000	20,122	12,204	46,326	12,974	16,218	9,999	39,191	123,693				
CSE-03	ARAP / ACRS: number of households assisted to move on to find their own accommodation	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	New	New	2	1	2	5	1.00	10.00	2.00	13.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	4.00	22.00				
CSE-02	Homes for Ukraine: percentage of hosting breakdowns where homelessness is prevented	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Communities & Opportunities	Higher	New	New	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.67	0.50	1.00	0.63	0.67	0.67	0.60	0.64					
DM-01	Percentage of major planning applications processed within 13 weeks or agreed timescales	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Place	Higher	79.0%	-	71.4%	100.0%	100.0%	87.5%	100.0%	84.6%	75.0%	87.5%	100.0%	85.7%	71.4%	83.3%	77.8%		92.0%	92.0%	2022-23 Q4
DM-02	Percentage of non-major planning applications processed within 8 weeks or agreed timescales	4. Thriving Villages & Towns	Place	Higher	64.0%	-	83.9%	79.8%	76.6%	80.3%	96.2%	81.2%	89.1%	88.2%	84.7%	82.8%	84.6%	84.0%	84.2%		83.0%	87.0%	2022-23 Q4

Appendix – Scorecard Detail

Ref	Metric Title	Priority	Lead Directorate	Better to be?	2022-23 Q4	2022-23 Outturn	Apr	May	Jun	Q1	Jul	Aug	Sep	Q2	Oct	Nov	Dec	Q3	YTD	Stat Neighbour	Regional	National	Comparator Period
Econ2	Support to local businesses (Narrative Updated)	5. Economic Development	Place	-																			
5.4a	Total number of people on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	5. Economic Development	Finance	Lower	-	18,470				18,598				19,294.00				18,108.00					
5.4b	Pensioners on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	5. Economic Development	Finance	Lower	-	7,712				7,707				7,763.00				7,545.00					
5.4c	Working age people on Council Tax Reduction Scheme	5. Economic Development	Finance	Lower	-	10,758				10,891			640.00	11,531.00				10,563.00					
5.5a	Apprentices employed in substantive roles by WNC	5. Economic Development	Corporate Services	Higher	-	87				74				75				89	75				
5.5b	Apprenticeships starts in West Northants	5. Economic Development	Corporate Services	Higher	-	950	-	-	-	2,150													
6.1	Net Revenue budget delivery - Projected surplus/ deficit (£m)	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Lower							£2.78m				£2.66m		£3.49m						
6.2	Council Tax collection rate	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Higher	-	96.97%	10.99%	20.31%	29.55%	29.55%	38.7%	47.8%	56.9%	56.9%	66.1%	75.2%	84.2%	84.2%			96.0%	2022-23	
6.3	Business Rates collection rate	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Higher	-	98.02%	10.89%	20.35%	30.19%	30.19%	39.0%	46.5%	55.1%	55.1%	64.5%	73.0%	80.7%	80.7%			96.8%	2022-23	
6.4	Amount of debt owed to the council that is overdue by at least 90 days (£m)	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Lower	-	25	24.80	25.60	24.06		24.86	24.80	25.70		26.99	25.81	26.08		25.70				
6.5	Percentage of invoices that are paid within 30 days of receipt	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Higher	96.6%	96.7%	98.4%	97.2%	97.8%	97.8%	98.5%	98.7%	97.8%	98.4%	98.7%	98.3%	98.5%	98.5%	98.1%				
6.6a	Housing Benefit & CTRS - time to determine new applications	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Lower	-	36.45	48.79				39.39	38.47	45.02	43.02	47.61	29.71	31.84	41.13					
6.6b	Housing Benefit & CTRS - time to determine change in circumstances	6. Robust Resource Management	Finance	Lower	-	7.68	7.92				20.88	10.18	10.83	12.38	13.02	10.44	8.12	12.00					
6.7a	Number of Employee's - Full Time Equivalent (FTE)	6. Robust Resource Management	Corporate Services	No Tolerance	-	2400.72	2,432.01	2,439.22	2,417.85		2,378.21	2,425.93	2,446.99		2,454.86	2,493.25	2,504.76		2,446.99				
6.7b	Number of Employee's - Headcount	6. Robust Resource Management	Corporate Services	No Tolerance	-	2,667	2,693	2,690	2,706		2,666	2,696	2,741		2,733	2,732	2,782		2,741				
6.7c	Average number of days lost due to sickness	6. Robust Resource Management	Corporate Services	Lower	-	11.88	0.59	1.29	1.98		2.82	3.66	4.52		5.48	6.53	7.32		4.52				
6.7d	Projected sickness	6. Robust Resource Management	Corporate Services	Lower	-	11.88	7.07	7.73	7.92		8.45	8.77	9.04		9.39	9.79	9.76		9.04				
6.7e	Rolling Annual Staff Turnover	6. Robust Resource Management	Corporate Services	No Tolerance	-	15.1%	13.6%	13.1%	13.5%		13.6%	12.8%	11.8%		11.7%	11.0%	10.3%		11.8%				

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12th MARCH 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, CULTURE AND LEISURE – COUNCILLOR ADAM BROWN

Report Title	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-27
Report Author	Jacqueline Brooks, – Housing Services Manager (Strategy and Enabling jacqueline.brooks@westnorthants.gov.uk Sarah Credland – Homelessness Strategy Officer

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	22/02/2024
Other Director	Jane Carr	22/02/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	22/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, 2024-2027

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval of the West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2024-2027).

2. Executive Summary

2.1 S 2. of the Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duty on local authorities to:

- Carry out a homelessness review
 - Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
 - The strategy must be published every 5 years, or sooner if circumstances change.
- 2.2 MHCLG’s 2018 Ending Rough Sleeping Strategy required that by winter 2019 all local authorities must update their strategies and rebadge them as homelessness and rough sleeping strategies; ensure they were available online and that local authorities report progress in delivering these strategies and publish annual action plans.
- 2.3 DLUHC’s 2022 strategy committed government to Ending Rough Sleeping for Good, through a focus on prevention, intervention, recovery and a transparent, joined up system.
- 2.4 The West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has been developed to provide an aligned and harmonised approach to homelessness prevention, relief, and joint working across West Northants. This will help in meeting the emergency and longer-term housing needs of the most vulnerable of West Northamptonshire’s residents whilst protecting finances by reducing demand for temporary accommodation by ensuring more effective homelessness prevention and greater opportunities and support to help those who become homelessness to move on to settled housing solutions.
- 2.5 A co-production approach has been adopted in the development of the strategy. The Homelessness Review has been developed and informed by data collation and discussion with internal teams and key partners, and a number of engagement and consultation events have taken place to ensure wider collaboration and involvement.
- 2.6 In accordance with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulation 2008, (regulation 12) (as amended coronavirus amendment regulation) West Northamptonshire Council requires a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Approve the West Northamptonshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (2024-2027)
 - b) Note that a robust Delivery Action Plan, aligned to the objectives and priorities set out in the strategy, will be produced with partners and will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To accord with legislation which requires that a local authority formulate and publish a homelessness and rough sleeping strategy and specifically comply with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulation 2008 which requires a harmonised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy to be published by the Council by April 2024.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The three legacy authorities each had a Homelessness Strategy in place prior to vesting day. These need to be harmonised and aligned to provide a consistent service across the area of West Northamptonshire.

- 5.2 Following consultation with key partners and internal stakeholders we have identified four key themes for the new strategy, aligned to the government's 2022 Ending Rough Sleeping for Good Strategy, which focusses on Prevention, Intervention, Recovery and a transparent, joined up system.

- 5.3 The four strategic themes are:

- Theme 1: Improve collaborative partnerships to make homelessness everyone's business
- Theme 2: Early joined-up intervention and prevention of homelessness
- Theme 3: Increase provision and access to suitable and sustainable settled housing solutions
- Theme 4: Ensure that when rough sleeping occurs, it is rare, brief and non-recurring

- 5.4 In order to deliver these themes the strategy has suggested associated objectives and priorities for each. These are set out below.

5.5 Theme 1: Improve collaborative partnerships to make homelessness everyone's business

- **Strengthen collaborative working**

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Providing strong governance and delivery of partnership projects through the Housing Partnership Board, task and finish groups and our local partnership forums and networks to harness the resources of all partners to respond to homelessness.
- Delivering a collaborative multi-agency homelessness approach that facilitates early interventions to ensure pathways to housing and support reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Exploring opportunities to work with other services within the Council and external strategic partners for joint-commissioning opportunities to improve & enhance the delivery of a range of homelessness services.

- Work with local communities and Local Area Partnerships to understand the barriers to accessing services so we can improve access for specific communities and localities.
- The delivery of joint training, education and learning opportunities to share knowledge and experience and to understand each other's business to enable better coordination and collaboration.
- Raising awareness of homelessness support and services available for people with local community & voluntary sector organisations so they know where to signpost individuals looking for support.
- Strengthening relationships with Registered Providers (RPs) who have a strong presence across the area and who deliver good quality housing, to improve sustainable move on options.
- Improve data collection, monitoring and use of intelligence across WNC and relevant partners to evidence what works and where gaps in needs and services remain.
- Securing support and investment across a range of council services and external partners to break down silos and pool resources to use resources more effectively to maximise the support available.

- **Embedding a person-centered approach**

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Improving coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to minimise the need for people to repeat information about traumatic experiences.
- Ensuring the whole person is 'Seen and Heard' through the establishment of specialist multi-disciplinary and co-located teams, will including Adult Social Care, Housing, Northants Children's Trust (NCT), Public Health, the Police, Drug and alcohol service and the VCS so there is a holistic approach.
- Understand trauma informed approaches to develop service provision that supports better outcomes for customers.
- Working with partners to identify how those with lived experience of homelessness / rough sleeping can be included in the design and delivery of services.

5.6 Theme 2: Early identification, intervention and prevention of homelessness

- **Increase our early intervention services**

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners:

- accessible, high quality, up-to-date information and guidance, to help residents address their housing difficulties when these first arise
- a programme of awareness raising initiatives across community settings, including schools on tackling issues that may result in homelessness
- improved collection and analysis of data to identify households at risk of homelessness and inform service delivery

- **Provide effective homelessness prevention services**

We will do this by developing and delivering services that:

- Ensure that residents can access the right service from the right organisation at the right time
- Strengthen consistent provision, access to and promotion of housing, debt and money advice services across West Northants
- Encourage housing providers to identify and assist households at risk of homelessness at the earliest point possible
- Support all statutory partner agencies to use the Duty to Refer and Commitment to Refer to alert Housing Solutions team of households at risk of homelessness to enable us to respond at the earliest opportunity
- Develop a range of effective financial and other interventions and assistance to prevent homelessness
- Ensure our West Northants Housing Allocations Scheme is effective in preventing homelessness through access to settled homes

- **Reduce the instances of people facing repeated homelessness**

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners, services that:

- Support households to make timely and accurate claims for financial support with their housing costs to create sustainable tenancies and avoid arrears
- Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse have appropriate support to remain in safe, settled accommodation, avoiding need for repeated moves
- Develop resident's skills and strengths to support them to build skills and confidence and develop resilience and self sufficiency
- Identify and provide appropriate targeted support for people with more complex needs to help sustain tenancies

5.7 Theme 3: Increase provision and access to suitable and sustainable settled housing solutions

- **Increase the supply of new affordable housing**

We will do this by:

- Developing a council-led affordable homes development programme to increase the number of new council homes
- Strengthen our partnerships with registered providers to increase the supply of new social rented homes that are genuinely affordable, and look at options to increase the level of homes let at a social rent level
- Explore the provision of modular homes and investigate innovative ways of providing accommodation to prevent and relieve homelessness
- Maximising grant funding opportunities and ensure continual engagement with Homes England and DLUHC.
- Utilising and making best use of Council land assets and resources

- **Reduce the number of households in and cost of temporary accommodation**

We will do this by:

- Ensuring value for money in the procurement of temporary accommodation.
- Reducing the number of households needing temporary accommodation through effective, and early prevention tools
- Ensure that we have a sufficient supply of affordable temporary accommodation to meet demand and is of the right type, quality and in right location and better meets the needs of homeless households.
- Provide effective support and advice to households living in temporary accommodation, to develop a personalised move-on plan to understand their housing options to enable them to move onto settled, sustainable homes as quickly as possible.
- Increase the supply of Council owned temporary accommodation by continuing to deliver the temporary accommodation acquisition programme

- **Improve access to good quality, affordable private rented accommodation**

We will do this by:

- Utilise our full range of statutory powers to tackle substandard private rented properties.
- Improve the support and incentives available to the private rented sector into a single 'offer' for landlords

5.8 Theme 4: Ensure homelessness when it occurs is rare, brief and non-recurring

- **Reduce rough sleeping**

We will do this by working with partners to:

- Improve access to suitable housing solutions to reduce initial incidences of rough sleeping
- Reduce the prevalence of repeat homelessness arising where people are evicted from supported accommodation
- Monitor the prevalence of placements by other local authorities within West Northants, of vulnerable people
- Address the disproportionate impact of homelessness and destitution by groups and individuals who experience specific discrimination
- Ensure no-one transits from prison, hospital or care without accommodation and appropriate support

- **Co-produce a joined-up pathway which supports people with complex needs who experience homelessness**

We will work with a range of partners to:

- Ensure that an assertive outreach service is available to anyone who experiences rough sleeping, throughout West Northants
- Deliver a comprehensive 'pathway' of appropriate accommodation and support to people with complex needs who experience homelessness, including rough sleeping
- Deliver interventions that are tailored to an individual's need, that 'meet them where they are', for as long as needed

- **Help people settle into homes where they can thrive**

We will develop innovative services that:

- Develop and adopt housing-led principles throughout our support services, specialist housing provision and mainstream accommodation options.
- Increase our understanding of needs and experiences and deliver targeted support and services for women at risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- Improve access to rapid 'off-the-street' options for rough sleeping.

5.9 In order to deliver the priorities that we have set out in this strategy we need to continue to work closely with our key partners. However, we also recognise that homelessness is an ever-changing landscape, bringing new challenges all the time.

- 5.10 While this is a three-year strategy (2024-2027), we will develop a dynamic 12-month Delivery Plan, to be monitored and reviewed annually, ensuring its actions are flexible and resilient.
- 5.11 The Delivery Plan will be presented to Cabinet in May 2024.

6 Issues and Choices

- 6.1 It is a legal requirement under s.2 Homelessness Act 2002, that Local Authorities conduct a homelessness review and formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
- 6.2 West Northamptonshire Council is required to have a harmonised Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.
- 6.3 Therefore, to enable us to adhere to the requirements of having a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for West Northants and the timetable for this to be published in April 2024, it is recommended that the West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is approved.
- 6.4 The Council may be at risk of legal challenge if we do not have an adopted Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy within the timescales set out.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.2 The approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy does not in itself incur any new revenue or capital liabilities for either the Housing Revenue Account or the general fund.
- 7.1.3 The implementation of and delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy requires significant investment of time and resource by existing council staff and its partners. The delivery action plan will need to be fully costed to set out the expected financial impact on the council. If the financial impacts cannot be covered within existing resources a further report will be brought back to Cabinet to determine if additional resources will be released and how they will be funded.
- 7.1.4 The delivery plan will be an ever-evolving document and if additional resources are required in the future they may be considered as part of the normal budget setting process.
- 7.1.5 Throughout the lifetime of the strategy there will be some specific projects and developments where decisions will need to be made and the full revenue and capital implications will be made clear at the time. None of the projects or development will be able to proceed until the appropriate funding is agreed and in place.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 s.2 Homelessness Act 2002 sets out the duty on local authorities to:

- Carry out a homelessness review
- Formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on that review.
- The strategy must be published every 5 years, or sooner if circumstances change.

7.2.2 s.3 Homelessness Act 2002 specifies that the homelessness strategy is a strategy for:

- preventing homelessness
- securing that sufficient accommodation (of a range of types) is available for people who are or may become homeless
- providing satisfactory support for people who are or may become homeless, or who need support to prevent them becoming homeless again.

7.2.3 The strategy must consider how the local housing authority and social services authority, any other public authority, voluntary organisation or anyone else can meet the objectives of the strategy. It may include specific actions or objectives to be undertaken by the local housing and social services authority, or, with its agreement, by any other public authority, voluntary organisation or anyone else.

7.2.4 The authority must consider the needs of all groups of people in its area who may be affected by homelessness.

7.2.5 The local housing authority must keep the strategy under review. Before adopting or modifying the strategy the local housing authority must consult any public or voluntary organisations or other persons, as it considers appropriate.

7.2.6 Once the strategy is completed, it must be made available for public inspection without charge, and copies made available on payment of a reasonable charge.

7.2.7 In accordance with the Local Government (Structural Changes) Transitional Arrangements (No.2) Regulation 2008, (regulation 12) (as amended coronavirus amendment regulation) West Northamptonshire Council requires a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy by April 2024.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There is a legal requirement before adopting a homelessness strategy the authority shall consult such public or local authorities, voluntary organisations or other persons they consider appropriate. The council has taken a co-production approach to developing this first West Northants Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy through extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders including statutory external partners and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations.

7.3.2 The impact of non-compliance to the structural change order could result in reputational damage, risk of challenge and potential consequences from central government.

7.3 Consultation and Communications

7.4.1 The development of the strategy has been co-designed /produced with regular discussions with internal team and key partners. There were also a number of engagements events, including:

- Single Homeless Forum and Homelessness Prevention Network:
- Prevention of rough sleeping engagement event
- General needs homelessness and prevention event
- Wider Determinants of Health Workshops

7.3.2 In addition, we commissioned two independent pieces of research:

- a. Health Needs Assessment of people who sleep rough – commissioned jointly with Public Health. This research reviewed the current customer journey, including existing accommodation and support; identified gaps and made recommendations on maximising service provision, including new operating models and approaches, to inform a new commissioning framework for supported accommodation and services for this cohort. Over 20 partner organisations were involved, including people with lived experience of homelessness.
- b. Homelessness and Housing Solutions Health Check - commissioned an internal 'service health check' of our Housing Solutions provision, which included mystery shopping of the access points to our service, staff interviews and case file reviews. This work has informed service aggregation and transformation of the housing solutions team.

7.4 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

A presentation was provided to Children's, Education and Housing Overview and Scrutiny on the 5th February. This provided an overview of the key headlines from the homelessness review, the aims, themes and objectives of the West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.

7.5 Climate Impact

None

7.6 Community Impact

7.7.1 An Equality Screening Assessment in respect of the draft Homelessness and rough sleeping strategy has been completed and will be made available alongside the formal public and stakeholder consultation. Changes will be made to the ESA to reflect any feedback gathered during the consultation.

8 Background Papers

8.7 None

West Northants Council

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024 – 2027

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Foreword

Homelessness in the 21st century is a tragic reflection of the fragility of society and the failures of the systems underpinning that society. It is our job as public servants to make those systems as robust, adaptable, and compassionate as possible in order to avoid the waste of potential, the erosion of dignity and the loss of life that homelessness and rough sleeping can give rise to. With that in mind we approach this task with the commitment and determination that it merits. We want to ensure people have access to good, safe housing which provides the foundation for accessing health and social care when they need it, the best education, securing employment and living their best life.

This strategy has been developed at a time of significant pressures and the cumulative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, the national housing crisis and the current global situation. Unfortunately, this means many households continue to feel the pressures relating to increases in costs of living and the demand for affordable housing and housing-related support services continue to increase. We are committed to change this and believe by working with a variety of partners including health, the police, Registered Provider partners and the voluntary, community and faith sector we can achieve better outcomes for people affected by homelessness in West Northants.

This is our first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy as West Northamptonshire Council (WNC). We have included the views of colleagues, partners and customers on how collectively we can reduce homelessness and rough sleeping in West Northants. We believe that the themes and actions it sets out are long-term and flexible enough to address likely changes to legislation, guidance and social and economic shifts over its duration. This strategy outlines our commitment to tackle an issue which is complex and challenging. The delivery of this strategy will assist people who are some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Our new three-year strategy places strong emphasis on early intervention and ensuring we increase prevention of homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation and provide more suitable and affordable accommodation for our diverse communities.

The strategy is framed around four themes:

- Improving collaboration & partnership working
- Early intervention and prevention of homelessness
- More suitable and affordable housing
- Reducing rough sleeping

We are determined to make homelessness in West Northants rare, brief and unrepeatable. With increasing demand, there is additional pressure on council services and the resources of our partners. However, by working together and making homelessness everyone's responsibility we will continue working towards ending homelessness in all its forms.

Councillor Adam Brown - Deputy Leader of the Council & Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure

Our Vision and Values

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2027 has been co-produced with a range of services across the council, external statutory partners, our arms-length management organisation (ALMO) who manage our council housing stock and key Registered Provider Partners and voluntary, community and faith sector organisations. All partners supported this strategy setting out the vision to work towards ending homelessness across West Northants.

We will achieve this through:

- Taking a **multi-agency collaborative partnership** approach to effectively tackle homelessness and making homelessness everyone's responsibility
- A **personalised approach** to ensure that people receive the right advice and support at the right time to help them to find, or remain in, a safe and stable home
- Improving residents' experience of engaging with services and ensuring that **every contact counts**

Homeless Link worked with staff from local accommodation providers, support services and people with lived experience of homelessness to find out what values mattered to them and to the way they are treated. The following values were identified:

- **Honesty and trustworthiness**
- **Respect**
- **Empathy, kindness and compassion**
- Staff working with people experiencing homelessness highly value **purpose in their work**.



Graphic: Created via workshop facilitated by Homeless Link, July 2023

How we developed our strategy

We adopted a co-production approach to develop our Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and it was informed by:

- the findings of our strategic review of homelessness in West Northants
- discussions with various teams within the council including our ALMO and Northamptonshire Childrens Trust
- various external statutory and non-statutory partners
- two independent pieces of research commissioned by the council

Health Needs Assessment of people who sleep rough

During 2023, the Council's Housing and Public Health teams commissioned an independent assessment of the health, social care, housing and support needs of people at risk of or with experience of sleeping rough, within West Northamptonshire. A project group of over 20 key partner organisations, including those involved in supported accommodation and health service provision provided data and staff interviews. The research also included the views of those with lived experience of homelessness and using local services. The research reviewed: the current customer journey, including existing accommodation and support; identified gaps in service provision; and made recommendations for future scale and type of service provision. This included new operating models and approaches to inform a new commissioning framework for supported accommodation and services for this cohort.

Homelessness and Housing Solutions Health check

During 2023 we commissioned an internal 'service health check' of our Housing Solutions provision, which included mystery shopping of the access points to our service, staff interviews and case file reviews. This work has informed our plans for an aggregated West Northamptonshire Housing Solutions Service aggregation, our Homelessness Transformation Project and a programme of bespoke staff training.

Events and engagement:

- **Single Homeless Forum and Homelessness Prevention Network:** Our two established partnership networks fed into the review and strategy development and provided data.
- **Prevention of rough sleeping engagement event:** In conjunction with Homeless Link, we held a half day event focused on prevention of rough sleeping, in July 2023. This was informed by a survey on values of those with lived experience of homelessness and of service providers, undertaken by Homeless Link in advance of the session.
- **General needs homelessness and prevention event (Jan 2024)**
- **Wider Determinants of Health Workshop:** In conjunction with Public Health, the health needs assessment was presented to a wide range of internal and external stakeholders at this workshop in August 2023 and further workshops have taken place in early 2024.

National Context

This strategy and the evidence base that informs the themes and objectives have been developed at a time when our country is experiencing significant pressures and challenges, with the landscape of homelessness evolving quickly, shaped by cumulative impacts. Significant challenges at a national level include:

- Cost of living increases – this has culminated in high levels of inflation, increased living costs that have severely impacted household finances. This is a contributing factor in the increasing risk of homelessness and created additional pressures for households who were already struggling.
- Benefit and welfare reforms – these reforms have had significant implications for housing and homelessness.
 - Universal credit – a single payment generally made direct to the applicant, which cover some or part of any housing costs. Benefit rates have not risen in line with market rental values, which may lead to rent arrears and can contribute towards the on-going costs of living crisis. For some households in temporary accommodation, the Local Housing Allowance rates have been frozen at 2011 levels therefore exacerbating issues around affordability (although an uplift in LHA rates is due from April 2024)
 - Single Accommodation room rate – for people under 35, a single shared room rate applies. This restricts people to a very low rate to cover housing costs as well as putting homelessness services under pressure to find affordable shared properties for people to move on to
 - Under-occupancy – this reduced housing benefit entitlement to social housing tenants considered to be under-occupying their home.
- Health inequalities - the pandemic accentuated health inequalities arising from lack of warm, safe homes with adequate space; access to healthy outdoor space; safe workplaces and schools. Nationally, we now better understand the negative impacts on those who lack one or more of the ‘key determinants of health’.
- Resettlement Schemes - the emergency resettlement of Afghan nationals; the refugee crisis following the invasion of Ukraine.
- Unaffordable local housing market – lack of affordable housing and expensive private rented sector.

The latest headline measures for homelessness and rough sleeping in 2022-23 for England are as follows:

- **Homelessness Assessments** – the number of households assessed due to being threatened with homelessness or already being homeless was just under 300,000 (up 6.8% from 2021/22 and 3% above the pre-covid level in 2019/20)
- **Temporary Accommodation** - the number of households in temporary accommodation increased by 10%
- **Rough Sleeping** – the single-night count of people sleeping rough in November 2022 was 3,069 – an increase of 26% from the previous year

Other notable changes in 2022-23 compared to the previous year include:

- decrease in successful outcomes to prevent & relieve homelessness
- increases in number of households owed a homelessness duty due to the end of an assured shorthold tenancy. In particular, large increases were seen in the end of assured shorthold tenancies due to landlords wishing to sell or re-let properties.
- increase in households owed a prevention or relief duty where the main applicant was aged 65-74
- increase in number of households owed a prevention or relief duty where the main applicant was in full-time (up 10.8%) or part-time work (up 6.5%)

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Local Context

West Northamptonshire Council’s Corporate Plan 2021-2025 sets out priorities to achieve the vision for making West Northants a great place to live, work, visit and thrive. These are:

- Green and Clean
- Improved Life Chances – including adults supported to live independently; care provided for those that need it; reduced hospital stays and delays; joined up and local services with health; and safe and secure accommodation for all
- Connected Communities
- Thriving Villages & Towns – including increase affordable housing & council homes; raise standards of privately rented homes
- Economic Development
- Robust Resource Management

The **West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028** focuses on helping residents to “**Live Your Best Life**”. This is a joint strategy working with a variety of partners including health, voluntary and community sector organisations, police and fire colleagues. The strategy focuses on tackling health inequalities throughout West Northamptonshire by looking at “wider determinants”, which are external elements that can affect a person’s health and wellbeing. Over the next 5 years, the aim is to achieve the 10 ambitions outlined in the strategy through work at a very local level via West Northamptonshire’s nine Local Area Partnerships (LAPS). The 10 ambitions and some of the key outcomes relevant to homelessness are outlined below:

Ambition	Key Outcomes
The best start in life	
Access to the best available education and learning	
Opportunity to be fit, well and independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults are healthy and active and enjoy good mental health.
Employment that keeps you and your family out of poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More adults are employed and receive a ‘living wage’. • Adults and families take up benefits they are entitled to
Good Housing in places which are clean and green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good access to affordable, safe, quality, accommodation and security of tenure
Safe in your homes and when out and about	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are safe in their homes, on public transport and in public places. • Children and young people are safe and protected from harm.
Connected to friends and family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel well connected to family, friends and their community. • Improving outcomes for those who are socially excluded.
The chance of a fresh start when things go wrong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homeless people and ex-offenders are helped back into society. • People have good access to support for addictive behaviour and take it up

Access to health and social care when you need it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely access to all health and social care services when it is required, life course from conception to end of life. • People are supported to live at places of their residence and only spend time in hospital to meet medical needs. • Services to prevent illness (all health screening and vaccinations) are easy to access with quality service provision.
Accepted and valued for who you are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel they are a valued part of their community and are not isolated or lonely. • People are treated with dignity and respect.

West Northamptonshire Council’s Anti-Poverty Strategy sets out how we will work with partners to support people struggling financially, what we will do to stop people 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. The strategy includes an objective to ‘Meet housing need with good quality social housing and enable the private rented sector to be an effective housing contributor’, with commitments to:

- Develop a new West Northants Housing Strategy.
- Support the development of new homes and ensure rent levels support local housing needs
- Develop a new West Northants Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- Help to prevent and reduce homelessness by seeking alternative housing options and increasing the number of good quality private sector homes available to rent.

The **West Northants Housing Strategy (2022-2025)** is a high-level document, which forms one of the cornerstones for delivering our Corporate Plan. It sets out the main housing related issues across West Northants and how we will deliver the housing priorities based around the following themes:

1. Deliver Homes people need and can afford
2. Improve the quality, standard and safety of homes and housing services
3. Support residents to live healthy, safe and independent and active lives
4. Support thriving and sustainable communities

Underpinning the strategy is the importance of partnership working and without this we will not be able to tackle the big challenges that lie ahead.

This is West Northamptonshire Council’s (WNC) first Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy, to cover the next three years. Prior to the formation of WNC as a unitary authority, in April 2021, the legacy authorities of Northampton Borough Council, South Northants Council and Daventry District Council each had their own homelessness and rough sleeping strategies, with related action plans. All three had similar priorities for homelessness prevention, though with different locality-based challenges and levels of need for services.

Key achievements

Since our legacy authorities' strategies were produced, we have achieved positive results through partnership working and funding initiatives, despite global, national and local challenges. These include:

- Accommodating safely people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping, through the Everyone In programme, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Embedding effective new working practices following our learning during this period, improving outcomes for those affected.
- In conjunction with Public Health, ensured access to the Covid-19 vaccination and screening for blood borne viruses, for those accommodated in winter shelter and supported provision. This addressed some health inequalities for those most vulnerably housed.
- Securing funding from the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative Round 5 (RSI 5) for 2022-25, to support people at risk of rough sleeping.
- Establishing, with Public Health, the multi-agency, peripatetic, Northampton Homeless Treatment Team (NHTT), in conjunction with [CGL](#), [Bridge](#) and the [Hope Centre](#) for people with drug and alcohol dependency who sleep rough or are at risk.
- Purchased and set up 35 properties, with tenancy support under [NSAP/RSAP 1](#) and 2 funding, including three with additional support for women who have experience of sexual and financial exploitation.
- Led a partnership approach to establish the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders (AfeO) project, which provides private rented accommodation for up to two years following release from prison. Accommodated 40 people by end of March 2023. Secured funding for 60 further ex-offenders during 2023-25.
- Co-designed and delivered with Adult Social Care, Multiple Exclusion Homelessness (MEH) training following the [Jonathan 19 Safeguarding Adults Review](#)
- Commissioned Midland Heart to deliver housing related and supported accommodation at [Oasis House](#), as part of our single homeless pathway
- Developed and adopted the [Housing Strategy 2022-25](#)
- Adopted a new WNC Housing Allocations scheme
- Provided wrap around resettlement support for over 800 arrivals under Homes for Ukraine and over 500 individuals under programmes for Afghan nationals.
- Obtained Local Authority Housing Funding (LAHF), to support settled accommodation for Afghan and Ukrainian individuals and families.

Main findings of our homelessness review

Homelessness approaches: Almost 5,000 homelessness approaches (4951) were made to the Housing Options Service in 2022/23. An increase of 14% (599 approaches) on the previous year.

Main duty acceptances: we made 483 main duty homelessness acceptances in 2022/23, increasing from 321 in 2021/22.

Reasons for loss of last settled home

In common with the national trend in reasons for loss of last settled home for households approaching as homeless, our main reasons are:

- Being asked to leave by family and friends
- End of an assured short-hold tenancy
- Domestic abuse.

West Northants has a higher than national average rate of people approaching as homeless after 'End of supported housing'.

Repeat approaches: Almost half of customers who approached during 2022/23 had made one or more previous approaches in the five years prior.

Single person applicants and couples without children comprise almost half of the households in temporary accommodation.

Number of people sleeping rough

We compile several different measures for central government to indicate the prevalence of people sleeping rough in our area. Each provides a 'snapshot' in time, rather than definitive figure, as many people move in and out of homelessness and rough sleeping at different points:

- 15 people were recorded as sleeping rough on a single night in June 2023 with 45 people recorded as having slept rough across that month.
- Our annual rough sleeping estimate and count recorded 36 people sleeping rough on a single night in November 2023. This rose from 25 people in 2022 and 15 in 2021.
- We have an identified 'target priority group' of 100 people who have been seen sleeping rough in two or more years out of the last three, or in two or more months out of the last 12.

West Northants was identified by DLUHC as a target authority area for funding for the cohort 'Adults with a history of rough sleeping who have a high level of support need'.

Theme 1 Improve collaborative partnerships to make homelessness everyone's business.

The causes of homelessness and rough sleeping are multiple and complex and not all are housing related, therefore no one organisation can tackle the systemic challenges alone. By working together across services / sectors we can achieve better outcomes for all who are affected by homelessness and rough sleeping. The statutory homelessness responsibilities on local authorities, high dependence on short-term government grants and continuing pressures on local government finances, make a collaborative, innovative approach critical.

Why this is important

- The government's [Ending Rough Sleeping for Good strategy](#) expects to see a whole system approach locally, building on the excellent partnership working during the pandemic. This approach is applicable to the prevention of all forms of homelessness, not just rough sleeping.
- The [Northants Integrated Care Strategy](#) and the West Northants Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy 2023-28 provides opportunities to collaborate on developing services.
- The West Northants Housing Partnership Board (HPB) was set up to facilitate collaborative solutions, embed a partnership approach and unite people from different sectors to co-produce solutions. The HPB will drive the delivery of partnership actions in the Housing and Homelessness strategies.
- Collective action is required so we can effectively tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and reduce health inequalities. We can improve services and interventions that support people when they are most in need and deliver better outcomes for them.
- Stronger partnership creates better chances of creating services that meet people's needs, improving their experience and outcomes.
- Around half of all homelessness approaches originate within three of our **Local Area Partnerships (LAPS)**, within the urban area of Northampton, however, we appreciate the different challenges residents in our rural areas can have, such as accessing services and support.
- Data is essential and a powerful tool for developing strategies, monitoring progress against action plans, designing service provision and intervention, commissioning services and evaluating what does and does not work. Although much data is collected currently, there is a lack of consistency across services in how it is collected, monitored, or used to evidence what works well or to identify gaps in services.
- We are experiencing an increase in the level of homelessness and rough sleeping locally. Our statutory homelessness responsibilities, high dependence on short-term government grants

and continuing pressures on local government finances, makes taking a collaborative, innovative approach vital.

- During the pandemic, existing relationships and partnership were the foundations for quick and effective partnership working around homelessness in a time of crisis. The pandemic raised the profile of homelessness and required greater working with Public Health, as a result of this there is a wider understanding on the issues around homelessness and rough sleeping and greater collaboration.
- Domestic abuse remains a significant cause of homelessness locally, causing long term harm, trauma and disruption to individuals and families. The implementation of our **Domestic abuse strategy** is supporting collaboration across the authority, with specialist providers, RPs, the Police and other statutory partners to improve access to Safe Accommodation and facilitate long term safety for victim survivors including children.
- There are many examples where collaborative working across key services and partners are achieving better outcomes for people affected by homelessness and rough sleeping:
 - Co-location of adult social care and Housing teams, has highlighted successful outcomes in the prevention of homelessness and improvement of living conditions for people experiencing issues such as hoarding and self-neglect.
 - Housing and Public Health jointly commissioned a comprehensive independent assessment of the health and wider needs of people who experience or are at risk of rough sleeping. This work will inform improvements to housing provision and access to health services, as too many of our vulnerable residents end up repeatedly seeking urgent health care interventions or experience significant risk to life, exacerbated by poor living conditions.
 - The creation of a Homelessness Mental Health Practitioner post, in 2021 has improved access to mental health services and support, working closely with Northamptonshire Homeless Treatment Team (NHTT) to provide support on a dual diagnosis basis.
 - Work with Public Health to establish the multi-agency, peripatetic, Northampton Homeless Treatment Team (NHTT), in conjunction with specialist local service providers, for people with drug and alcohol dependency, who sleep rough or are at risk, funded through Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG).
 - Housing and NCT implemented a joint protocol, mandatory staff training and audit framework for 16 to 17 year olds at risk of homelessness. Joint working continues to develop a needs analysis and development opportunities for young people leaving care. This includes supporting NCT's Staying Close Project, which aims to provide independent accommodation for young people leaving care.

What people told us

- Work with partners to improve access to services and information and awareness of the support available
- Explore options to join up data on customers to reduce people telling their 'story' multiple time

- Co-location of staff from across different services improves collaboration and outcomes
- Support care leavers transitioning from care into independent living
- Early intervention is required to identify emerging issues
- The importance of identifying training needs across services/partners and ensure joint training opportunities are made available
- Concern over the short-term commissioning and being able to deliver good quality provision and lasting outcomes
- Need to ensure commissioned service meet the needs of individuals and are accessible to people
- Lack of appropriate data sharing between key organisations involved in a person's case remains a barrier to providing responsive and effective services. Current practices require people to re-count difficult experiences over and over again.

What we will do

1.1 Strengthen collaborative working

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Providing strong governance and delivery of partnership projects through the Housing Partnership Board, task and finish groups and our local partnership forums and networks to harness the resources of all partners to respond to homelessness.
- Delivering a collaborative multi-agency homelessness approach that facilitates early interventions to ensure pathways to housing and support reduce homelessness and rough sleeping
- Exploring opportunities to work with other services within the council and external strategic partners for joint-commissioning opportunities to improve & enhance the delivery of a range of homelessness services
- Work with local communities and Local Area Partnerships to understand the barriers to accessing services so we can improve access to support for specific communities and localities.
- The delivery of joint training, education and learning opportunities to share knowledge and experience and to understand each other's business to enable better coordination and collaboration.
- Raising awareness of homelessness support and services available for people with local community & voluntary sector organisations so they know where to signpost individuals looking for support.
- Strengthening relationships with Registered Providers (RPs) who have a strong presence across the area and who deliver good quality housing, to improve sustainable move on options.
- Improve data collection, monitoring and use of intelligence across WNC and relevant partners to evidence what works and where gaps in needs and services remain.

- Secure support and investment across a range of council services and external partners to break down silos and pool resources to use resources more effectively to maximise the support available.

1.2 Embedding a person-centered approach

We will do this by working with a wide range of partners and organisations through:

- Improving coordination and integration of support services around individuals and families to minimise the need for people to repeat information about traumatic experiences
- Ensuring the whole person is 'Seen and Heard' through the establishment of specialist multi-disciplinary and co-located teams, will including Adult Social Care, Housing, Northants Children's Trust (NCT), Public Health, the Police, Drug and alcohol service and the VCS so there is a holistic approach
- Understand trauma informed approaches to develop service provision that supports better outcomes for customers.
- Working with partners to identify how those with lived experience of homelessness / rough sleeping can be included in the design and delivery of services.

Theme 2: Early intervention and prevention of homelessness

Homelessness in any form is disruptive to a person's sense of wellbeing, safety, and security. Early help and prevention will reduce the impact of homelessness on a household. Also, facing reflected in the lesser complexity of intervention required at an earlier stage, than if circumstances were to escalate and reach crisis.

Solutions need to be cross-cutting, with a council-wide, collaborative approach. All services will work hard to prevent homelessness from occurring and assist people to stay in their homes or support them to move to other settled accommodation.

Why this is important

- Too many households do not get the advice or help they need at a time when homelessness could be avoided. Accessing accurate information, advice and help can avoid problems escalating and provide time for alternative housing to be found before a crisis arises.
- We are potentially missing opportunities to prevent homelessness. In 2022/23, our rate of dealing with homelessness cases at prevention duty stage (42%) was lower than the regional average (50%).
- In 2022/23 we are dealing with a greater proportion of households at the relief duty stage locally (58%) compared to the regional average (50%). This means people are approaching us for help when the chance of preventing homelessness has passed.
- Public authorities have a [Duty to Refer](#) (DtR) people engaged with their services who may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to the Council (where they have consent to do so). We have trained partners to use the Duty to Refer and have high rates of referrals from Probation, our hospitals, and Northants Childrens' Trust (NCT).
- Registered providers are not legally covered by the Duty to Refer, but we work with local housing providers to use this easy method of referral, under the [Commitment to Refer](#).
- Almost half of customers who have approached the service for assistance have made one or more approaches in the previous five years. This is most prevalent amongst single people, but also households with dependent children.
- Debt and money advice services are vital to homelessness prevention. Our in-house and commissioned services are in the process of restructuring to ensure consistent provision. All have seen increases in demand, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, which has impacted services capacity. All services contribute to homelessness prevention, but data is not currently systematically recorded.
- We support people to access available funds to retain their current home or to move in a timely fashion. We are developing a Homelessness Prevention Scheme to ensure

residents have fair access to grants, loans and other financial and practical assistance wherever they live within West Northants.

- Domestic abuse remains one of the four top reasons for homelessness approaches. We have a higher than average prevalence of domestic abuse cases being re-referred to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), indicating that serious risks of domestic abuse are not being tackled or ameliorated. Domestic abuse is a driver of homelessness and repeat homelessness locally.

What people told us

- Too many people find it difficult to access information, advice and support from WNC services at the time and place they need it. This becomes more difficult where people have complex needs.
- We need to respond quickly and consistently when referrals are made to us by partner agencies, to embed positive working practices.
- Quality services are currently delivered by our Money Advice Service, and voluntary sector partners, but these are not accessible in all parts of West Northants.
- We have a number of financial and other 'tools' to prevent homelessness however we need to ensure that these are used consistently and clear outcomes and achievements are recorded.
- Making people recount difficult experiences over again creates barriers to accessing help and can negatively impact on wellbeing or recovery. This is especially the case when people have experienced trauma, such as domestic abuse, bereavement, or family breakdown.
- Partners working with those experiencing financial difficulties, including many people in work, have noted a continued escalation in demand and complexity of need for their services.

What we will do

2.1 Increase our early intervention services

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners:

- accessible, high quality, up-to-date information and guidance, to help residents address their housing difficulties when these first arise
- a programme of awareness raising initiatives across community settings, including schools on tackling issues that may result in homelessness
- improved collection and analysis of data to identify households at risk of homelessness and inform service delivery

2.2 Provide effective homelessness prevention services

We will do this by developing and delivering services that:

- Ensure that residents can access the right service from the right organisation at the right time
- Strengthen consistent provision, access to and promotion of housing, debt and money advice services across West Northants
- Encourage housing providers to identify and assist households at risk of homelessness at the earliest point possible
- Support all statutory partner agencies to use the Duty to Refer and Commitment to Refer to alert Housing Solutions team of households at risk of homelessness to enable us to respond at the earliest opportunity
- Develop a range of effective financial and other interventions and assistance to prevent homelessness
- Ensure our West Northants Housing Allocations Scheme is effective in preventing homelessness through access to settled homes

2.3 Reduce the instances of people facing repeated homelessness

We will do this by delivering, with a wide range of organisations and partners, services that:

- Support households to make timely and accurate claims for financial support with their housing costs to create sustainable tenancies and avoid arrears
- Ensure that people experiencing domestic abuse have appropriate support to remain in safe, settled accommodation, avoiding need for repeated moves
- Develop resident's skills and strengths to support them to build skills and confidence and develop resilience and self sufficiency
- Identify and provide appropriate targeted support for people with more complex needs to help sustain tenancies

Theme 3: Increase provision and access to suitable and sustainable settled housing solutions

The Council's Housing Strategy (2022-2025) focuses on opportunities to improve and maximise the delivery of new affordable housing. The delivery of a range of affordable housing options in the right locations is an important factor in supporting the prevention of homelessness in helping to meet housing need and the provision of longer-term sustainable settled housing solutions.

Why this is important

- There has been an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation, As of January 2024, there were just under 700 households in temporary accommodation; this has increased from 600 households in June 2023. We have a legal duty to provide temporary accommodation to households who approach us for assistance, who we have reason to believe may be homeless, in priority need and eligible for assistance
- As of June 2023, 65% of households had spent under 6 months in temporary accommodation, however there were 50 households who had stayed in temporary accommodation for longer than 12 months
- An increase in temporary accommodation costs and an increase in demand has seen significant costs on council budgets
- The most cost-effective provision is council owned accommodation, however currently our largest provision of temporary accommodation is nightly-let which is the most expensive.
- Single households and couples without dependents have made up 50% of households in temporary accommodation
- The number of households on the Council's housing register is approximately 4000.
- There have been 1268 new affordable homes developed since April 2021, however new affordable supply is impacted on the number of properties lost through Right to Buy.
- Discharge of main homelessness duty into the PRS has been very low, this is a result of limited engagement with private landlords and also local rent levels are very high.
- A temporary accommodation acquisitions project has purchased eight properties, with a further eight properties proceeding through conveyancing. This additional provision will provide more council owned properties that we can use for temporary accommodation, rather than the more costly nightly-let accommodation.
- Local Housing Allowance in the private rented sector does not cover the full rent within West Northants resulting in rent shortfalls and affordability difficulties for households.
- Ensured effective licensing and regulation of the local private rented sector. This has resulted in the council issuing £50,000 worth of financial penalties to 15 landlords operating 13 private rented properties, for non-compliance with the Housing Act 2004, and taking enforcement action against 10 landlords operating 18 unlicensed houses in multiple occupation, resulting in fines and contributions to court costs in excess of £400,000.

What people told us

- Effective tenancy support for those placed in temporary accommodation ensures that households understand the steps they need to take while experiencing homelessness, and are supported to move-on and sustain new settled homes
- That some residents struggle to afford homes let at affordable rent levels.
- That we need more homes at social rent levels.
- The council should use its enforcement powers against private landlords with substandard properties and poor management practices.
- There needs to be a comprehensive 'offer' to private rented landlords to increase access to the sector and support tenants in private rented homes when required.
- Explore options for increasing the supply of good quality, affordable private rented accommodation.

What we will do

3.1 Increase the supply of new affordable housing

We will do this by:

- Developing a council-led affordable homes development programme to increase the number of council homes.
- Strengthen our partnerships with registered providers to increase the supply of new social rented homes that are genuinely affordable, and look at options to increase the level of homes let at a social rent level
- Explore the provision of modular homes and investigate innovative ways of providing accommodation to prevent and relieve homelessness
- Maximising grant funding opportunities and ensure continual engagement with Homes England and DLUHC.
- Utilising and making best use of Council land assets and resources

3.2 Reduce the number of households in and the cost of temporary accommodation

We will do this by:

- Ensuring value for money in the procurement of temporary accommodation,
- Reducing the number of households needing temporary accommodation through effective, and early prevention tools
- Ensure that we have a sufficient supply of affordable temporary accommodation to meet demand and is of the right type, quality and in right location and better meets the needs of homeless households.
- Provide effective support and advice to households living in temporary accommodation, to develop a personalised move-on plan to understand their housing options to enable them to move onto settled, sustainable homes as quickly as possible.

- Increase the supply of Council owned temporary accommodation by continuing to deliver the temporary accommodation acquisition programme.

3.3 Improve access to good quality, affordable private rented accommodation

We will do this by:

- Utilise our full range of statutory powers to tackle substandard private rented properties.
- Improve the support and incentives available to the private rented sector into a single 'offer' for landlords

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Theme 4: Ensure that where rough sleeping occurs, it is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Rough Sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and can negatively impact on an individuals' health and wellbeing. Many people with prolonged or repeat experiences of rough sleeping face a range of complex health and social issues. Support tailored to the needs of the individual can secure better outcomes, improve health and wellbeing and support recovery and avoid repeated homelessness.

Why this is important

- Experience of rough sleeping impacts negatively on health outcomes and increases the risk of early mortality. Nationally, the average age of death for women is 81 years compared to women who experience homelessness, which is 42 years. The average age of death for men is 76 years compared to men who experience homelessness, which is 44 years. Those who sleep rough over a longer period face a higher risk of dying prematurely and dying from injury, poisoning or suicide than the general population.
- We have an identified 'target priority group' of around 100 people in West Northants who have been seen sleeping rough in two or more years out of the last three, or in two or more months out of the last 12. 36 people were included in our annual rough sleeping estimate data, as sleeping rough on one 'typical' night in November 2023.
- Data shows that some people who experience rough sleeping make significant numbers of approaches to housing and emergency health care provision. This increases the crisis demand for those services, without individuals getting the help they need to resolve their situation. Among individuals making repeat homelessness approaches over the last five years, those making the highest number of repeat approaches were single people with a history of rough sleeping, mental health and drug dependency issues. This indicates that current service delivery models do not resolve these people's issues.
- The 'Health and housing needs of people experiencing rough sleeping' research recommended improvements across housing, health, and social care provision, to significantly improve outcomes for individuals, increase effectiveness of service provision and improve value for money.
- Most current supported housing provision is designed to be short term with an expected linear progression. However, local provision has only assisted a minority (8%) of people out of homelessness and into settled homes. It does not function as a 'coherent and effective response system', or sustainably end people's homelessness. People are staying in supported accommodation for far longer than services are designed for.
- It is currently far too difficult for people who have experienced homelessness to access private rented homes as settled move-on. Social housing has been almost the sole move-on route from supported housing, but there is a lack of supply, which can mean long waiting

times. The lack of alternatives reduces housing choices for those who have experienced rough sleeping.

- The 'Health and housing needs of people experiencing rough sleeping' research identified provision for individuals requiring high intensity support as a key area of unmet need.
- People newly experiencing rough sleeping need rapid interventions, with advice and support. Each night someone spends without safe accommodation will be detrimental to their health and wellbeing and is likely to require additional resource to help with recovery.
- Most current services are structured so that support ends when the person moves on. This can impede development of trust with key services and impede recovery for people who have experienced trauma and deprivation. It can limit the effectiveness of services.
- [Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board \(NSAB\)](#) commissioned a [Safeguarding Adults Review \(SAR\)](#) following the death of a 46-year-old man called Jonathan in December 2019. There were concerns about how local agencies worked together to safeguard Jonathan. The SAR recommended improvements to ensure that agencies 'see the person and not just the problems' as key to securing better wellbeing outcomes for homeless adults with complex needs. This includes developing a greater understanding of the needs of those experiencing 'Multiple Exclusion Homeless' which includes trauma and deep social exclusion.
- The Government's '**Everyone In**' response at the start of the pandemic ensured that people sleeping rough and in accommodation, where it was difficult to self-isolate, were safely accommodated to protect them, and the wider public, from the risks of the virus. This collaborative way of working facilitated a greater understanding of those accommodated, resulting in a more holistic, tailored approach to meet individual needs. This has improved operational partnership working across all sectors.
- The [Kerslake Commission](#) notes that homelessness is experienced differently by women, who face an additional burden of gender-based harassment, abuse and violence. Women who experience homelessness also tend to have more severe and complex interrelated needs which can make recovery exceptionally difficult.
- Our [Joint Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy 2023 -27](#) commits to addressing health inequalities through improving access to health and wider services for vulnerable groups.

What people told us

- We provide effective responses when services are delivered in a truly joined up, multi-agency way. Positive examples are improved joint working with partner agencies, including multi-agency working with peripatetic drug and alcohol services (Northants Homeless Treatment Team (NHTT)) and the design and delivery of Multiple Exclusion Homelessness training programme, in conjunction with Adult Social Care.

- Our established and experienced Street Services Team provide a responsive service and enable a good flow through our Housing Panel into accommodation with partner organisations. This team have strong relationships with both statutory, faith and community services, providing quality management of, and support to, a cohort of people with complex needs and often challenging behaviour.
- Fully funded care packages for very vulnerable individuals were secured through seconding an Approved Mental Health Practitioner Social Worker into our Winter Shelter provision during 2022/23.
- More multi-disciplinary services are needed to address the range of needs experienced by an individual or household in crisis.
- Accessing services outside of standard working hours is very difficult for many people, including those in our rural areas. Being able to access an outreach service 'out of office hours' makes a real difference to people in crisis and to other professionals working to support them.
- A comprehensive programme of training is vital, to better understand the impact of trauma, addiction and multiple exclusion homelessness on individuals needing to access our services. There is a sense that we respond to the needs of services, not service users.
- We need to better address the experiences of women and others locally, who experience overlapping homelessness, domestic abuse, sexual violence and forms of exploitation, often repeatedly. Current service provision often inhibits us from understanding and responding to the needs of very marginalised groups.
- At present, most support available to people experiencing rough sleeping is short term and tied to specific accommodation interventions. This means that people experience repeated disruption and disjointed interventions, and are forced to re-live their traumatic experiences, which are not conducive to their recovery.
- Access to mental health services, dentistry and some primary care services is almost impossible for too many people who experience homelessness and have complex needs.
- There is concern that some very vulnerable people are placed in West Northants by other authorities, but stay in our area, without services being made aware of them, or adequate accommodation or support if the placement breaks down.
- Although the majority of those who experience rough sleeping do so within Northampton town, rough sleeping also occurs in our rural towns and villages. When this happens, it can be even more difficult for people to access the support and services they need. Concentration of services in Northampton tends to 'pull' people to that area.

What we will do

4.1 Reduce rough sleeping

- Implement recommendations of safeguarding adult reviews to improve service delivery and design
- Embed an understanding of Multiple Exclusion Homelessness throughout the sector

- Deliver and improve support to reduce rough sleeping using the funding awarded to West Northants and enhance services
- Assess the impact and outcomes of the rough sleeping initiatives funded projects, to enable us to develop business cases to secure future funding for essential services
- Improve data collection and analysis across services to better understand outcomes

4.2 Co-produce a joined-up pathway which supports people with complex needs who experience homelessness

- Develop a framework of supported accommodation provision and housing related support based on the recommendations of the 'Health and Housing needs of rough sleepers' report.
- Develop a coordinated and joined-up approach bringing together a range of partners to deliver personalised support to enable long term recovery
- Secure support and investment across a range of services (Housing, Health, Adult Social Care) by breaking down silos and pooling resources where appropriate
- Embed co-production with people with lived experiences into new service delivery

4.3 Help people settle into homes where they can thrive

- Develop and adopt housing-led principles throughout our support services, specialist housing provision and mainstream accommodation options.
- Increase our understanding of needs and experiences and deliver targeted support and services for women at risk of and experiencing homelessness.
- Improve access to rapid 'off-the-street' options for rough sleeping.

How our strategy will be delivered

In order to deliver the priorities that we have set out in this strategy we need to continue to work closely with our key partners. However, we also recognise that homelessness is an everchanging landscape, bringing new challenges all the time.

While this is a three-year strategy (2024-2027), we will develop a dynamic 12-month Delivery Plan, to be monitored and reviewed annually, ensuring its actions are flexible and resilient.

Governance

The Housing Partnership Board (HPB) will be a catalyst for strong strategic governance and leadership and the delivery of this Strategy.

Four steering groups aligned to the themes of our [Housing Strategy](#) will undertake the practical activities needed to achieve our priorities. Membership is senior operational or senior technical expert level and includes representatives from Adult Social Care, NCT, Public Health, our main Registered Providers, and our Assets and Planning teams. Theme 3 covers Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. Task and Finish groups will be set up to support delivery.

We have established partnership groups comprising the Homelessness Prevention Network in our rural areas and the Single Homelessness Forum in Northampton, which will feed into the HPB.

Our workforce

Across West Northants organisations and services, rely on a dedicated, experienced workforce to deliver services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This can be rewarding, but challenging work. Those supporting people with complex needs or in complex areas of law have accrued skills and knowledge over several years. Many organisations are experiencing difficulties with staff recruitment and retention, exacerbated post-Covid and by the cost of living crisis. Local housing affordability issues affect staff, as well as those accessing our services. Throughout the sector there is a prevalence of fixed term contracts, often because of the short-term nature of funding. These can cause employment instability and add to workload pressures.

WNC are signed up to the Armed Forces, Care Leavers Covenants and are a Disability Confident employer, to offer greater employment opportunities and increase representation from people in these groups. However, there are limited roles and services that encourage applications or build in routes to employment from those with lived experience of homelessness. We will build in routes to employment within the sector, from those with lived experience and build a sustainable workforce, to deliver our strategic ambitions.

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12th MARCH 2024

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGY –
COUNCILLOR JONATHAN NUNN

Report Title	WNC Communications & Engagement Strategy 2024-27
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List of Approvers

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Other Director	Rebecca Purnell, Assistant Chief Executive	14/02/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	14/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft WNC Communications and Engagement Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report introduces the Communications and Engagement Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) for the period 2024-2027. It sets out the approach to developing and improving the organisation's communications and engagement activities and channels over the next three years in line with the changing communications needs of stakeholders, including residents of West Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Effective communications and engagement play a crucial role in supporting the work, services, and strategies of West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) so that people living and working here understand what our organisation is working to achieve and how this will make a difference, as well as ensuring they are better informed, engaged and involved in shaping their communities.
- 2.2 It is important the Council has a clear and consistent plan to continuously develop and improve the way it communicates and engages with communities, partners, and employees. The Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-27 sets out the approach for doing this over the next three years, building upon strong foundations already laid during the Council's first few years as a young unitary authority when it established and embedded a brand-new corporate communications service.
- 2.3 The Communications and Engagement Strategy will play an important role in how we meet our vision and outcomes for the Council, ensuring our activities and channels are aligned with our strategic priorities and support all teams in their delivery. It looks at how we can continue to make our communications more accessible and inclusive to communities, in line with their changing needs in an evolving media landscape. The strategy also sets out a one council approach for developing a communications culture of openness as our organisation continues to build public trust and increase transparency of public services during its formative years

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the Council's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-27 and supports its implementation across the organisation.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The Strategy provides the Council with a clear plan for further developing and improving its corporate communications channels and activities over the next three years to better inform, engage and involve residents, communities, partners, and colleagues at the earliest opportunities and in line with their evolving needs.
- It ensures the communications and engagement service, and activities are aligned with the Council's strategic vision and priorities to effectively support their delivery across the organisation.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 During its first three years the Council has focused on establishing, developing and embedding a progressive new communications and engagement service, with the key priority of replacing the reactive, crisis-driven legacy communications with a proactive and positive new approach. This work has been set against an ongoing backdrop of national challenges requiring significant local communications support – from the initial days of the Covid pandemic onto the Cost-of-Living

challenges, as well as extreme weather emergencies, the sad loss of our Queen and the ongoing financial pressures and increased demand for services.

- 5.2 In 2021/22 the initial focus following Day One was to establish and stabilise the Council's new communications channels, with an interim service structure and embedding new branding, channels and activities, working to rebuild public trust and reputation after Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 5.3 In 2022/23 WNC's communications service was restructured following an LGA Peer Review, which recommended a progressive new team structure introducing new Communications and Engagement Business Partners to successfully foster trusted, partnerships with teams' council-wide, placing strategic comms at the heart of planning and decision-making. This along with incorporate consultation colleagues into the service and specialist roles in digital media, marketing, internal communications, reinforced the Council's ability to start strengthening and expanding its channels and activities.
- 5.4 During 2023/24, with a highly motivated team now appointed, the Council has seen a notable increase in proactive, forward-planned communications and continued channel growth including the significant expansion of social media activity, launch of fortnightly e-news, and publication of the new West Northants Life magazine. It also included the delivery of proactive, high-quality promotions for over 200 projects and activities from the Cost Living campaign to Northampton Regeneration proposals, alongside 362 news releases, 3,250 social media updates, and over 60 stakeholder briefings. Council consultations also saw a 133% increase in public participations this year, receiving 12,685 responses compared to 5,441 in 22/23.
- 5.5 The Council's in-house communications support offer was also developed, with the service providing graphic design and video production services, which have helped to save teams money and also generate £17k of income from external partners.
- 5.6 It is therefore timely for the Council to build upon these strong foundations with its first Communications and Engagement Strategy, to set out the next phase of developing and improving these channels and activities over a three-year-period.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy (featured in Appendix A) enables the Council to:
 - Set out its vision and future approach to developing the way it communicates and engages with communities, partners, and colleagues.
 - Have clear objectives and priorities for further developing its communications and engagement activities and channels – what we want to achieve and why, how we will do it and what success will look like.
 - Build positively on its first few years and the great progress already made to transform communications and establish a bold and progressive service.

6.2 It sets out a corporate communications vision to:

- Better inform, engage and involve our communities, colleagues and partners
- Increase awareness and improve understanding of everything our Council is doing and working to achieve for West Northamptonshire and why it matters
- Build public trust and increase transparency of public services whilst also protecting and enhancing our reputation
- Be inclusive and accessible to all, reflecting the diverse needs of our communities.
- Place comms and engagement at the heart of our organisational culture and service planning, supporting all teams in improving services and delivering objectives.
- Be innovative and evolving with the changing digital landscape and our residents' needs.

6.3 To support the Council in achieving this vision, the strategy reviews the progress that has been made so far towards developing and improving communications and engagement channels and activities and proposes how the organisation can build on this further over the next three years through the following key themes:

- *Developing our narrative* – how we tell our story of our organisation and place in all our communications to help everyone understand our purpose, goals, ambitions, and challenges
- *Corporate and Place Branding* – developing our visual identity and brand culture to build recognition, awareness and trust and open up fresh opportunities and investment for our area
- *Campaign planning* – ensuring our communications campaigns and activities proactively support the delivery our key organisational priorities over the next three years
- *Digital and social media development* – evolving our channels and content in line with the ever-changing needs of our communities
- *Media relations and managing the news agenda* – continuing to build and strengthen relationships and adapt with the changing media landscape
- *Consultation and engagement activities* – reviewing our approach to increase reach and ensure our residents and communities are engaged at the earliest opportunities.
- *Internal communications* – how we can continue to build a communications culture
- *Audience and channel mapping* – to ensure our communications channels and activities are tailored to the right audiences using the most accessible and convenient methods for them
- *Publications and other published content* – developing our content and reach and making our communications clearer and easier for residents to understand
- *Measuring our progress* – planning our next steps and ensuring we evaluate our activities for effectiveness.

6.4 The strategy looks at what communications channels and activities within each of these themes could be improved/developed in line with audience needs and what successful outcomes would be delivered by doing so. It will be supported by an action plan and timeline which will inform the Communications Team's annual Service Plan and other workplans by providing a clear direction of travel on what we need to do.

7 Implications

7.4 Resources and Financial

7.4.1 The Communications and Engagement Strategy will be delivered through the Communications Service in line with existing resource and budgets. However, should any additional funding be identified as part of the implementation of the strategy at a later date, this would be subject for consideration a future Cabinet meeting once quantified. There is scope for objectives within the strategy leading to future opportunities for efficiencies and income generation, for example around improving digital and marketing channels to reduce wider organisational spend.

7.5 Legal

7.5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report. The strategy supports and aligns with the principles of the Government's Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity that all communications should be lawful, cost effective, objective, even-handed, appropriate, have regard to equality and diversity and are issued with care particularly during periods of heightened sensitivity.

7.6 Risk

7.6.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report. The Strategy provides a clear and consistent future plan for developing and improving external and internal communications that will enable the Council to better manage reputational risks that arise.

7.7 Consultation and Communications

7.7.1 The Strategy has been developed with the involvement of Communications Team colleagues and its objectives for developing channels and activities draw upon ongoing feedback and suggestions from stakeholders including colleagues, members, and customers such as social media users. Feedback from other platforms such as the Big Conversation and Staff Surveys have also helped the team to shape future priorities.

7.8 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.8.1 There are no implications for consideration by Overview and Scrutiny.

7.9 Climate Impact

7.9.1 The Strategy has a positive climate impact by exploring future opportunities around the continuing shift to digital and online channels by residents seeking news and information, which provides opportunities for greener, more cost-effective ways of communicating our messages.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 The implementation of the Strategy will have a positive community impact by further developing our communications and consultations channels and activities to better inform, engage and involve our residents and increase and improve awareness, understanding and accessibility of the many services, projects and activities available to them.

8 Background Papers

8.4 None



West
Northamptonshire
Council

Communications &

Engagement Strategy

2024-2027



Introduction

As a young Council formed less than three years ago, a bright new start for public services in West Northamptonshire, the way we communicate and engage with our communities, colleagues and partners has never been so important on our journey to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

In our first two years, whilst working hard towards improving and transforming the many services we have inherited from the legacy councils, we have also made good progress to develop and establish a bold and progressive new communications and engagement service, with the key aim of delivering a proactive, shared voice between residents, partners and the Council.

Effective communications and engagement must be at the heart of everything we do, underpinning our work, services and strategies so that all residents,

businesses and partners understand and are clear on the commitments we are making to them and our area. Not only must we inform and engage with them on how we're working hard to meet their needs but also involve them in this work, build public trust and increase transparency over what we do, enhancing and protecting our reputation.

Having now shaped our new service, this strategy sets out how we plan to develop our communications activities and channels over the next three years, to ensure we bring our communities on our journey with us by listening, engaging and informing them along the way.



Cllr Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council



Our Vision

Our vision for communication and engagement is to:

- Increase awareness and improve understanding about our work, services and activities to help our residents, colleagues and partners feel better informed, engaged and involved in what we do.
- Tell the story of everything our Council is doing and working to achieve for West Northamptonshire, why it matters, and the difference it makes to the lives of our residents and communities.
- Build public trust and increase transparency of public services as well as enhancing and protecting the Council's reputation.
- Be inclusive and accessible to everyone, reflecting the diversity and needs of our communities.
- Create opportunities for our residents, stakeholders and colleagues to get involved and engaged in local decision-making.
- Be proactive with compelling narrative, prioritising campaigns with impact that are tailored to our residents' needs.
- Give people reasons to feel proud about living, working in and visiting West Northants and help our communities and businesses shout about the many great things happening here.
- Be embedded in our organisational culture and service planning, supporting all teams in developing and improving services and delivering our corporate strategic objectives.
- Be innovative and evolving with the changing digital landscape and our residents' needs.



Our Principles

We will be:

- Open, honest and accountable, focusing on the decisions we make and the outcomes that matter to our residents
- Accessible, clear, easy to understand and consistent, not confusing
- Meaningful and inclusive, using and developing those channels that work best for our audiences
- Timely and relevant, responding to the news agenda quickly and effectively
- Two-way and engaging, creating a shared voice between our public, our people and our partners where we listen and act to build trust, improve awareness and change behaviours.



Our Journey So Far

Since our journey as a Council began less than three years ago, we have already made good progress towards achieving our vision for better, effective communications and engagement.

During 2022/23 we restructured our communications service and appointed a highly-motivated and talented team, switching our focus from a reactive comms legacy to a progressive and proactive new service model that puts compelling campaigns and narrative at the heart of our activities.

We introduced Communications and Engagement Business Partners to foster trusted partnerships between the service and other teams council-wide, working with them so that communications is at the heart of planning and decision-making.

This, coupled with the development of specialist roles in digital media, marketing, internal communications, consultation and engagement have reinforced our ability to deliver the right messages, to the right people, and in the right ways.

We have also developed our channels and reach to audiences, from expanding and strengthening our internal communications methods to starting from

scratch then significantly growing our social media presence and digital content. This has included introducing additional channels, such as fortnightly e-news updates, regular proactive briefings for councillors and parishes and a twice-yearly printed magazine delivered to all households, which are helping engage some of our harder-to-reach audiences.

We have delivered high quality and proactive campaigns, dealing with issues ranging from the cost of living to the resettlement of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees, whilst also delivering an outstanding response to a series of important national occasions including the Queen's Jubilee, Operation London Bridge and King's Coronation.

In the past year we have worked hard to encourage more people to have their say and get involved in local decision-making and increase our consultation and engagement activities to help shape services. This has led to a 133% increase in public participation, receiving 12,685 responses from residents compared to 5,441 during the previous year. We also increased our consultation and engagement activities by over a third, with 70 campaigns this year.

A year in figures

In the past year, WNC's Communications Service:

- ✓ Produced and shared **362** news releases and updates about a range of services, projects and activities across West Northants
- ✓ Planned and delivered **204** proactive communications campaigns and projects throughout the year
- ✓ Dealt with **740** queries and requests from local and national media
- ✓ Posted **3,258** updates on social media, reaching on average 640,000 people every month
- ✓ Continued to increase its social media presence, with followers across its main corporate channels increasing by 20% to over **28,000**
- ✓ Produced **186** videos, which have been viewed over 236,000 times
- ✓ Kept colleagues informed and engaged with over **1,380** internal comms messages
- ✓ Enabled residents to have their say in **70** consultation and engagement campaigns on services, projects and activities across West Northants.



For advice on cost of living support

Visit: westnorthants.gov.uk/cost-of-living or call: **0300 126 7000***

*Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

EXPLORE WEST NORTHANTS

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Preparation works to begin transformation of Northampton shopping district

Women are being encouraged to be more "breast aware" this Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Public health in West Northants are encouraging all women to check their breasts and take up the Breast Cancer awareness offer if eligible

28 October 2023

ST DAVE'S COMMUNITY VOTING DAY

WELL NORTHANTS WORKS TOGETHER WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

All projects are about addressing the community's needs. In your area, you can help improve:

- Working in partnership
- Community activities
- Improving communications

Come along to the community voting day: **Saturday, 4th March 10am to 2pm**

WEST NORTHANTS Life

DAVENTRY

WITTON

TOWCESTER

BRACKLEY

WITH SUPPORT YOU ARE 3X MORE LIKELY TO QUIT SMOKING FOR GOOD

JOIN US AT THE BEACH

FREE EVENT 22 JULY to 3 SEPTEMBER

SUPER SUMMER FAMILY FUN

NORTHAMPTON MARKET COMMERCIAL STREET

NORTHAMPTON MARKET

NOW OPEN AT COMMERCIAL STREET CAR PARK

FOR ON DOWN WE'VE GOT WHAT YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR

NEAR THE MAXX

Students guide to **Recycling** in Northampton

NEVER BIN BATTERIES

THEY CAUSE FIRES

KING CHARLES III • 2022-2023

CORONATION • 6TH MAY

The weekend EVENTS

West Northamptonshire Council

Annual Report 2022/23

Delivering services that make a difference

West Northamptonshire Council

West Northampton September 2023

Moving into Adult Social Care

for young people with SEN

We are a Welcoming Spaces partner

WHERE CAREERS THRIVE

VCE ASSEMBLY LAUNCH OF SPORTS AND ART, CULTURE AND HERITAGE THEMATICS

BHM Icons: Words of Wisdom

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2023

The proposals affect how much council tax you pay

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Our Corporate Narrative

As a young Council with bold and bright ambitions for the future, it's important our residents, colleagues and partners know the story of our past, present and future – a consistent and compelling narrative that will help everyone understand and recognise our purpose, our goals and ambitions, our challenges and where we have come from as an organisation.

Using this narrative at the heart of all our communications enables everyone to understand the same story and tell it anyone who asks, helping to build consensus about why we are here and what we are trying to achieve.

Our narrative underpins our principles of being honest and open, supporting us in our work to create a shared voice between our public, our people and our partners.

A brighter, better future for public services

Formed in 2021, West Northamptonshire Council is one of the newest local authorities in the UK, a young unitary council with big ambitions to create better opportunities for everyone, no matter their background or ability, so they can thrive and live their best lives.

Serving over 425,000 people, we're the 13th largest local authority area in the country and also one of the fastest-growing – seeing a 13.5 per cent population rise in the past decade.

Born out of Northamptonshire's largest local government reorganisation for nearly four decades, our Council is an opportunity to bring together and shape better services for our residents and businesses. And only a couple of years into our journey we've made a great start on this, in the face of many challenges for both our organisation and our residents during ongoing cost of living struggles and financial and economic obstacles.

We want to reflect the times we live in and play our part to create a more sustainable and inclusive environment, supporting our communities through their daily lives in a way that makes a real difference to them.

Facing our challenges

Like all local authorities, we are facing financially challenging times, with increased pressures emerging from an uncertain economic climate, rising inflation and cost of living struggles.

Despite these new and unpredictable pressures, we are building on our strong start and acting now to tackle these head on, managing our finances robustly and prudently.

But we recognise we need to do things differently to address our challenges, and look at new ways of working and innovation, as well as increasing our focus on prevention and intervention to reduce reactive, costly service delivery.

We have learnt lessons from the challenges faced by Northamptonshire's legacy councils and will not repeat them. We will always take strong, bold and swift action to face our challenges to ensure we continue to deliver our ambitions and meet our duty to provide vital services to local communities.

Our Corporate Narrative

Helping our people to Thrive

We want to make West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work, visit and thrive, where people can be supported to 'Live Their Best Life', which has become our mantra.

We aim to build a place where there is opportunity for all, where people are proud to live and are supported to live independent, self-sufficient lives, in a thriving, prosperous and sustainable place.

Our young Council is building strong foundations that make us future-proof and cost-effective, the facilities to make us modern, efficient and sustainable, the support services that our residents want and need in case there is a problem, and the infrastructure that connects to the area, community and work.

We know that to deliver better outcomes for residents, we need a well-supported and empowered workforce that puts the customer at the heart of everything they do and how they behave, and we must harness opportunities to work smarter by delivering modern, quality services that also offer the best value for money for our residents. We need to connect to our customers and communities in the ways that they want us to and that meets their needs.

We care – not just in the context of providing services that support and protect our most vulnerable, but in all aspects of the work we do. Putting people first is our priority, whether it's the needs of our residents and businesses, or our workforce.

Enabling people to THRIVE is at the heart of our organisation's cultural values.

We want everyone working at our Council to live and breathe these values every day.

As a new employer, we recognise our greatest asset is our people, and our ability to succeed is driven by a well-equipped and highly-motivated workforce that can work flexibly in the heart of our communities – our West Way of Working.

Our Council is where potential is unlocked and where talent thrives – we want to retain and nurture our colleagues to thrive whilst also attracting fresh talent to join us on our journey.

We are a new Council in the first chapter of our story and will develop our narrative in line with the everyday needs, challenges and priorities of our residents and businesses.

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 Place Narrative

A place to be proud of

West Northamptonshire is right at the heart of the UK – geographically, historically, and economically.

We are home to over 400,000 residents and over 21,000 businesses, including the thriving towns of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley which offer unique and independent character, sitting alongside scenic rolling countryside with over 160 picturesque parishes. West Northamptonshire provides the highly sought-after balance of urban and rural lifestyles.

Both London and Birmingham are just an hour from here, as are Oxford and Cambridge, and we have five major airports within 90 minutes travel.

Our area is a flourishing hub of industry and we pride ourselves on world-class quality and innovation, from our globally-renowned shoe trade and outstanding track record in motorsport to our shining reputation as the UK's 'Logistics Golden Triangle'.

As well as playing host to many large international corporations, we are also proud of the number of small, independent businesses found in our high streets, and hidden gems and attractions found throughout our market towns, which all help make West Northants a vibrant and prosperous place to be.

Innovation is one of the area's greatest strengths. As a result of this entrepreneurial spirit,

we regularly feature in top ten lists for business start-ups and are home to hundreds of independent and niche businesses.

Silverstone has helped turn West Northamptonshire into a hub for high-performance automotive. At the centre of the UK transport network, it is also an ideal spot for the burgeoning distribution industry.

Our largest town – Northampton – is undergoing a radical transformation with £33m contributed by Government so far, unlocking hundreds of millions more in private sector investment. It's home to a new, £330m state-of-the-art university campus which helps feed the local talent pool. This is supported by top-notch schools and further education including the Silverstone University Technical College which helps supply our growing high-performance engineering industry.

We're in the process of bringing all sectors together – from business to non-profit, health to education, arts and cultural – to create a place where everyone has the tools and opportunities to thrive, professionally and personally.

We've made incredible progress in our first few years and have even more in the pipeline.

As a totally new area formed through Northamptonshire's local government reform in 2021, it's vital we have a consistent and compelling narrative that will help us build upon our work to create a sense of place, belonging and civic pride among our communities.

Our narrative provides all local partners with a consistent and shared story to tell about our history and our future, supporting us in developing a shared sense of ambition and direction, building confidence among our communities and partners, helping potential investors and businesses to find out more about how they might benefit from our area, and building credibility with Government and stakeholders.

As a young Council shaping a new journey with fresh ambitions, our place narrative will continue to evolve in the years ahead, but this is where our story for West Northamptonshire starts....

Our rich heritage

West Northants looms large throughout British history, as early as the Iron Age – from Towcester (or Lactodorum) as an important Roman settlement to Northampton's role as royal residence through medieval times, our heritage is rich.

We've been the backdrop for many decisive battles, with Northampton and Edgecote the sites of key clashes in the Wars of the Roses, and when Cromwell's forces all but crushed the Royalists at Naseby in the first English Civil War. Catesby and Guy Fawkes even conspired the Gunpowder Plot here at Ashby St Ledgers.

Since Victorian times, our area has been renowned for making the highest quality footwear in the world – something we can still lay claim to, with Trickers, Church's, Crockett and Jones, and Edward Green now exporting shoes across the globe.

We are home to an impressive number of stately homes and historic landmarks, from Sulgrave Manor and Canons Ashby to the BBC's wartime radio mast at Daventry's Borough Hill. We've been at the forefront of evolving science and technology, from the birth of radar by Watson-Watt and Wilkins in a field near Daventry to the discovery of DNA by Northampton's Francis Crick in 1953.

Let's not forget our excellent sporting connections – the world-famous UK home of motorsport, Silverstone, is part of our unique offer, and we are also home to Northampton Saints Rugby club, Northamptonshire County Cricket Club and Northampton Town Football Club.

Our Place Narrative

Our people make a difference

Over the centuries, West Northants has welcomed people from across the globe, resulting in an inclusive community with a cosmopolitan feel and strong community bonds

We are proud of our community spirit and resilience, with residents and businesses banding together in times of need and a large number of community groups and volunteers who make a real difference in all aspects of life, whether they are running food larders or welcoming spaces, or providing much-needed leisure time and wellbeing support.

Our residents have opened their homes to those fleeing the war in Ukraine, and our communities have supported the resettlement of Afghan families facing persecution in their homeland.

We mix a true sense of diversity with unity - it's a constant cause for celebration here, with communities staging numerous events and festivals, from Black History Month and Pride, to International Women's Day and Diwali.

Everyone has access to quality education and training to inspire them to succeed in their chosen careers. We are home to more than 180 schools – 89.2 per cent of which are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, and around 90,000 of our population are under 18s.

Our best place ambitions

Our people make our place – and everything we do is about West Northants being a great and sustainable place for everyone who calls it home to live their best life. The best place to grow up, live, work, grow old and thrive.

Partners and communities across West Northants are working together on improving outcomes for everyone so that in 2030:

We will be a healthier and caring place for everyone young and old. A place where people are living healthier lives for longer, thriving from an early age and into their later years. A place where people feel safe and have access to decent homes, green space and the means to live their best life.

We will have an economy that works for everyone with great skills and good quality jobs and where people and business are connected so that our economic success benefits everyone across West Northants and we are seen as the best place to visit and do business.

We will have delivered on our environmental commitments, with the council achieving Net zero for its own emissions, with bold new initiatives in place that protect the environmental, economic and social sustainability of West Northamptonshire for all residents, businesses, communities and wider society.

Place Branding

Separate to our Council's corporate identity, yet aligned with our key objectives and priorities, a strong place brand is crucial to promoting West Northamptonshire as a leading destination at regional, national and international level – to support existing businesses and tourism, economic development, encourage inward investment, attract visitors and instil civic pride among existing residents.

Developing our place brand will also help local communities feel an increased sense of place and belonging to the new local authority area of West Northamptonshire, whilst recognising and celebrating the individuality and unique features of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley and the many surrounding villages.



What we will do:

- Create a new, consistent place brand for West Northamptonshire which underpins the Place Vision, investment, tourism and growth priorities and celebrates our area's unique identity and its diverse make-up of towns and villages
- Work with our partners to develop distinct and unique brand identities for our towns of Northampton, Daventry, Brackley and Towcester which reflect their character and make-up and support economic growth, tourism and inward investment.
- Review our existing place promotions and channels inherited from the previous authorities to support our new approach
- Work with our partners to develop fresh marketing strategies identifying fresh opportunities and improvements to raise the profile of West Northants on a national and international platform (for example a prime location for big business, major events and the film industry)

What success will look like:

- Strong place branding for West Northamptonshire that promotes and builds upon its reputation as key UK destination, attracting more investment, business growth and tourism
- Existing residents and businesses will have an increased sense of identity and pride in the area where they live and work.



Corporate Branding

Our Council is aspiring to build a corporate brand with inspiring, thoughtful and transparent values that reflect our social objectives and responsibilities towards helping our communities and our planet.

Our visual identity

Our visual identity is key to building recognition, awareness and trust of our organisation and services.

To achieve a strong corporate brand, all our materials, from signage and uniforms to letters and leaflets, must show our visual identity clearly and consistently across all our services.

As a young Council our visual identity is established yet still in its infancy, so work must continue to roll it out across all service areas to replace the previous legacy council brands.

Our new in-house design service plays a key role in improving brand consistency of corporate materials and advising and supporting teams in their marketing activities, and this work will be developed further.

Our internal brand

Our staff and members are our brand ambassadors who can build trust and social advocacy among our communities. Believing in our brand culture - our corporate vision, objectives and organisational values - is key to this success.

It is important that colleagues who transferred from the previous local authorities fully identify with and relate to our new organisation, with positive experiences that reflect how we work and serve our local communities.

Progress continues on this, with the widespread internal use of 'Thrive' as a visual identity, linking to the Council's organisational values and resonating with colleagues and members. This has been strengthened further by the introduction of the annual Thrive employee awards and the Thrive Ambassadors network.

Employer brand

It is also important for the Council to develop an effective employer brand, to signify what working for our organisation will feel, look and sound like, to not only support and retain our existing workforce but to attract the best talent we can to deliver excellent services.

A successful employer brand has been developed and established - 'When potential is unlocked, talent thrives' - which now underpins all communications and marketing activities relating to recruitment and retention initiatives. Work will now focus on further embedding the brand across the organisation and externally via corporate communications channels and content.



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**



What we will do:

- Take a 'stock-check' of where the organisation currently is with its visual rebranding activities and develop a new branding implementation plan with further and updated guidance to support all teams and service areas
- Work with teams to continue the roll-out of the visual identity across all service areas, in line with transformation activities and opportunities
- Use our in-house graphic design service to further improve brand consistency of corporate materials across all service areas and advise and support teams in their branding and marketing activities
- Use internal communications to increase employees' familiarity of the Council's vision and behaviours of our Thrive cultural values
- Further develop the use and rollout of the 'Thrive' brand in all internal/employer identity communications

What success will look like:

- All our services, assets and activities will be branded consistently, improving recognition, awareness and trust among our residents of what we are doing within their communities
- Our employees feel an increased sense of belonging to West Northamptonshire Council and no longer refer to their legacy authorities; they know the Thrive vision and how these values personally relate to them, both at home and at work
- An effective employer brand will increase our organisational reputation as a great place to work among current employees and attract the best fresh talent.

Our tone of voice

Tone of voice is crucial to our brand success. In all our communications our tone will be:

- Honest, open, friendly and helpful
- Professional without jargon
- Relatable to our audiences – sometimes serious, sometimes fun, but never inappropriate.

Our Audiences and Channels

**Who we will communicate
and engage with and the
methods we will use**

Our Public

Residents
Businesses
Other service users
Visitors and tourists
Future residents & businesses
Community & voluntary organisations
Media

Our Partners

Town and parish councils
Neighbouring councils
Other public agencies (NHS,
police, housing associations)
Government
Representative bodies
Regeneration partners
Investors and developers

Our People

WNC colleagues
Councillors
Trade unions
Our contractors

External Channels

Media - local, regional, national and trade
WNC website
E-news updates
West Northants Life Magazine
WNC social media – X, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok,
YouTube
Community social media channels
Email news updates
Printed materials – posters, leaflets, flyers
Outdoor marketing – billboards, digital signs,
banners, bus advertising
Public events, displays, roadshows
Partner websites and social media pages
Reports and briefings
Letters and service emails
Customer Contact Centre

Internal Channels

Intranet
Teams news feeds
Chief executive weekly update
All-staff briefings
Manager briefings
Team meetings
All staff emails & Mid-week updates
Office screens & desktop wallpaper
Noticeboards
Pop-up banners and signage
Weekly members' briefing
Mod.gov
Email updates and briefings
Senior Leadership Coffe & Chats

Consultation channels

Have Your Say - our online consultation hub
Surveys (online, face-to-face, printed)
Focus groups
Residents Panel
Consultation Register
Customer and user groups
Surveys (face to face, printed)
Social media polls
Community events and roadshows
Our elected members and WNC colleagues

Planning our Campaigns

Effective campaign planning is key to achieving our objectives of ensuring our communications and engagement focus is proactive, not reactive, and we reach, inform and engage the right audiences in the right ways at the right time.

Each communications and consultation campaign should be strategically planned with clear outcomes and evaluation to make sure that we use our people and money in the best way possible and continuously improve what we do.

It is important that all teams council-wide integrate communications and engagement into their planning and decision-making from the outset when developing their services and activities.

To aid this approach, we will continue to develop our new Business Partner model to forward plan and develop and deliver multi-channel, targeted campaigns supporting their service priorities and objectives. Business Partners will also assist teams in exploring future opportunities for communications improvements and addressing reputational challenges.

As part of our wider marketing and campaign planning, it is also important that we research our audiences, their needs and behaviours better so we are communicating the right things to them and gauging their feedback using the right channels at the right times.



What we will do

- Provide compelling narrative about our work, activities and services, based around key messages that are specific to each resident and their varying needs
- Develop clear forward plans of strategic campaigns, forthcoming marketing and media activities, continuing to change our focus from reactive to proactive communications
- Encourage and apply communications and consultation resource planning within all future campaigns, growth and funding bids
- Make better use of audience research, data, insight and segmentation as part of our marketing activities and campaign planning so we are targeting the right people with the right messages and channels
- Ensure all our campaigns follow the same planning framework with clear goals that are measured and evaluated

What success will look like

- Reactive, ad-hoc communications and engagement activity are minimised and replaced by proactive, planned campaigns that help to support and deliver our work, objectives and priorities
- Our organisation's communications and consultation activities will be better aligned to our services, and we continue to identify reputational risks and opportunities at an earlier stage
- Communications and consultation will be embedded in our organisation's service planning and teams will make more effective use of resources to inform and engage their audiences
- We know our audiences better and our communications are more specific and targeted to their needs
- Our audiences will have an improved understanding of our council and the wide range of services available to them and feel better informed and engaged in our work.



Digital and Social Media

The fast-changing digital landscape and increasing use of the internet in all aspects of daily lives presents both opportunities and challenges for our Council as we strive to connect our communities and improve their life chances.

Our communications approach must reflect the continuing shift to online channels by residents seeking news and information and accessing our services.

Developing how we use and target social media to reach, engage and interact with our audiences is a priority, to increase accessibility and convenience of our information and services. It will also build trust in what our council is doing to achieve better outcomes for our local communities.

Improving our digital channels will also provide us with greener, more cost-effective ways of communicating our messages.

Underpinning all our efforts must be compelling content, which reflects the growing demand from our audiences for dynamic, visual storytelling in the form of video, images and graphics.



What we will do:

- Create a social media strategy focusing on channel and content development, increasing our reach and engagement with online communities
- Increase our use of video and digital graphics to provide engaging and compelling storytelling, reflecting the growing demand for online visual content by our audiences
- Increase the take-up of our fortnightly corporate e-news updates and explore further opportunities for developing reach and content
- Build and strengthen relationships with local online communities and identify and engage advocates within these to help champion causes and widen awareness of our work and services we provide
- Ensure all our published digital content is relevant and timely to residents, in Plain English and accessible to all
- Increase trust and advocacy by encouraging, sharing and engaging with more content generated by our own audiences
- Use signposting content on our social media channels to drive traffic to our website to increase awareness, engagement and access of services and information available online
- Keep up to date with the changing digital media landscape and continuously review our digital approach in line with the evolving needs of our audiences.

What success will look like:

- Our audiences have a better understanding of what we do and the services available to them through our increased online engagement and interaction
- Better, more targeted online communications that improve awareness and advocacy of the Council's activities, objectives and decision-making, helping to strengthen trust and build social reputation.



Media Relations



Despite the continued rise in popularity of digital channels in how our residents seek their news and information, traditional media outlets continue to play an important, objective role as part of the wider communications mix in keeping them informed and updated about the Council's services, activities and decision-making.

Newspapers, TV and radio have gradually shifted their content online to websites and social media, resulting in major changes to their operational processes, including an increased demand and faster pace for publishing content.

Set weekly and daily deadlines have disappeared, with the media requiring more frequent, quicker responses from the council to queries and requests. Some media outlets have also adopted new models encouraging the online publication of self-submitted community content such as articles and videos.

In response to this, we must adapt our communications processes to meet the changing needs of our media partners, whilst recognising the increasingly broadening, alternative channels our audiences are now using to seek their news and information.

Our news focus should be wide-ranging, building and strengthening relationships with national, regional, local and specialist media outlets and working with teams to identify and target the key news and information.

What we will do:

- Be more proactive and less reactive in producing and providing news content for use on our own channels and for updating the media
- Involve and engage the media as part of our campaign and forward planning process to reduce reactive queries and increase proactive content, and build and strengthen key relationships
- Where we need to react to the news agenda and media enquiries, we will do so quickly and effectively
- Develop our digital media office, with the possibility of providing a one-stop shop platform of news releases, images and video content for use by journalists
- Build and strengthen relationships with the media, with regular catch-ups providing honest and open dialogue, context to our decision-making, and ongoing story opportunities

What success will look like:

- Strong, productive relations with our media partners and mutual understanding of needs and objectives to keep our audiences informed
- Increased proactive and positive media coverage about the work of the council at national, regional and local level.

Consultation &

Engagement

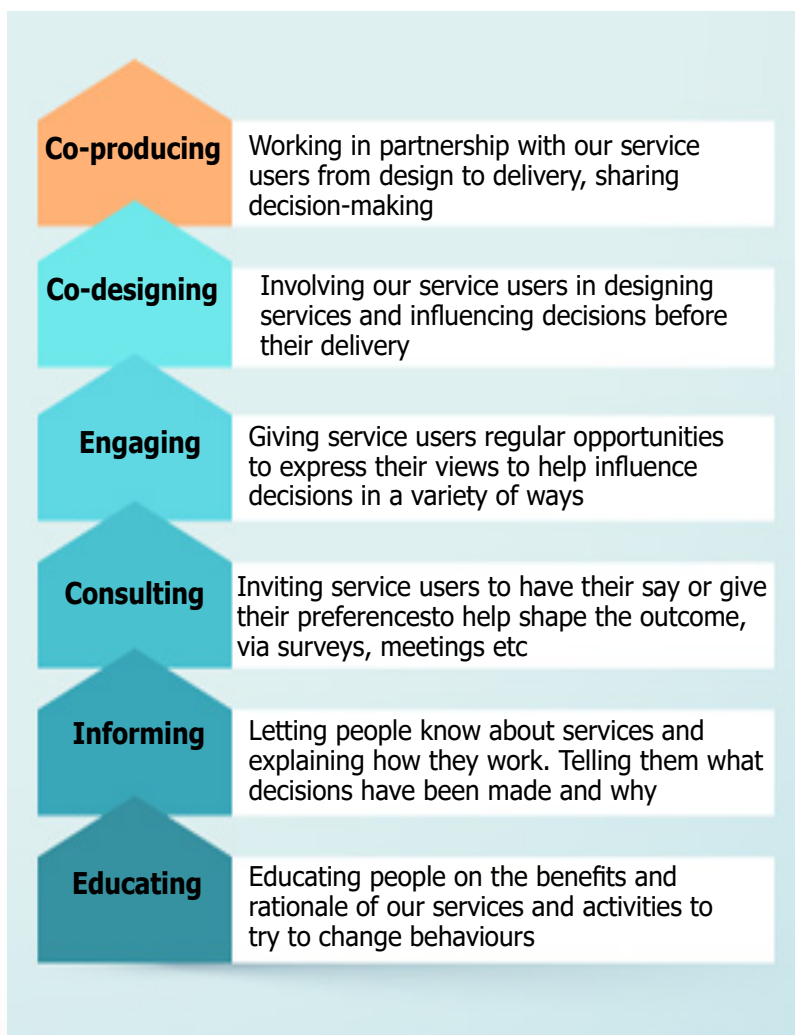


Our Council recognises we can only make real, positive change and improvement by ensuring we listen, engage and consult our communities in the decision-making process.

This includes empowering our residents where possible in designing and shaping the services we deliver.

Working hand-in-hand with our communications activities, effective consultation and engagement will:

- Inform the way we shape and deliver our services, priorities and strategies to ensure we are meeting the needs of our residents and communities
- Help to build and increase trust, awareness and understanding of the Council and the role it plays within our local community
- Give us a better understanding of our residents and communities and be more in tune with the issues they face and the challenges as they arise
- Improve local democracy by encouraging the public to become more involved in the decision-making process
- Increase satisfaction with services by enabling our communities and residents to have greater involvement in shaping them
- Remove physical, language or social barriers to our communities getting access to information or voicing their needs or opinions.



Consultation & Engagement



Our Principles

- Ensure the public and communities have an active role in our governance and decision-making
- Involve our residents and communities at every stage and feed back to them how their views have influenced activities and decisions
- Build open, honest and accountable relationships with our residents and communities, including marginalised groups and those affected by inequalities
- Use co-production, insight and engagement methods so that people can actively participate in shaping services
- Work with our public, voluntary and community partners, establishing and strengthening networks, relationships and activities locally to deliver effective outcomes

Our activities will be:

- Meaningful with a clear purpose – we will always be clear about why we are undertaking consultation and engagement activities and how people can take part.
 - Timely, with ample opportunity for people to respond and influence the decision-making process
- Considered, alongside opportunities for the co-design and co-production of services to increase community empowerment and involvement in local decision-making
- Accessible, easy to understand and targeted to those people we need to reach

Effective analysis of data to inform decision-making, with participants receiving feedback of the outcomes and the results shared as widely as possible to our communities.

What we will do:

- Encourage an 'ask, listen, act' culture across council teams so that consultation, engagement and opportunities for co designing and co-producing services are identified at, and integral to, the planning stages of service change and development
- Review our existing frameworks and develop a new corporate strategy for consultation, engagement and co-production, with processes and practical toolkits that support our staff, partners and communities in delivering these activities
- Explore the role and use of social media channels and other digital methods to increase opportunities for people to give their views and feedback
- Tailor our activities and increase reach and participation through better use of audience research, data, insight and segmentation.

What success will look like:

- Our residents and other stakeholders will have more opportunities to have their say on issues that are important to them and their local community
- Increased public feedback on our decision-making will help us shape better services that meet customer needs
- Improved perception and trust by residents that the council listens and responds to their needs.



Internal

Communications

We want all our employees and councillors to thrive in our young organisation, so it is important we ensure they are regularly informed, engaged, and listened to as we work together on shaping better services.

As we settle into new ways of working, we will adapt to new procedures, develop our services and build new relationships – how we communicate as colleagues is crucial to our success.

We want to:

- Create a culture of openness and transparency where employees feel empowered, trusted and respected
- Use our communications to embed the THRIVE organisational values across the organisation and create an open environment where colleagues feel valued, well informed, listened to and motivated
- Ensure all our communications are inclusive and accessible to everyone working at WNC
- Provide and maintain a strong and effective two-way flow of information between leadership, teams and colleagues, up, down and across the organisation
- Communicate change openly, honestly and effectively to all our colleagues using the right channels
- Promote a culture of engagement and wellbeing across the organisation and ensure that all employees are working collaboratively towards common goals.



What we will do:

- Create a new internal communications strategy focusing on channel and content development to improve the way we inform and engage all our employees
- Promote open and honest communication among colleagues with regular surveys, staff briefings and feedback sessions that will give a voice to individual employees and be listened to by our leadership team
- Take a personal, human approach towards developing two-way communication, building on existing channels to help us do this
- Support teams in developing the way they communicate with their customers, with a particular focus around ensuring customer needs and inclusivity are at the heart of these activities
- Develop our intranet as the daily go-to place where all colleagues are kept well-informed and updated and can easily access the information and internal support tools they need to do their jobs effectively
- Be proactive in all our internal communications, ensuring we share the correct messages with our colleagues at the right times, using the right channels
- Ensure our internal communications activities underpin and promote the goals of our West Way of Working approach, People Strategy and Connected Council programmes
- Produce more engaging and interactive content and encourage staff to share their stories and experiences with others.

What success will look like:

- Well informed and engaged colleagues who are loyal, motivated, productive and happy
- Everyone who works and represents the Council are our advocates who communicate openly and effectively with all customers and colleagues
- All colleagues feel empowered, trusted and respected – we want all our staff and councillors to THRIVE in our new organisation, so it is important that we ensure they are regularly informed, engaged, and listened to as we work together on shaping our Council.
- A culture of openness and transparency where colleagues feel empowered, trusted and respected
- A strong and effective two-way flow of information between leadership, teams and colleagues, both up and down the organisation
- All colleagues are working collaboratively towards a common goal
- Communications embed the THRIVE organisational values across the organisation to create an environment where colleagues feel valued, well informed and motivated

Publications

Publications can play a key role within the wider communications mix, by providing regularity and familiarity that strengthens our news and information offer.

We want to develop the use of digital and print publications alongside our other communications channels to keep our residents and stakeholders informed and engaged about our work, activities and the services available to them.

We must also ensure all our published content, including reports, correspondence and publications, is relevant and timely to residents, in Plain English and accessible to everyone.

As we move forward, we will deliver value for money and aim to reduce costs wherever possible, as well as continually review the effectiveness and relevance of publications to our target audiences.



What we will do:

- Develop the reach and content of our regular e-newsletters and email bulletins for residents to enhance our news and information offer and increase user interaction with our other digital channels (including website and social media)
- Supplement and support our regular news output with the ongoing development of our bi-annual printed residents magazine West Northants Life, focusing on key need-to-know information about the Council, its services and activities
- Develop and produce regular, tailored e-publications and bulletins for key stakeholders including parish councils and partner organisations, to ensure they are kept regularly informed and engaged
- Provide guidance and training for employees in 'writing in plain English' to ensure consistency of language and tone in our reports and publications
- Explore alternative presentation methods, such as use of video and infographics etc
- Work alongside the Customer Service and web Teams to ensure online information is understandable and engaging.

What success will look like:

- Our residents and other stakeholders will feel more regularly informed, engaged and updated on the work of the Council and issues that are important to them
- Increased public awareness and understanding of the services we provide and how the Council operates

Measuring progress and next steps

A three-year delivery plan is being developed to underpin this strategy and implement all the actions we have set out to do – this will be led operationally by the Communications Service with the support of various teams across the organisation and form the basis of their annual service improvement plan.

We will also regularly review, measure and evaluate the progress and effectiveness of our communications and engagement activities to ensure that continuous improvement can be made.

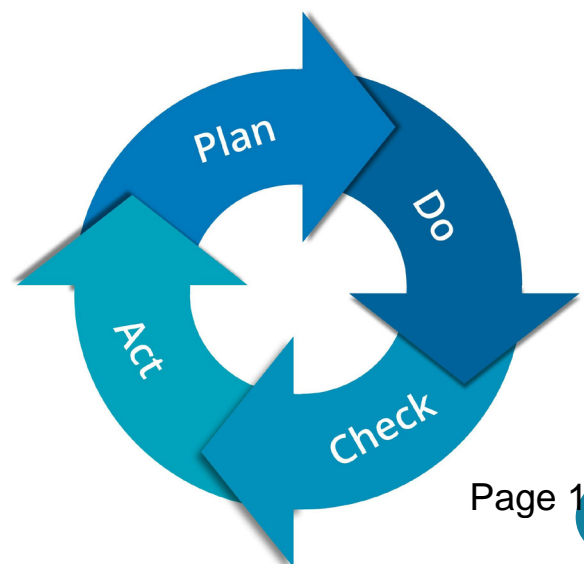
This will include:

- Setting and agreeing annual baseline targets for outputs and outcomes in our service plan
- Monthly performance dashboards analysing key channels and activities (such as social media and media coverage)
- Providing Cabinet with regular communications and engagement reviews and progress updates
- Preparing evaluation reports for communications campaigns to review and measure the success of activities against objectives and resource.



What success will look like:

- Increase in social followers, reach and impressions
- Rise or sustained high levels of social media content engagement (likes/shares/comments)
- Improved positive coverage sentiment, wider shares and mentions on social media
- More user-generated content is shared with us
- Increase in e-news subscribers
- Improved customer interaction with website and social media channels
- Wider engagement and interaction from online communities
- Increase in number of proactive news items produced and issued
- Reduction in number of reactive media enquiries and statements issued
- Improved sentiment of media coverage.



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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

12th MARCH 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE: COUNCILLOR PHIL LARRATT

Report Title	The Establishment of West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum
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Report Author	Nick Henstock, Assistant Director Highways and Transport, nick.henstock@westnorthants.gov.uk
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Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer (for West and joint papers)	Sara Hall	14/02/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	14/02/2024
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	14/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Terms of Reference for West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet’s approval to establish a Local Access Forum for West Northamptonshire and to agree the Terms of Reference for the forum.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Following the disaggregation of the Highways and Transport functions which includes the functions relating to Public Rights of Way, it is necessary to consider whether the Council should withdraw from the previous Northamptonshire Local Access Forum which covered the whole of Northamptonshire and as a result establish a Local Access forum for West Northamptonshire. This course of action is recommended along with a proposal for the Terms of Reference for the new West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Agree that West Northamptonshire should withdraw from Northamptonshire Local Access Forum - the previous joint arrangement with North Northamptonshire.
 - b) Agree to establish the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.
 - c) Agree the proposed Terms of Reference for the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is **mandatory and must be completed**)

- *The future Council (or customers) will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed*
- *As a result of withdrawing from the previous arrangement it is possible for West Northamptonshire to establish a Local Access Forum that will represent the residents and organisations of West Northamptonshire.*
- *The Terms of reference are required in order to ensure that there is an appropriate level of governance in place within which the Forum will operate.*

5. Report Background

- 5.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are established under [sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) and are governed by [The Local Access Forums \(England\) Regulations 2007](#).
- 5.2 As a local authority, the Council is the Appointing Authority for the LAF in West Northamptonshire.
- 5.3 Under the regulations the Council has the power to:
- establish a new LAF
 - merge a LAF with another to create a joint forum
 - change the area covered by a LAF
 - withdraw from a joint forum arrangement
- 5.4 Previously in Northamptonshire there has been a single LAF to cover the whole geographic area. It is proposed that West Northamptonshire formally withdraws from the joint

arrangement that has been in place and establishes a LAF for West Northamptonshire. In reality this has already taken place as there are now separate meetings for the WNC and NNC with a brief co-ordination meeting between the two.

- 5.5 As a result of establishing a new LAF it is necessary for Cabinet to agree new Terms of Reference that will apply to the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum. Proposed Terms of Reference are included at Appendix A.
- 5.6 Discussions have taken place with North Northamptonshire Council who have decided to also withdraw from the previous joint arrangement.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The Council, in reality has, little option but to follow the recommendations as NNC are proposing to withdraw from the current arrangement and so for West Northamptonshire to remain within a Local Access Forum that considers a wider geography than it is able to have influence over would make little sense.
- 6.2 By establishing the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum, the Council will be able to ensure that the forum concentrates on issues that are of importance to West Northamptonshire residents and businesses.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There is little financial impact associated with the operation of the LAF with officer time required for attendance and secretarial duties.
- 7.1.2 The additional cost of a WNLAF is therefore restricted to the cost of the secretarial duties as this was previously shared between WNC and NNC and now will be borne by each council individually for their own meetings – however this is not a significant sum as meetings take place quarterly.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 Local Access Forums (LAFs) are established under [sections 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#) and are governed by [The Local Access Forums \(England\) Regulations 2007](#).
- 7.2.2 To form a LAF for West Northamptonshire the Council needs to agree new Terms of Reference in support of the new LAF for and under which the Council will remain the Appointing Authority.
- 7.2.3 The new LAF (if approved) will ensure a focus on issues pertinent to West Northamptonshire residents and business.

7.3 Risk

- 7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4 Consultation and Communication

7.4.1 No consultation has taken place in relation to this report.

7.4.2 West Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Communications team will share the outcome of the cabinet's decision and the next steps with the community and key stakeholders via the Council's established channels.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 The subject matter of this report has not been considered by Overview and Scrutiny.

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There are no direct impacts relating to the climate as a result of the existence of the WNLAf or the proposed Terms of Reference. However the Forum is able to have a positive impact on footpaths and bridleways through its role as a consultee which in turn may have a positive impact on active travel.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 There are no differential impacts on any communities within West Northamptonshire as a result of this report.

7.7.2

8. Background Papers

8.1 Appendix A – Proposed Terms of Reference for West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum.

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

The Local Access Forum for the District of West Northamptonshire shall be known as The West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum (WNLAF).

Local Access Forums (LAFs) are advisory bodies established by local highway authorities under s94 and 95 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (the Act). West Northamptonshire Council is the Appointing Authority for the Forum (herein referred to as 'the Appointing Authority').

In 2007 Defra published the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 (the Regulations). These came into force on 19th March 2007 with additional Guidance from the Secretary of State. Operation of WNLAF will comply with these regulations and any associated guidance or amendments.

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The primary purpose of WNLAF is to provide advice to a range of organisations specified in the Act and in supplementary regulations and guidance. Specifically, the WNLAF is in place to: 'advise as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open air recreation and the enjoyment of the area, and as to such other matters as may be prescribed'.

2. Role

WNLAF shall:

- 2.1 Comment on the Appointing Authority's access strategies with a view to developing additional opportunities for everyone to enjoy the rights of way network, with particular emphasis on encouraging those who might feel excluded, for example people with disabilities.
- 2.2 Advise the Appointing Authority on the development of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for the District.
- 2.3 Advise on the promotion of opportunities for the appropriate use and enjoyment of the countryside.
- 2.4 Advise upon the appropriate management and maintenance of access to land in the District to which the public have access for open-air recreation.
- 2.5 Respond to Natural England on the draft maps of open country and registered common land.
- 2.6 Respond to consultations by Government Departments and Agencies on Access land, registered common land and other open country.
- 2.7 WNLAF will set their priorities and forward plan for investigations depending on local issues on an annual basis but will endeavour to respond to consultations and draft

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

policy documents. When making recommendations, WNLAF members will consider land use, as well as the need to conserve flora, fauna, geological and physical features.

- 2.8 WNLAF will provide advice to prescribed bodies under Section 94 of the Act:
- The Appointing Authority
 - The Secretary of State (meaning any Government Dept. with Secretary of State)
 - Natural England
 - Forestry Commission
 - English Heritage

Regulation 21 also permits advice to:

- Sport England (English Sports Council)
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Conservation Boards
- Parish and Town Councils

- 2.9 Advice to Bodies under Section 94 of the Act will be one or more of the following:
- Improvements to Public Access to land (by foot, cycle, horse or mechanically propelled vehicle that is lawful to the status of the land) for purpose of recreation and enjoyment Public Access to land for lawful purposes
 - Public Access to land by mechanically propelled vehicle for Byways open to Traffic

- 2.10 WNLAF advice to Bodies under Section 94 of the Act will be issued with the following preface: 'This Letter Constitutes formal advice from the West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum. (Insert name of section 94 body) is required in accordance with section 94 (5) of The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to have regard to the relevant advice from this forum in carrying out its functions.'

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 In carrying out its function, the WNLAF will have regard to biodiversity, wildlife management, land management and the needs and interests of landowners, land managers, user groups and the public at large.
- 3.2 The WNLAF shall take into account statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State whilst operating within the Act and regulations made thereafter.
- 3.3 The WNLAF shall respect local circumstances as well as environmental, social, economic and educational interests.

4. Membership of the Forum

- 4.1 The WNLAF shall consist of a minimum of 10 and maximum of 22 members.
- 4.2 The maximum number of members of the WNLAF who may also be members of the Appointing Authority is:-

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

- a) In the case of the WNLAf consisting of not more than 16 members, two, and
 - b) In the case of the WNLAf consisting of no fewer than 17 members, three.
- 4.3 The Appointing Authority may appoint a new member or members to the WNLAf at any time, provided that the total number of members does not exceed 22 as a result of the appointment. If the number of members of WNLAf falls below ten at any time, the Appointing Authority must, as soon as reasonably practicable, appoint a new member or members so that the forum consists of at least ten members. Appointments shall be made in accordance with the Regulations.
- 4.4 Appointment to the WNLAf will be for a period of three years but members can be reappointed at the end of their term. Vacancies will be advertised to be filled as soon as possible once they arise. The WNLAf Chair will advise the Appointing Authority of membership vacancies and request recruitment.
- 4.5 A record of Members' appointment terms and interests will be recorded and kept up to date on the WNLAf Webpages.
- 4.6 Individual members will, through consultation, represent a field of interest rather than a particular organisation of which they might also be a member. A reasonable balance of members representing different interests will be maintained.
- 4.7 Members of WNLAf must not use their position to seek or gain an unfair advantage by pursuing their own interests or issues. Members are there to represent their wider group, i.e. Land management representatives must think beyond their own land holdings and seek to express the views of the land management community.
- 4.8 Members are expected to take active steps to stay in touch with the community they represent so that they can convey its views to the WNLAf.
- 4.9 WNLAf can request the Appointing Authority to terminate a member's appointment if they:
- Without consent fail to attend meetings for a year;
 - Fail to reflect wider community views;
 - Act against the interests of the WNLAf; or
 - Are rude or abusive to other WNLAf Members or Officers of the Appointing Authority.
- 4.10 Members of the Appointing Authority can be appointed to serve on the Forum, but these members must be clear if they are represent 'public agency' interests or 'community' interests in their responses.
- 5. Chair and Vice Chair**
- 5.1 The Chair and Vice Chair will be drawn from Forum members and be elected by whichever method the WNLAf decides appropriate. The Chair and Vice Chair will

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

represent different categories of interest. Members of the Appointing Authority will not be eligible for either position.

- 5.2 The appointment to these posts will be renewed on an annual basis. In the event that either post becomes vacant during the period of appointment, the WNLAf may decide that both posts should be filled afresh. The total period during which a member may be Chair or Vice Chair will not exceed the period of their appointment as a member.
- 5.3 Where neither the Chair nor Vice Chair are able to attend a meeting, the WNLAf may elect a Chair on a casual basis (i.e. for the duration of that meeting only).
- 5.4 The Chair, in consultation with the WNLAf and the secretary will draft the agenda for WNLAf meetings.

6. Meetings of the Forum

- 6.1 Meetings are to be held at least twice every year. The WNLAf may meet more frequently but shall meet no more than four times every year.
- 6.2 Meetings shall be deemed to be quorate when not less than third of the current membership is present.
- 6.3 Members who have a personal interest, whether direct or indirect, in a matter to be discussed by the WNLAf should disclose that interest at the meeting. A personal interest is defined as one which might affect a member's wellbeing, financial position or business, or that of a relative or friend, to a greater extent than that of other council tax payers, rate payers or other inhabitants of the area. Personal interests will be recorded in the minutes but will not prohibit that member from taking part in the discussion of that item.
- 6.4 The agenda will be made available to the public no less than three working days prior to a meeting being held.
- 6.5 Copies of the agenda for each meeting, along with the papers and minutes will be made available for on the Appointing Authority's website for a period of two years after the meeting.
- 6.6 The timing of meetings and the venue should take account of the needs and preferences of WNLAf members and others who may attend the meetings. Where appropriate the WNLAf will vary the location and timing of meetings to enable a larger number and range of people to attend.
- 6.7 Matters can be put to the vote but this should be seen as a last resort.

7. Public Access to Meetings

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

- 7.1 The meetings will be open to the public but people may be excluded if necessary to prevent disorderly conduct or misbehaviour.
- 7.2 Members of the public may submit questions to the WNLAf. The questions asked by members of the public must be on a subject pertinent to the Terms of Reference of WNLAf. The questions must be submitted to the secretariat at least one working day prior to the WNLAf meeting.
- 7.3 Members of the public who wish to speak on a particular subject may do so for a maximum of 3 minutes.
- 7.4 Observers cannot vote on or take part in the decision-making.
- 7.5 A representative of the Rights of Way section, West Northamptonshire Council, shall attend all meetings as an observer.

8. Secretary

- 8.1 The Appointing Authority will nominate an officer to act as the interface with the WNLAf and fulfil the responsibilities of a secretary.
- 8.2 The Secretary will, in conjunction with the Chair, be responsible for the overall administration of the WNLAf including organising the meetings, drafting the minutes, producing the draft annual report and liaising with neighbouring forums and the appointing authority.
- 8.3 Secretary Roles and Expectations
 - 8.3.1 Acting as the point of contact for anyone wishing to contact the WNLAf, and forwarding information on to the chairman and/or members as appropriate.
 - 8.3.2 Receiving, prioritising and processing consultations and requests for advice.
 - 8.3.3 Assisting the chairman and members in conducting meetings to comply with statutory requirements.
 - 8.3.4 Assisting with production of the forward work programme and annual report.
 - 8.3.5 Ascertaining the appropriate named individual or team to which WNLAf advice should be sent and sending that advice.
 - 8.3.6 The secretary will request feedback at the time of submitting advice to a body to which section 94(4) of the Act applies, and then follow up the request if necessary, so that the results can be reported to the WNLAf.

West Northamptonshire Local Access Forum – Terms of Reference

- 8.3.7 Liaising with the Appointing Authority regarding financial management of the WNLAf and processing of members expenses.

9. Annual Report

- 9.1 The WNLAf shall prepare an annual report on its work which the Appointing Authority will make available online.

10. Expenses

- 10.1 Reasonable expenses associated with the normal work of the WNLAf may be reimbursed; but only in respect of:
- travel and subsistence costs; and
 - any expenses of arranging for the care of their children or dependants
- 10.2 Expenses will be paid at the rates payable to members of the Appointing Authority as set out in the Scheme of Allowances. Mileage claims will be managed by the Secretary.

11. Complaints

- 11.1 Although WNLAf is an independent advisory body, the Appointing Authority should ensure that WNLAf conducts its business within its statutory remit having regard to the Regulations and Statutory Guidance issued by Government.
- 11.2 Any complaints about the conduct of the WNLAf or a WNLAf member should be dealt with through the Appointing Authority's normal complaints procedures.



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

12th MARCH 2024

CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE - COUNCILLOR MALCOLM LONGLEY

Report Title	Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register
Report Author	Adrian Ward – Head of Audit & Risk Management adrian.ward@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Sarah Hall	22/02/2024
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	22/02/2024
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	22/02/2024

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Risk Management Strategy

Appendix B – Strategic Risk Register

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To seek Cabinet approval for an updated Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register.

2. Executive Summary

1.2. The Risk Management Strategy has been reviewed and updated to reflect current good practice, and the Strategic Risk Register has been comprehensively reviewed to reflect the current strategic risks and threats that the Council is faced with, and to evaluate and present these in accordance with the guidance contained within the updated Strategy document.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Approve the updated Risk Management Strategy (Appendix A).
- b) Endorse the updated Strategic Risk Register (Appendix B).
- c) Note that the Audit & Governance Committee will monitor the Strategic Risk Register and the mitigating actions contained within it on an ongoing basis, and report any significant concerns back to Cabinet.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To ensure that the Council has an effective strategy for identifying and evaluating risks and opportunities, and an up to date and comprehensive strategic risk register which identifies the most significant key risks facing the organisation and the relevant mitigating actions being taken, which can then be subject to ongoing oversight by the Audit & Governance Committee.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The current Risk Management Strategy approved in June 2021 and a Strategic Risk Register was developed, which the Audit & Governance Committee have kept under periodic review.
- 5.2 The Strategy has been subject to review and updating to ensure it reflects current best practice and is logical and easy to understand.
- 5.3 The Strategic Risk Register has also been subject to an extensive and comprehensive review and updating process, and a new register has been developed following the processes set out in the updated Strategy.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 The updated Risk Management Strategy seeks to establish a clear and logical approach to risk management that can be applied to all the Council's relevant activities, including strategic and operational risks, and programme and project risks.
- 6.2 It also recognises that as well as identifying and mitigating threats, good risk management also includes the identification and consideration of potential opportunities, and it seeks to adopt a consistent Council-wide approach, including an approach for establishing a 'risk appetite' (which may vary according to the type of threat or opportunity being considered).
- 6.3 The Strategy specifies that risks should be assessed based on likelihood and impact both at gross (or inherent) risk level (ie. before any mitigating actions or factors are considered, and again at met risk level (ie. taking into account any mitigations).
- 6.4 A 'traffic light' scoring approach is then be used to categorise gross and net risks scores into high (red), medium (amber) and low (green) categories.
- 6.5 The Strategy also sets out the risk management responsibilities of relevant parties, including Cabinet, Audit & Governance Committee, senior managers, and other officers and groups.

6.6 The Strategic Risk Register has been compiled following consultation with senior managers, and includes 15 high-level significant risks that have been identified which could impact on the Council’s abilities to achieve its key corporate objectives.

6.7 The strategic risks are set out in detail in the register, together with mitigating actions, and are summarised below:

Ref.	Summary	Gross Risk	Current Net Risk	Target Net Risk	Risk Owner	Cabinet Portfolio
SR01	Data management (including Cyber Security)	20	12	6	Chief Information Officer	HR & Corporate Services
SR02	NPH residential – change in regulations	12	9	9	Director of Communities & Opportunities	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR03	Cost of living impact – increased demand for services	16	16	12	Executive Director of People	Adult Care, Wellbeing & Health Integration
SR04	Availability of affordable rented accommodation	20	9	9	Director of Communities & Opportunities	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR05	Health and safety of WNC properties	16	12	9	Executive Director of Corporate Services and Executive Director Place	HR & Corporate Services
SR06	Inability to recruit, and therefore deliver	16	9	8	Assistant Director HR	HR & Corporate Services
SR07	Change of policy and strategic direction	16	12	12	Chief Executive	Strategy (Leader)
SR08	Inter authority agreements	20	16	8	Director of Legal & Democratic Services	Finance
SR09	NCT relationship management (WNC / NNC/ NCT)	16	6	4	Director of Childrens Services	Children, Families & Education

SR10	NCT financial pressures	25	20	9	Director of Childrens Services	Children, Families & Education
SR11	Strategic communications and reputational risk	16	9	9	Assistant Chief Executive	Strategy (Leader)
SR12	RAAC (reinforced aerated autoclaved concrete)	25	9	1	Director of Childrens Services	Children, Families & Education
SR13	Cladding	15	9	1	Director for Communities & Opportunities	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR14	Financial sustainability	20	10	10	Executive Director - Finance	Finance
SR15	Disaggregation and other disputes	20	12	8	Executive Director - Finance	Finance

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The strategic risk register considers a range of issues, including finance and resources, which could impact on the operations of the Council

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 There are no specific 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. If approved, the Strategic Risk Register will replace the current document, and therefore will be taken account of in future Cabinet and Committee reports, where relevant.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

7.4.1 Senior management has been engaged on the updated Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register and it has also been endorsed by the Executive Leadership Team.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

No implications

7.6 **Climate Impact**

7.6.1 Any implications relating to climate impact are considered as part of the development of the risk strategy

7.7 **Community Impact**

The impact of strategic risks on the wider community has been considered as part of the development of the strategy

8. **Background Papers**

8.1 None.

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West
Northamptonshire
Council

APPENDIX A

Risk Management Strategy & Framework

Version 2.0

www.westnorthants.gov.uk

Document Version Control

Document File Name	<i>Risk Management Strategy & Framework</i>
Document Type	<i>Strategy & Framework</i>
Document Status	<i>Version 2.0</i>
Author	<i>Risk & Internal Control Manager</i>
Document held by (name/section)	<i>Risk & Internal Control Team</i>
Contact	<i>Risk & Internal Control Manager – Joanne Bonham</i>
Date of publication	xxx
Next review date	<i>January 2025</i>
Version Number	<i>2.0</i>
Approval date and by who	<i>29/01/2024 Executive Leadership Team</i>
For internal publication only or external also?	<i>Internal and external</i>
Document stored on Council website or Intranet?	<i>WNC Website and Intranet</i>

Change History

Issue	Date	Comments
0.1	26/05/2021	Draft
1.0	08/06/2021	Final version
0.2	23/01/24	Draft – Strategy update
2.0		Final version update

NB: Draft versions 0.1 - final published versions 1.0

Consultees

Internal	External
S151 Officer	
Executive Leadership Team	
Chief Internal Auditor	

Distribution List

Internal	External
All staff	WNC Website

Links to other documents

Document	Link

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West Northamptonshire Council

1. Introduction

The purpose of the risk management approach outlined in this document is to:

- Provide standard definitions and language to underpin the risk management process
- Ensure risks are identified and assessed consistently throughout the organisation through the clarification of key concepts
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for managing risk
- Implement an approach that meets current legislative requirements and follows best practice and relevant standards.

Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by and unwanted or uncertain action or event.

Risk Management is the process whereby the Council addresses key risks or barriers to achieving its vision and corporate objectives. Risk arises from possible threats to objectives as well as failure to take advantage of possible opportunities.

Risk can be operational in nature and exist at service or team level or organisational, such as disaster recovery or health and safety risks, but are barriers to achieving operational outcomes and objectives. Unless effectively managed, risks can escalate in their nature and impact to become much more significant and strategic in their impact.

WNC has set six core values to support its corporate strategy and these are:

- 1) Trust – We are honest, fair, transparent and accountable. We can be trusted to do what we say will.
- 2) High Performance – We get the basics right and what we do, we do well.
- 3) Respect – We respect each other and our customers in a diverse, professional and supportive environment.
- 4) Innovate – We encourage curiosity, are creative and seize opportunities to grow individually as an organisation and as an area.
- 5) Value – We value each other's skills, experience and ideas and we celebrate our similarities, differences and environment.
- 6) Empower – We believe in people, will listen, learn and trust them to make decisions. We help people to realise their ambitions.

The aim of risk management at WNC is not to remove all risks, but to understand the nature of risks and to implement controlled, sensible, balanced and cost effective measures, to manage risk and achieve objectives. Risk management is not about being 'risk averse,' but about being 'risk aware' and this awareness will mean that the Council and its leadership team is better able to avoid threats and hazards and also take full advantage of opportunities that arise in the course of its business.

WNC recognises there is uncertainty in everything it does, and the uncertainties present both threats and opportunities. This strategy describes how the Council will manage these uncertainties by identifying, evaluating and controlling risk, increasing the authority's success

in achieving its priorities and objectives and also by putting in place contingencies and an organisational agility for both planned and also unforeseen events.

The relationship between risk management and objectives is shown in Diagram 1 below:

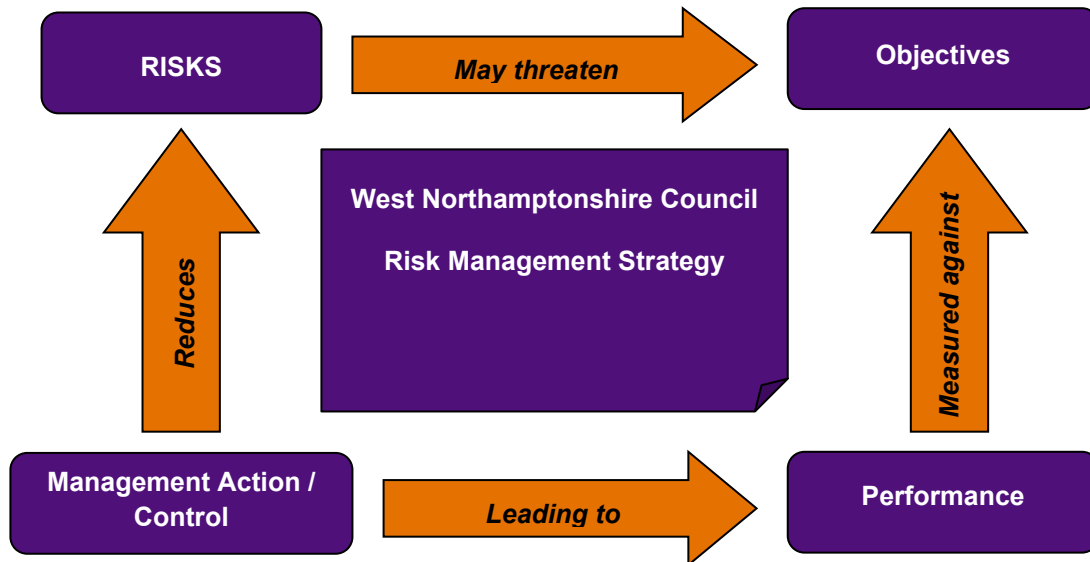


Diagram 1: Risks and Objectives

2. The benefits of risk management

There are a number of benefits to the Council in continuing to develop and embed a sound risk management function. The key benefits include:

- Supporting the Council in achieving its priorities and objectives at all levels within the organisation;
- Supporting better decision-making throughout the Council;
- Creating and contributing to effective governance procedures and protocols;
- Providing a framework for internal and external assurance;
- Targeting resources at areas and issues of greatest risk where the Council's objectives are most under threat;
- Providing an early-warning system to alert Officers and Members to potential threats and opportunities;
- Providing an organisational agility and rapid response capability to the above opportunities and threats and also any unforeseen events;
- Enabling the Council to act proactively, avoiding reactive management wherever possible;
- Protecting and enhancing the reputation of WNC.

3. Risk Management Policy Statement

Definition of Risk Management

Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk management is a planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of those risks which can threaten the assets or financial and organisational well-being of the Council.

Policy Statement

WNC recognises that it has a duty of care to its residents, customers, employees, partners and visitors. In fulfilling this duty, the Council will endeavour to apply high standards of governance and to be efficient, effective, transparent and accountable.

Effective risk management is a statutory responsibility for the Council and is central to its good governance. Importantly, risk management is an integral part of the Council's business processes and assists with decision making and achievement of key objectives whilst providing evidence of effective management and control in support of the Annual Governance Statement.

It is impossible to remove all risk but the Council are committed to adopting a governance-driven, corporate, systematic and structured approach to the management of risk at WNC with the Council's leadership team setting a "tone from the top".

It will be also be the responsibility of councillors, all employees and partner organisations of the Council to review, understand the nature and take responsibility for controlling the risks within their service areas.

To give effect to this the Council will put in place this risk management strategy & framework document, the core elements of which will include procedures, protocols and detailed guidance to council officers. The objectives of the strategy are to:

- Adopt a strategic approach to risk management to make better informed decisions which is vital to successful transformational change;
- Set the 'tone from the top' on the level of risk we are prepared to accept on our different service delivery activities and priorities;
- Acknowledge that with even good risk management and our best endeavours, things can go wrong. Where this happens, we use the lessons learnt to try to prevent it from happening again;
- Develop leadership capacity and skills in identifying, understanding and managing the risks facing the Council;
- Integrate risk management into how we run Council business and/or services. Sound risk management processes help us to achieve our core purpose, priorities and outcomes;
- Support a culture of well-measured risk taking throughout the Council's business, including strategic, partnership, project and operational. This includes setting risk ownership and accountabilities and responding to risk in a balanced way, considering the level of risk, reward, impact and cost of control measures;

- Ensure that the Council continues to meet all statutory and best practice requirements in relation to risk management; and
- Ensure risk management continues to be a key and effective element of our Corporate Governance arrangements.

We will meet these objectives by:

- Establishing and articulating our risk culture; setting out expectations of behaviour throughout the Council;
- Maintaining a consistent and robust risk management approach that will;
 - Identify and effectively manage strategic, operational and project risk; and
 - Focus on those key risks that, because of their likelihood and impact, make them priorities;
- Utilise the internal control team to conduct health checks within service areas to ensure processes are robust;
- Ensuring accountabilities, roles and responsibilities for managing risks are clearly defined and communicated;
- Considering risk as an integral part of service improvement planning, key decision-making processes, and project and partnership governance;
- Communicating risk information effectively through a clear reporting framework; and
- Increasing understanding and expertise in risk management through targeted training and sharing of good practice.

Signatures:

Anna Earnshaw
Chief Executive

Date signed

Martin Henry
Executive Director of Finance (S151)

Date signed

4. Risk Management Approach

The council's approach to risk management is based on best practice and involves a number of key steps as outlined below:

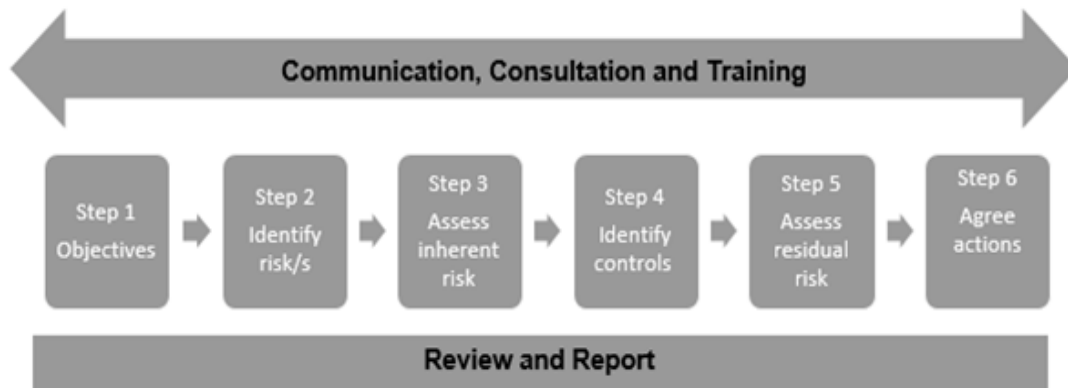


Diagram 2: WNC's Risk Management Approach

Risk can exist at a more operational level as part of the Council's day to day activities and importantly also in programmes and project management. At WNC, and similarly to the strategic level, this is being strongly embedded and integrated into the culture of the Council, with responsibility for managing risk assigned to managers and staff as part of their individual job profile and service area performance objectives. The approach of WNC is one of top down whereby senior management focus on the risks to strategic objectives, and bottom up where officers focus on the risks to achievement at an operational level.

Directorates and service areas within WNC may not carry the same risk profile and risk management will be via the operation of risk registers which may be used to support managers in decision-making such as designing business processes, evaluating opportunities and for choosing and prioritising what areas of performance are monitored.

The purpose of the risk management approach outlined in this document is to:

- Provide standard definitions and language to underpin the risk management process;
- Ensure risks are identified and assessed consistently throughout the Council through the clarification of key concepts;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for managing risks;
- Implement an approach that meets current legislative requirements and follows best practice and relevant standards.

5. Risk management roles and responsibilities

Although the corporate risk management framework is set and regularly monitored by Cabinet (who have ultimate responsibility for it) and the Council's Executive Leadership, core delivery of the approved risk management framework is primarily led by and rests with the Chief Executive, directors and statutory officers acting individually and collectively as part of the Executive Leadership Team, and who are then supported by their departmental management

teams or equivalent. The Risk Team will work in collaboration with corporate directors offering advice and challenge and support reporting and monitoring.

All elected members, managers and staff of the Council, including when acting in partnership and joint venture with other bodies and organisations, have a general responsibility and duty to manage risk as an integral part of their role.

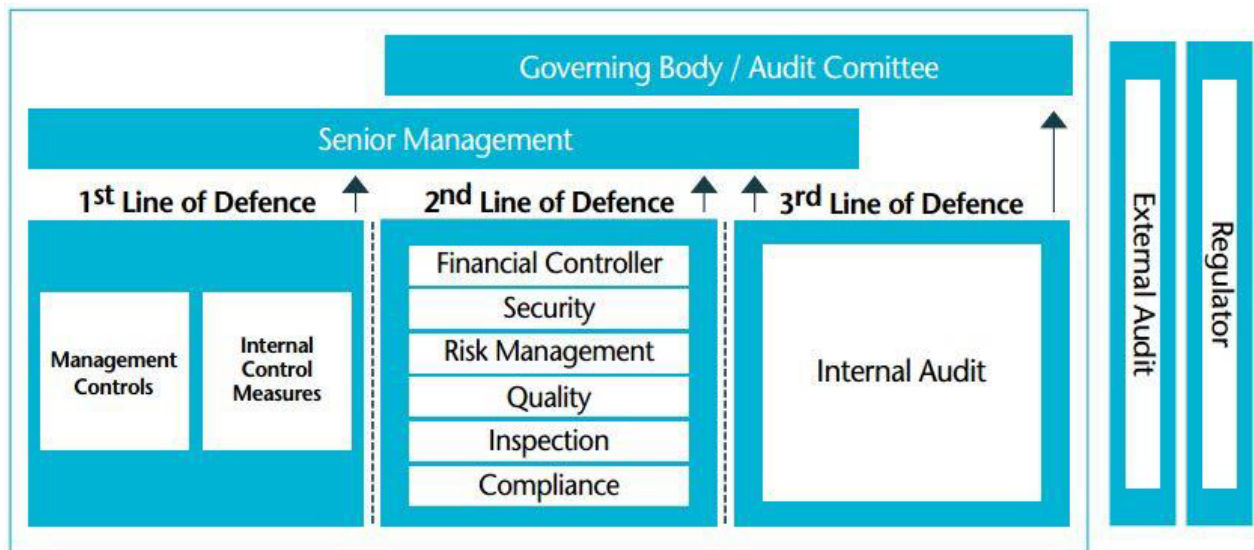
In addition, specific core risk-related/risk-driven support service activities, such as the performance management function, health and safety, insurance, emergency business continuity planning and programme and project management in addition all contribute to the overall corporate risk management process.

The Council and its leadership team will set the “tone from the top” on risk management and will directly oversee the risk management function in achieving its objectives and these will be to:

- Continuously develop WNC’s risk management framework to support the achievement of the Council’s core values and its ambition to be one the best councils in the country;
- Facilitate the achievement of Council priorities and objectives by embedding an effective process of identification and management of strategic, service level and key operational risks;
- Similarly facilitate the achievement of Council priorities and objectives by embedding an effective process of identification and management of major programme and project risks;
- Ensure, where appropriate, risks are effectively escalated, and escalation is timely;
- Ensure the risks associated with partnerships are effectively identified and managed;
- Promote risk-awareness, particularly business risk awareness, risk-intelligence and risk management throughout the Council;
- Capture, expand and act upon positive risk opportunities;
- Support the effective identification and management of risks associated with delivering existing and new council services into both existing and new markets;
- Proactively identify and manage emergent risk;
- Clearly state and communicate to all council officers, managers, partners and residents their risk management responsibilities;
- Manage risk in line with recognised best practice in public sector governance.

A summary overview of responsibilities for risk management at the Council is at Annex A with further detail at Annex B.

The 'Three Lines of Defence' model is a way of explaining the relationship between the monitoring and assurance functions and a guide to how senior management should divide these responsibilities:



6. Risk registers

Whilst the management of risk at different management levels within the Council will vary in terms of focus and level of formal analysis, in order to ensure good practice, it is important that consistency and clarity of risk information is achieved on risk registers.

For this reason, a standard risk register format will be used throughout WNC to align service and programme risk registers with the corporate risks. The register has been kept in a simple form to enable service areas to understand the fields and get used to updating the register on a regular basis.

An overall risk register matrix and risk map has been added on the front-cover sheet of the corporate risk register to provide an at-a-glance helicopter view of the risks captured and to better reveal any potential form, pattern, spread or cluster of risks on the register.

7. Risk management process

Identify Risks

There are a number of different types of risks that an organisation may face including financial loss, failure of service delivery, physical risks to people, and damage to the organisation's reputation.

To act as a prompt and to ensure completeness, a checklist of risk categories has been developed around the acronym PERFORMANCE:

P olitical	O pportunities/Outcomes	N ew partnerships/projects/contracts
E conomic	R eputation	C ustomers/Citizens
R egulatory	M anagement	E nvironment
F inancial	A ssets	

Describing the risk is equally important to ensure that risks are fully understood and to assist with the identification of actions, the cause and effect of each risk must also be detailed. Once identified, all risks are recorded in a risk register.

A risk owner must be allocated and recorded against each risk on the risk register. Such accountability helps to ensure ownership of the risk is documented and recognised. A risk owner is defined as a person with the accountability and authority to effectively manage the risk. At this stage there may well be a long list of possible risks. The next step will help to prioritise these in order of importance.

Assess Gross (Inherent) Risk Level

To ensure resources are focused on the most significant risks, the council’s approach to risk management is to assess the risks identified in terms of both the potential likelihood and impact so that actions can be prioritised.

The risk management process requires each risk to be assessed twice – gross (or inherent) and net (or residual) risk levels. The first assessment (the ‘gross’ risk level) is taken on the basis that there is no action being taken to manage the identified risk and/or any existing actions are not operating effectively. In other words, the worst-case scenario if the risk were to occur.

To ensure that a consistent scoring mechanism is in place across the Council, risks are assessed using the agreed criteria for likelihood and impact via reference to the risk matrix shown below. The matrix uses a “traffic light” approach to show high (red), medium (amber) and low (yellow/green) risks.

Risk Scorecard – Residual Risks						
		Likelihood				
		1 – Very rare	2 - Unlikely	3 - Possible	4 - Likely	5 – Very likely
Impact	5 – Very high					
	4 - High					
	3 - Medium					
	2 - Low					
	1 - Negligible					

Diagram 3: Risk Matrix

Where probability and impact meet this determines the risk level. For example, possible probability (3) and major impact (4) would result in a risk level of 12.

Identify Existing Controls

Existing controls, which are helping to minimise the likelihood and/or impact of the risk occurring, are identified for each risk. These controls are specifically those in place or completed and should not include planned or aspirational actions.

Assess Net (Residual) Risk Level

The second assessment (the net risk level) re-evaluates the risk, taking into consideration the effectiveness of the identified existing actions and controls. In other words, the reality if the risk were to occur in the immediate future.

Net risks are prioritised by applying the same criteria and matrix used for assessing the gross risk level. It is the risk owner's responsibility to ensure that the agreed net risk level for each risk is an accurate reflection of the likelihood and impact measures detailed in Appendix 2.

The council considers the net risk to ensure that:

- Identified risks are prioritised in terms of their significance as it is not practical or possible to manage every risk all the time; and
- Existing actions are relevant and effectively managing and/or reducing the likelihood or impact of the identified risks.

Risk Response and Further Actions

Not all risks can be managed all the time, so having assessed and prioritised the identified risks, cost effective action needs to be taken to manage those that pose the most significant threat. Based on risk scores there are four response actions:

- **Terminate** – In this situation the risk is avoided by deciding not to proceed with an activity.
- **Tolerate** – in this case, it may not always be necessary (or appropriate) to take action to treat risks.
- **Transfer** – another party bears or shares all or part of the risk.
- **Treat** – this involves identifying mitigating actions or controls to reduce risk.

The response is recorded on the risk register for each risk item.

Risk Appetite

The amount of risk at the strategic and corporate level that the Council and its leadership team are willing to take on, accept, tolerate or be exposed to in the pursuit of its business objectives, is generally referred to as its risk appetite.

Risk Appetite is not static and can be adjusted by the Cabinet with supporting advice from the Executive Leadership Team.

Importantly, in deciding the risk appetite and delegated risk appetite, Cabinet considers:

- Environmental and wider macro-economic factors, including central government legislation and any required reductions in spending and other efficiencies in services
- The amount of risk that is acceptable (what risk could be justified if it actually happened)
- The Council's funding levels and its overall capacity to bear risk.
- The areas/directorates within the Council that have an expertise and skill set for taking risk
- The extent and prevalence of operational and commercial opportunities capable of being exploited by the council

The Council's approach to risk appetite will evolve over the next few years as the risk management within the organisation is embedded and matures. Interviews and discussion throughout 2024/25 at corporate level will enable the risk appetite to be assessed and developed using a risk statement for each Directorate.

The risk statement has been designed to cover strategy, financial & value for money, operational service delivery & policy delivery, legal & regulatory and reputation & credibility. Risk appetite ratings are based on the following levels of risk appetite: averse, minimalist, cautious, open and seeking/hungry.

The risk appetite for each risk is also recorded on the risk register to give an indication of the overall appetite of risk owners. The categories are:

- Averse
- Minimalist
- Cautious
- Open
- Seeking

Risk Mitigation

These are controls and actions put in place to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring or minimising the impact if it does. An internal control system incorporating policies, processes, business continuity arrangements and other aspects of operations should:

- enable the Council to respond appropriately to business risks;
- help ensure the quality of internal and external reporting. This requires the maintenance of proper records and processes that generate the flow of timely, relevant and reliable information; and
- help ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations and also with internal policies.

Mitigating controls are recorded in the risk register as SMART actions which define the detail of the controls either in place or to be implemented and will include action plans for any risks that fall in to the 'red' area.

The residual risk that remains is the net risk, it is also good practice to define "target risk" which indicates the tolerable level of risk that the Council should aim for.

Review and Report

Risk management should be thought of as an ongoing process and as such risks need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that prompt and appropriate action is taken to reduce their likelihood and/or impact. WNC's approach is one where such reviews are:

- where possible, part of existing performance monitoring timetables; or
- focus on those risks that, because of their likelihood and impact, make them priorities.

Regular reporting enables senior managers and members to be more fully aware of the extent of the risks and progression being made to manage them.

Risk registers are currently created and maintained on standard spreadsheets but will eventually be held on dedicated software once the risk management process is in place. This enables the council to create a corporate risk profile, linked to its objectives, to record and manage risks in a consistent way, monitor and review risks and produce meaningful management reports.

The Strategic Risk Register is reviewed on a quarterly basis and overseen by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). There is also a quarterly review of the strategic register by the Executive programme Board (EPB) which is made up of Cabinet Members and Officers of the Council with the option for the Head of Internal Audit and Risk Management to attend if there is significant risk escalation.

Risk escalation

It is the responsibility of individual risk owners to raise risks which they believe require action by a higher authority. It should be emphasised though that we want to discourage people from escalating risks that they should be dealing with themselves. High risk issues should be escalated through the hierarchy that makes up the risk universe so that they are captured in the appropriate register for information purposes. However, responsibility for addressing the risk may still remain with the originator. Regular reviews will take place of directorate and service risk registers once they have been developed by the risk team for identification of risks that should be escalated to a corporate level. Should a risk present itself that requires urgent management attention the S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer should be informed who will evaluate the risk and forward to the Executive Leadership Team for inclusion in the corporate risk register.

Risks should feature as a standard agenda item at management team meetings. Discussions on risk should include:

- new or emerging issues and risks;
- evaluation and criticality of new or emerging issues and risks;
- decisions required and by whom;
- mitigating actions, action owners, timescales and review points;
- ownerships of new risks;
- the review of existing risks and the effectiveness of the current controls in place.

8. Monitoring and reporting arrangements

Monitoring risks

Risk management needs to be embedded in everyday activity. It is the responsibility, therefore, of each risk owner to review risks on a regular basis and identify whether any revisions are required. The revision may involve a re-assessment of impact and likelihood or planned mitigating actions.

As previously stated, it is important that risk is included as a standing item on the agenda for management teams (at all levels within the organisation) and working groups so that risks can be identified and captured. Initially, on a monthly basis during the management team meetings, each Director will seek assurance that the risks in their assigned areas are being adequately monitored and action is being completed as agreed in formal action plans.

The Strategic Risk Register will be included in a Corporate Governance/Health Report that will be presented to the ELT & Assistant Directors (AD's) meeting on a quarterly basis. The purpose will be to discuss the current risks and to identify any 'new' or emerging risks that may need to be escalated to the Strategic Risk Register.

The Strategic Risk Register is a dynamic document and will be updated to reflect any changes, any risks that are no longer seen as strategic will be removed but not deleted should the risk resurface at a later date.

Monitoring Process for risks

Previously the Corporate Risk Register was issued to senior management for review and updates on their risks on a quarterly basis. The revised process will see the following review and updates based on the residual scores:

Red risk	Review and update on a monthly basis
Amber risk	Review and update on a quarterly basis
Green risk	Review and update on a 6 monthly basis

Reporting and assurance arrangements

WNC's risk management framework will be supported through agreed reporting and assurance arrangements. This is to ensure that the key risks and their owners are clearly identified that mitigation and specified actions are appropriate and that actions are being carried out. The arrangements include:

Corporate level

The Executive Leadership Team will review and approve risk management policies and strategies and will consult with the Audit and Governance Committee on these matters.

On a routine basis the Audit and Governance Committee will receive updates on WNC's risk management framework and risks. Reporting will include:

- the Corporate Risk Register including associated action plans for the higher rated risks; and

- reports on the changing risk profile within WNC including areas of increasing risk, where controls are not considered to be effective and horizon scanning for areas of possible future risk.

Directorate/service level

Each Director will review risks and actions in mitigation of risk on a regular basis as an integral part of the business planning process. These officers will also ensure that risks identified at a service level and which may have a wider impact on the organisation are escalated through to the Executive Leadership Team through the CRMG. The following should be considered:

- the status of all high risks (including actions taken)
- any new risks
- changed risks (especially where risk is increasing)
- risks escalated
- risks removed from registers.

Programme level

Programme and project management is very much about managing uncertainties. Poor risk management is a key element as to why many projects often fail. Risk taking in projects is inevitable since projects are enablers of change and change introduces uncertainty, hence risk.

Throughout the life of the programme or project there will be risks that need to be managed; to reduce the probability and impact of unwanted outcomes such as project time and cost overruns. To manage the risks the Project Manager will maintain a project risk register on behalf of the project.

Managing risks within a programme or a project will ensure that responsibilities are clear to:

- Implement appropriate measures and controls to manage risks during the life of the project
- Review the risks on a regular basis
- Identify and assess the impact of risks and their influence on the project schedule and other important project variables such as cost and quality
- Have appropriate contingency plans in place to remove or limit the risk (these can be either controls (already in place) or actions (yet to be undertaken but planned))

Where suppliers/and or partners are involved in the project, it is essential that there is a shared understanding of risk. There may need to be contingency plans and risk allowances (funding and time identified to manage such risks) allocated to allow for the possibility of (for example) delays or failure for a service to be taken up.

At a project level, a risk register is a key tool for managing risk, which must be reviewed and updated continually throughout the life of the project.

Within a programme or project, responsibility and ownership for managing risks must be assigned to individuals with the authority to take appropriate action on risk.

Performance management

The effectiveness of the risk management function is reviewed on an on-going basis by the Executive Leadership Team and its effectiveness is appraised and evaluated by the Audit and Governance Committee, who also monitor and challenge activities and progress. The risk management function is also audited against public sector best practice by both internal and external audit.

In addition, specific core risk-related/risk-driven support service activities, such as performance management, health and safety, insurance, emergency and business continuity planning and programme and project management all contribute to the overall corporate risk management process.

Review and control

This strategy and policy will be subject to regular review (at least annually) by the S151 Officer and the Executive Leadership Team with any changes reflected in related guidance, training and tools as appropriate.

Annex A & B are on the following pages.

Annex A Summary Overview of Risk Management Responsibilities

Risk Strategy Activity Council Group/ Team/Officer or Commercial Partner	Develop the Risk Management Strategy	Agree the Risk Management Strategy	Provide Advice and Support on the Strategy	Implement the Strategy	Share experience of risk management issues	Review the effectiveness of the Strategy
Cabinet		●				●
Audit and Governance Committee			●		●	●
Executive Leadership Team	●			●	●	●
Directors	●			●	●	●
Section 151 Officer	●		●	●	●	
Monitoring Officer	●		●	●	●	
Major Programme & Project Boards				●	●	
WNC Trading Companies				●	●	
Commercial Partners/Joint Ventures					●	
Public Sector Partnerships					●	
Large WNC Procurement Contracts				●	●	
Shared Services (WNC Service-Lead)				●	●	
Shared Services (WNC Non-Leading)					●	
Departmental management teams			●	●	●	●
Council Committees/Boards/Groups				●	●	
Service Managers			●	●	●	●
Internal Audit	●		●	●	●	●
External Audit						●
Council Staff				●	●	
Northampton Residents					●	

(Source of Model – CIPFA; Risk Management in the Public Services)

Annex B Detailed Risk Management Responsibilities

Position	Role /Responsibilities
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annually approve the Council’s Risk Management Strategy & Framework • Provide leadership on risk management in the organisation • Consider the strategic risks associated with the decisions taken. • Monitor the Council’s risk management arrangements, including via the Council’s strategic performance and audit reports. • Assess risks in Cabinet reports and provide challenge, where necessary and identify risks associated with Cabinet decisions
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To lead risk management by example • To develop, implement and review the Council’s Risk Management Strategy & Policy • To champion the effective application of risk management processes and principles across the Council’s business systems • Seek assurance at least annually that all risks comprising barriers to achievement of the Council’s corporate objectives have been identified and accurately assessed and are being managed • To review and update the corporate risk register and ensure mitigating actions are completed • Seek assurance at least annually that all directorates and major programmes and projects are appropriately complying with the Council’s risk management policies and framework
Directorate Management Teams, or Equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectively support and contribute to their corporate discharge of their risk management responsibilities • Make arrangements for continuing to embed risk management and a risk aware culture throughout their respective directorates • Ensure risk is regularly reported (at least quarterly) to their Director • Maintain and review directorate risk register(s) on a quarterly basis
Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept responsibility for managing risk as a core managerial competency • Manage the risks associated with their area, including those crossing area boundaries within their Directorate and their delegated budget allocation and service plan responsibilities • Ensure there is effective risk management within their service area • Ensure a risk register is in place for any business or major programme or project related risks and the risk registers are reviewed at least quarterly • Compliance with risk policies and ensure staff are trained in risk Management • Encourage staff to raise risks and send a message to staff that escalated risks will be evaluated and acted upon if necessary • Promptly advise senior managers of significant identified risks

Annex B: Detailed Risk Management Responsibilities

Position	Role / Responsibilities
Department management teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and discuss risk exception reporting Discuss and review Directorate risk register(s), as necessary Where appropriate, escalate risks for discussion and consideration by Management Board or the Borough Secretary for inclusion on the corporate risk register.
Programme and Project Boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update risk registers/action plans for programme and project level risks Report risks to the Programme/ or Project Board Escalate any risks that exceed risk appetite to the next level or to the Borough Secretary for inclusion in the corporate risk register Provide a copy of the updated risk register/action plan to the Borough Secretary
Other Council Boards, Panels, Steering Groups & Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a written Terms of Reference which requires risks to achieving Board/Committee/Panel/Group objectives, or opportunities to accelerating or enhancing achievement, to be identified, assessed, managed and reported by the Board/Committee/Panel/Group
Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote, support and co-ordinate risk management at Member level ensuring a positive and cogent attitude toward the understanding and treatment of risk at the Council Monitor, advise and review at least annually the effectiveness of the Council's overall risk management framework and arrangements prior to submission to Cabinet and review the Council's key risks to ensure these are being adequately managed To hold the Management Board accountable for effective risk management across the Council
Public Sector Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage partnership related risks including risk escalation procedures Actively manage risks within the partnership participating in the regular update and maintenance of a joint partnership risk register. Report on risk management issues to the respective partnership board. Show a clear link between objectives and outcomes that is customer focused Escalate risks for inclusion on the service or corporate risk register
Commercial & Private Sector Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage commercial partnership related risks including risk escalation procedures to relevant Board and/or DMT/Management Board Actively manage risks within the commercial partnership and participating in the regular update and maintenance of a joint commercial partnership risk register. Report on risk management issues to the respective partnership board. Show a clear link between objectives and outcomes that is customer focused

Annex B: Detailed Risk Management Responsibilities

Position	Roles/Responsibilities
Council Commercial Trading Companies and/or LLP Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement and review the trading company's or partnership's risk management strategy • Seek assurance at least annually that all risks comprising barriers to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the company or LLP Partnership have been identified and accurately assessed and are being managed • Seek assurance at least annually that all divisions and departments within the company or LLP Partnership are appropriately complying with the company or partnership's risk management policies and framework • Ensure adequate risk escalation procedures are in place for the trading company or LLP Partnership • Escalate and report risks, as appropriate, quarterly for consideration and action by Management Board and the Borough Secretary
Shared Services (WNC Non-Lead)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to manage and escalate shared services related risks. • Actively manage risks within the shared-service arrangements participating in the regular update and maintenance of a shared-services risk register. • Report on risk management issues to the Lead-Authority. • Show a clear link between objectives and outcomes that is customer focused
Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independently evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements and where appropriate make recommendations for improvement
Monitoring Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it appears to the Monitoring Officer that a proposal under this framework gives rise to a contravention of law or maladministration to alert the Council to this
All Council Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use risk management as a tool to support decision-making • Raise/escalate any concerns or risks identified or considered within their working environment that are not being sufficiently addressed or directly to the appropriate council manager • Maintain vigilance and a risk-aware attitude of mind at all time

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APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

No	Risk Description	Risk Owner	Inherent risk			Response	Risk Appetite	Mitigating Actions (These must be SMART actions with implementation dates) (Key Controls)	Monitoring frequency	Monitoring forum e.g. ELT, DMT etc.	Current risk			Target Risk Rating	Cabinet Portfolio
			Impact	Likelihood	Inherent Risk Rating						Impact	Likelihood	Residual Risk Rating		
SR01	Data Management including Cyber Security: Insufficient security or recovery plans for data held and IT systems used by the council resulting in a risk of: data breach, loss of service, malicious attacks or inability to deliver services due to loss of systems and data.	Chief Information Officer	5 - Very high	4 - Likely	20	Treat	Minimalist	Our Cyber Action Plan tackles the four major objectives defined by the Cyber Assessment Framework produced by the National Cyber Security Centre: A - Managing security risk B - Protecting against cyber attack C - Detecting cyber security events D - Minimising the impact of incidents The plan includes various milestones through to June 2024 which progressively tackle these objectives and decrease risk	Quarterly	DTI Strategy Board	4 - High	3 - Possible	12	6	HR & Corporate Services
SR02	NPH Residential - Change in Regulations: Recent change in regulations to have more emphasis on WNC managing the deliverables of NPH. Reputational, financial, H&S and legal risks of non-compliance.	Director Communities & Opportunities	4 - High	3 - Possible	12	Treat	Minimalist	Completion of DHLUC registration of properties - mid sept 2023 - completed Incorporate building standards monitoring, as per new regulation in regular monitoring process at appropriate NPH forums . Work with NPH to ensure capital programme reflects the priorities outlined in the building condition surveys to achieve all minimum standards.	Monthly	WNC /NPH - Place , People & Finance Forums.	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	9	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR03	Cost of living impact - increased demand for services: Lack of resources and systems in place locally to cope with additional demand on core services. Significant increase in self neglect being encountered.	Executive Director of People	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Treat	Minimalist	Household support fund distribution was prioritised to areas assessed of greatest need but is now expected to cease from March 2024. Migrations to implement will focus on communication and engagement with parents and schools with the main risk area being the end of support for children on free school meals during the holidays.	Monthly	People SLT	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	12	Adult Care, Wellbeing & Health Integration
SR04	Availability of affordable rental accommodation: Lack of supply of appropriate local affordable housing.	Director of Communities and Opportunities	4 - High	5 - Very likely	20	Treat	Open	1. Develop clear strategic plan re housing needs and development 2. Review of preventative actions to confirm effectiveness of existing measures and develop new . 3. review of temp accomm residents to ascertain move on plans and incentivise to move into PRS 4. Review of existing nightly paid accomm to determine best value (All from July 2023). Weekly performance stand up to measure real time effectiveness 5. New DPS proposal to Cabinet October 2023 for implementation 2024.	Monthly	WNC /NPH - Place , People & Finance Forums.	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	9	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR05	Health and Safety of WNC properties:	Executive Director of Corporate Services and Executive Director Place	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Treat	Open	1. New system being implemented for Property management - will provide wider assurance and better governance of all properties 2. New system being procured for H and S and linkages to property 3. H and S overarching strategy being developed 4. H and S audit recommendations being implemented 5. Working group across directorates to pick up key actions 6. Reminder comms given to all ADs.	Monthly	SLT/ELT	4 - High	3 - Possible	12	9	HR & Corporate Services
SR06	Inability to recruit and therefore deliver: Workforce skills and capacity – inability to attract or retain staff with the right skills, experience and knowledge. Succession planning and over reliance on key individuals, retention.	Assistant Director HR	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Treat	Open	Our People strategy delivery (Yr 2) is underway with a series of projects designed to ensure we are an employer of choice and can attract and retain staff with the right knowledge, skills and experience. Key activity pertinent to this risk includes: i) Implementation of new pay and grading structure and investment in annual pay awards to ensure we offer market rate salaries for the majority of roles with ability to flex via market factor supplements. ii) Employer brand implementation underway supported by fully staffed resourcing team, robust applicant tracking system and use of a variety of different media in order to increase our brand reach, target particular groups and head hunt as required. iii) Monitoring of exit interviews and glassdoor/indeed ratings and taking corrective action as necessary and contract in place to utilise agency workers as required. iv) Apprenticeship strategy in place, review of learning and development offer underway and formation of our internal mobility strategy planned for Aut 2023.	Quarterly	ELT and Transformation Board	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	8	HR & Corporate Services
SR07	Risk of significant change in policy direction: Outcome of the next general and local elections and the potential impact of political change on service delivery through government instability and changes in law/regulations/policy/funding.	Chief Executive	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Treat	Open	Continue to engage with all political groups at West Northamptonshire Council to maintain awareness of key issues and ensure members are fully briefed. Facilitate cross party working on priority initiatives e.g. Sustainability and anti poverty to ensure buy in from all groups. As an active member of the Local Government Association continue to engage with national lobbying initiatives by the local government community.	Monthly	ELT	3 - Medium	4 - Likely	12	12	Strategy (Leader)

No	Risk Description	Risk Owner	Impact	Likelihood	Inherent Risk Rating	Response	Risk Appetite	Mitigating Actions (These must be SMART actions with implementation dates) (Key Controls)	Monitoring frequency	Monitoring forum e.g. ELT, DMT etc.	Impact	Likelihood	Residual Risk Rating	Target Risk Rating	Cabinet Portfolio
SR08	Inter authority agreements: The lack of legally constituted arrangements and consensus for the inter-authority agreements means the Council's financial situation is uncertain and an inability to finalise accounts and balanced budgets	Director of Legal and Democratic Services	4 - High	5 - Very likely	20	Treat	Minimalist	46 Finance schedules should be in place to determine a clear basis for claiming against NNC. Un-executed agreements as to how the authorities charge each other have been agreed and are in place for 22/23. There is a need for agreements to be prepared and agreed for 23/24 onwards which are in the process of being developed. The agreements should include: 1. Finance Schedules (Schedule 3s) 2. Service Schedules for the services in the agreement (Schedule 2s) - so we can hold the North to account for delivery. 3. Exit plans for those services going through disaggregation so that disaggregation doesn't leave us with stranded costs etc.	Monthly	STORM, IAA Group	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	8	Finance
SR09	NCT - relationships management (WNC / NNC / NCT) Complexity of management relationship impacts on the services provided	Director of Children's Services	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Tolerate	Seeking	1 Continue to reset relationships, we have some challenging times ahead linked to finances, but we need to continue to work open and transparently with NCT /NNC. (contract sum agreed - review March24) 2 Consider remodelling current meetings to ensure the right conversations are taking place, and not duplicating. This may help reset relationships and linked to the new T&E Board this has taken place but will be reviewed in 6 months June 24 to ensure working effectively) 3. Review of the ICF is underway to reset the work this does on both Councils behalf (March 24)	Monthly	Operation Group / Strategic Group	2 - Low	3 - Possible	6	4	Children, Families & Education
SR10	NCT - Financial pressures: There is a risk that the finances are not controlled by the Trust leading to continued poor ratings, intervention and additional cost to the Council who remain statutorily responsible despite having no delivery responsibility	Director of Children's Services	5 - Very high	5 - Very likely	25	Treat	Open	1. Contract Sum Workshops completed - review again in March 24 2. Understand NCT's Forecasting Methodology - informal step in and work undertaken with the Trust has given more assurance - review again in March 24 3. Continue to hold NCT to account around spend and understanding spending control - regular reviews through contract meetings	Monthly	Contract Sum / Joint Officer Board	5 - Very high	4 - Likely	20	9	Children, Families & Education
SR11	Strategic communications and reputational risk: Historic issues relating to legacy councils are not managed or communicated in a timely and effective manner.	Assistant Chief Executive	4 - High	4 - Likely	16	Treat	Cautious	Communications and engagement business partners to continue to work closely with portfolio holders and DMTs to ensure any communications issues are proactively identified and managed to maintain the council's reputation.	Monthly	SLT/ELT	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	9	Strategy (Leader)
SR12	RAAC (Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete) - Concerns re the safety of School (any WNC Buildings) built between 1950 and 1990 and which are of a flat roof construction - this is a national issue which could result in school closures or partial closure and could result in children NOT having a school place and missing out on education (including children with EHCPs who have named educational within their plan). Significant impact on children's education if schools closed, safeguarding and reputational risk.	Director of Children's Services	5 - Very high	5 - Very likely	25	Treat	Open	All local authority schools have been inspected following government guidance with the result that only one LA maintained school has been found to have limited RAAC in part of the roof with minimal educational impact. A further Trust School NIA (not the responsibility of WNC) has also been found to have more significant issues and will require more assistance and support in regard to maintaining the educational support and possible relation of some of the children. Each school has now been appointed a DFE project manager and these will continue to work with the council to progressing the mitigations. Education to continue to maintain a dialogue with DFE in regard to support required. Education to maintain a dialogue with assets to ensure rapid deployment of required infrastructure of temporary buildings is provided. December 23 - no further school identified, those identified (2) have plans in place and children remain in education	Monthly	SLT/ELT	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	1	Children, Families & Education
SR13	Cladding Participation in a HE pilot project has identified 8 buildings across WNC, managed by NPH, that do not meet the new fire safety standards applied to external cladding. Therefore a new FRAEW needs to be undertaken and all process reviewed regarding the access into and out of the buildings.	Director for Communities and Opportunities	5 - Very high	3 - Possible	15	Treat	Minimalist	All buildings have access to open to air corridors - all cladding in those corridors is being removed between end of October to end of December. Whilst work is being undertaken the residents have been informed that in the case of fire a "evacuation" process will be in place. A 24 hr waking watch is in place for the buildings whilst the work is being undertaken. As the cladding in the corridors is removed and the risk substantially reduced, the waking watch ends and the building reverts to an "In case of fire stay put" policy. 162 vulnerable tenants have been identified to be communicated with separately for extra support in case of fire. NPH bus is on sight with dtff to reassura staff around new processes. All residents have received a letter	Monthly	ELT/ NPH Board	3 - Medium	3 - Possible	9	1	Housing, Culture & Leisure
SR14	Financial Sustainability Increasing demand for services, increasing cost of services and uncertainty relating to local government funding is a continuing risk to the Council which needs to be closely and carefully monitored	Executive Director - Finance	5 - Very high	4 - Likely	20	Treat	Open	Pro-active approach to budget management, monitoring and setting Regular updates on Finance to ELT each week Professionally qualified and competent finance staff Business partnering model aligned and working closely with services Cohesive senior management team that works well together and pulls in the same direction Linked into wider professional finance networks to receive early intelligence on emerging issues Professional advisors commissioned to provide specialist advice in areas such as tax planning and treasury management	Monthly	ELT/Cabinet	5 - Very high	2 - Unlikely	10	10	Finance

No	Risk Description	Risk Owner	Impact	Likelihood	Inherent Risk Rating	Response	Risk Appetite	Mitigating Actions (These must be SMART actions with implementation dates) (Key Controls)	Monitoring frequency	Monitoring forum e.g. ELT, DMT etc.	Impact	Likelihood	Residual Risk Rating	Target Risk Rating	Cabinet Portfolio
SR15	Disaggregation and other disputes There are several areas with a potential financial impact currently in dispute. The most significant one is agreeing how some of the closing balances of the County Council will be split between West and North Northants.	Executive Director - Finance	4 - High	5 - Very likely	20	Treat	Open	Discussions have taken place with North Northants but we cannot reach an acceptable agreement and we are therefore progressing formal dispute resolution mechanisms to seek to progress in as timely a fashion as possible.	Monthly	ELT	4 - High	3 - Possible	12	8	Finance

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