



Cabinet

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held at the The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 8 November 2022 at 6.00 pm

Agenda

Public Session	
1.	Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members
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.	Chair's Announcements To receive communications from the Chair.
4.	Minutes of the meeting of 23 September 2022 (Pages 5 - 12) To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 23 September 2022.
5.	Minutes of the meeting of 11 October 2022 (Pages 13 - 20) To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 11 October 2022.
6.	Reports from O&S: Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council (Pages 21 - 170)
7.	Any other items from Overview and Scrutiny (including call-ins)
8.	Rural England Prosperity Fund (Pages 171 - 176) To note the addendum to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to draw down the Rural England Prosperity Fund

9.	SEND Strategy Development (Pages 177 - 182) To agree new governance and approach to develop a new strategic approach to SEND improvements.
10.	Abington Park Facilities (Pages 183 - 188)
11.	Social Care Charging Reform Update - report to follow
12.	Director of Public Health Annual Report (Pages 189 - 244)
13.	Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report (Pages 245 - 272)
14.	Economising on mobile telephony (Pages 273 - 276)
15.	Urgent Business The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any items of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

Private Session

Exclusion of the Press and Public

16.	<p>Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>The following report(s) contain exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>*DELETE AS APPROPRIATE*</p> <p>Paragraph 1 – Information relating to any individual.</p> <p>Paragraph 2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p> <p>Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).</p> <p>Paragraph 4 – Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.</p>
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Paragraph 5 – Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

Paragraph 6 – Information which reveals that the authority proposes;

- a) To give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
- b) To make an order or direction under any enactment

Paragraph 7 – Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

Members are reminded that whilst the following item(s) have been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider each of them in private or in public. In making the decision, members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to resolve as follows:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph(s) XXXXX would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

17. Private minutes 11 October 2022 (Pages 277 - 278)

Catherine Whitehead
Proper Officer
31 October 2022

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

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

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

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

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

Evacuation Procedure

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Queries Regarding this Agenda

If you have any queries about this agenda please contact Sofia Neal-Gonzalez, Democratic Services via the following:

Tel:

Email: democraticservices@westnorthants.gov.uk

Or by writing to:

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



Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Friday 23 September 2022 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 Ian McCord
 Councillor Cecile Irving-Swift
 Councillor Emma Roberts
 Councillor Sally Beardsworth
 Councillor Sue Sharps
 Councillor Ken Pritchard
 Councillor Rosie Herring
 Councillor Danielle Stone
 Councillor Walter Tarasiewicz
 Councillor Bob Purser
 Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere

Officers: Anna Earnshaw (Chief Executive Officer)
 Cath Whitehead (Director of Legal & Democratic and Monitoring
 Officer)
 Martin Henry (S151 Officer)
 Stuart Lackenby (Executive Director – Adults, Communities and
 Wellbeing)
 Stuart Timmiss (Executive Director - Place and Economy)
 Paul Hanson (Democratic Services Manager)
 Ed Bostock (Democratic Services Officer)

60. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

61. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2022 would be brought to the next meeting.

62. **Chair's Announcements**

None.

63. **Urgent Business**

None.

64. **Corporate Plan Performance Report - 2022-23 Q1**

At the Chair's invitation, councillors made the following comments on the report which had been previously circulated.

- Fly-tipping was a continuous problem for the authority, particularly in urban areas.
- Co2E production should be measured.
- Concern was raised around no target for tree planting.
- The descriptor for "clean and green" stated "carbon neutral" rather than "net zero".
- Customer satisfaction was positive, however there should be information on the number of complaints in each quarter.
- There was no information relating to how many homeless people accepted temporary accommodation; this should be included.
- Regarding robust resource management, sickness seemed high, and Members questioned how this related to other local authorities.
- Members felt that the goalposts had been shifted by not reporting outcomes.
- There was no real terms forecast for transformation.
- An action plan was needed regarding Improved Life Chances figures.
- Regarding Customer Services, a breakdown of what help was applied for and what was given would be beneficial for Members to see.

The Leader presented the report and the recommendations to Members. He advised that the report would include measures where they would make a contribution. He noted that tree planting was seasonal and that numbers would increase in the coming months and further noted that regarding Co2E, "carbon neutral" was no longer the descriptor and would be changed in future reports. This would be reported on a quarterly basis.

Cabinet Members then highlighted the salient points of the report which related to their portfolios.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) **Noted the content of the appendix covering the first quarter of 2022-23.**

65. **Revenue Monitoring Quarter 1 - Financial Year 2022-23**

At the Chair's invitation Councillors made the following comments on the report which had been previously circulated.

- Members welcomed the openness and detail of the report.
- The overspend on Adult Social Care was a concern; zero-based budgeting was needed and also a wider rethink of how to deliver services and the budget.
- It was suggested that despite meetings having taken place, the Children's Trust seemed more separate from Members than ever before.
- Underspends in the education budget were impacting on outcomes.
- Costs relating to temporary accommodation were a concern; evidence of real solutions were needed.
- Members felt that staff vacancies were propping up the budget.
- A timescale on the Children's Trust delivering proposals on forecasted pressures would be useful to have.
- It was felt that there had been a failure to transform and "old NCC ways of working" had produced the same results.

Cabinet members then highlighted the salient points of the report that related to their Portfolios.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

a) Noted the forecast outturn position for 2022-23 and associated risks

b) Noted the deliverability assessment of West Northamptonshire Council savings requirement

for 2022-23 summarised in section 7 and detailed in Appendix B

c) 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.

66. **Quarter 1 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report 2022-23**

At the Chair's invitation Councillors made the following comments on the report which had been previously circulated.

- Concern was raised regarding the Fraser Road development; some Members understood that the Inspector had recommended that the land be kept as open space and further concern was raised around the sustainability of homes built by the Council.
- Members questioned whether Table 1 of the report should state St James Library rather than Wootton Library.
- Concern was raised regarding the strength of the Housing Revenue Accounts and the government's recent consultation on CPI.
- Members would like an update regarding Section 106 Legal Agreements.
- Members would like life outcomes reports to be targeted more rurally in the future.

Cabinet members then highlighted the salient points of the report that related to their Portfolios.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet:

- a) Noted the latest capital monitoring position for the General Fund and HRA.
- b) Noted the new capital schemes and changes to the Capital Programme since the report that was considered by Cabinet in July 2022.

67. **Treasury Management Update Quarter 1, 2022-23**

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

Councillors made the following comments.

- Northampton was one of the leading areas in the country for credit card debt.
- Members questioned how the maturity profile regarding loans compared to other local authorities.
- It was noted that highly skilled refugees were able to work but were not finding employment opportunities.

Councillor Longley made the following comments.

- The majority of loans were on a fixed rate for a fixed term; interest rates could increase with LOBO loans.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet noted the report and treasury activity for the first quarter of the 22-23 financial year.

68. **West Northamptonshire Housing Strategy (2022-2025)**

Councillor Purser declared an interest in the item as a board member of Northampton Partnership Homes.

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Adam Brown presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Councillors made the following comments.

- There was concern that the report did not see any risks in the Strategy.
- Members questioned whether there was sufficient capacity, and whether there was Member capacity to scrutinise the Strategy.
- Members questioned how the authority would deliver specialist housing.
- Members felt disappointed that few Overview and Scrutiny recommendations had been implemented in the Strategy.
- Houses were being sold under the Right to Buy scheme as fast as the authority could build them.
- The government should put a cap on private rent.
- The Strategy should go back to Overview and Scrutiny for regular monitoring.

Councillor Brown made the following comments.

- The Strategy was intended to cover the next 3 years; it was not a statutory duty but put the authority in a stronger position and would be used to inform service delivery decisions.

- Multiple workshops were held along with a public consultation.
- An action plan would be developed following the approval of the Strategy.
- There was an amendment to recommendation (c) which now read: “To approve the adoption of a robust Delivery Action Plan, aligned to the priorities set out in the housing strategy, which will be produced with the continued engagement of partners and subject to the approval of the Cabinet member for Housing, Culture & Leisure”
- He thanked officers who worked to produce the Strategy.
- Venture capital was currently the best and fastest way to deliver specialist housing.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet

- a) Noted the outcome of the consultation and how this has been reflected in the Housing Strategy.**
- b) Approved the West Northants Housing Strategy 2022-2025 for adoption.**
- c) Approved the adoption of a robust Delivery Action Plan, aligned to the priorities set out in the housing strategy, which will be produced with the continued engagement of partners and subject to the approval of the Cabinet member for Housing, Culture & Leisure**

69. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

At the Chair’s invitation Councillor Mike Hallam presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Hallam made the following comments.

- Following a recent visit from the IPCO several recommendations were made which were contained within the updated policy.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- a) Noted the revised RIPA Surveillance Policy set out at Appendix A**
- b) Agreed to designate the Council’s Audit and Governance Committee as the responsible statutory committee for overseeing the operation of RIPA surveillance policies.**
- c) Noted that an external training provider has been identified to provide in-depth training to nominated staff (i.e. Authorised Officers and employees of the Council who may use surveillance).**

70. WNC Multiply Funding Investment Plan

At the Chair’s invitation Councillor Daniel Lister presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Councillor Lister made the following comments.

- The investment plan was submitted on 30th June; 1st year funding was approved.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet:

- a) Noted an investment plan to secure the Multiply funding was submitted to the Department of Education on 30 June 2022.**
- b) Noted the expectation is that DfE will assess the WNC Multiply investment plan and the provisional allocation will be signed off and approved by September 2022.**

71. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Daniel Lister presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Councillors made the following comments.

- Members had concern regarding the authority's relationship with the voluntary sector; a robust voluntary sector was needed to help deliver projects.
- Some failures to secure funding were due to a lack of preparedness which Members felt was a concern.
- Members did not feel that the Midlands would benefit much from the government's levelling up agenda.
- Ward Members should be briefed on projects before the press (in relation to the Billing Road corridor).

Councillor Lister made the following comments.

- Regarding the investment plan, a submission was made in August 2022 and the funding was due to be received in October 2022.
- The Rural England Prosperity Fund had been set up and £4.1m was allocated to WNC for rural areas only.

It was further noted that the Billing Road cycleway scheme was defunct; work was underway to develop an alternative scheme.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet:

- a) Noted an investment plan to draw down the UKSPF was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 1 August 2022.**
- b) Noted the selected interventions which the funding will be allocated to including the expected outputs and outcomes.**
- c) Noted that the DLUHC will review the WNC UKSPF Investment Plan and year one funds are expected to be received in October, following sign off.**

72. Recommissioning of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Baker presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Councillors Stone and Sharps declared an interest in the item as residents they worked with were recipients of food vouchers.

Councillors made the following comments.

- It would be useful to see outcomes in the report to see the value of the programme.
- More resources should be put into schools since they knew their children best.
- The way that food vouchers were delivered was not as smooth as it could have been, especially in rural areas.

Councillor Baker made the following comments.

- The government set out how food vouchers were delivered.

RESOLVED: that the Cabinet:

a) Noted the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme to date and its benefits to children, young people, and families in West Northamptonshire.

b) Approved the procurement of a supplier to coordinate the delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme in West Northamptonshire in partnership with the Council from March 2023 in line with the Contract Procedure Rules.

c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services (DCS) to take any further decisions and actions required to conclude this procurement and award the contract.

73. Towns Fund: 24 Guildhall Road Phase 2 Works

At the Chair's invitation Councillor Daniel Lister presented the report which had been previously circulated.

Members made the following comments.

- The scheme would promote the arts within the town and would complement several other activities.
- Members felt that the timescale was very ambitious and questioned whether it was realistic.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

a) approved the business case for 24 Guildhall Road Northampton Project Phase 2.

b) delegated to the Assistant Director of Place Shaping authority to enter into a contract to appoint a principal contractor for the build.

c) delegated to the Assistant Director of Assets and Environment authority to enter into a lease in relation to the upper floors of the completed building. building targets.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____



Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held at The Forum, Towcester, NN12 6AF on Tuesday 11 October 2022 at 6.00 pm.

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

Apologies Councillor Mike Hallam
 for
 Absence:

Officers Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer)
 Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic (Monitoring
 Officer)
 Jane Carr, Director of Communities & Opportunities
 Stuart Lackenby, Executive Director - People
 Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services
 Stuart Timmiss, Executive Director - Place and Economy
 Paul Hanson, Democratic Services Manager
 Kathryn Holton, Committee Officer
 Jed Scoles, Political Assistant to the Labour Group

74. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members

Councillor Mike Hallam. Apologies were also received from Anna Earnshaw, Chief Executive.

75. Declarations of Interest

None

76. Minutes

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting on the 13th September 2022 were approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

77. Chair's Announcements

None

78. **Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny**

None

79. **Amendments to the Articles of Association**

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments:

- The report was welcomed and thanks were expressed to NPH and WNC for their work and commitment to investment in social housing.
- The role of tenants on the NPH Board was welcomed.
- Would the services of NPH be rolled out to the rest of West Northamptonshire?
- Was the name change indicative of a wider remit than West Northamptonshire?

Councillor Adam Brown presented the report and advised that the name change reflected the legal status since vesting day. Although the area covered was West Northamptonshire, the new name retained the identity of NPH. There were options for expanding beyond Northampton but WNC was also committed to working with its other partners.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Noted that from the 1st April 2021 the Council became a social housing provider for the entire West Northants area and the AoA were being amended to reflect this.
- b) Noted changes to the AoA which NPH will consider to enable them to operate within the wider West Northants area.
- c) Delegated to the Director of Communities and Opportunities the preparation of a new Management Agreement with NPH to incorporate the arrangements for NPH to operate in the wider area to be agreed at a future Cabinet meeting.

80. **Proposal to extend the age-range at Parklands Maintained Nursery School from 2-3 to 2-4 years of age via the incorporation of Parklands Playgroup**

Councillor Fiona Baker presented the report proposing to increase the age range of Parklands Nursery School from 31 October 2022 due to the imminent closure of Parklands Playgroup. No responses had been received from the WNC consultation but 22 received from Parklands' own consultation had been in favour of the change.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Approved the proposal to lower the admission age range at Parklands MNS from 3 years to 2 years to enable the Nursery School to offer provision to 2- year-old children from 31 October 2022.

81. **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2021/22**

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments:

- A large number of complaints related to adult and children's services.
- The Education, Health and Care Plan process was lengthy – could this be shortened?
- It was concerning that over half of complaints had not been resolved.
- The report did not address capacity.
- Scrutiny was important – could this be added as a recommendation?
- There should be more transparency in tracking of complaints at the early stages – could this be a KPI?
- It was important to monitor staff and ensure they were supported.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn presented the report and noted that 13% of cases were remedied before reaching the ombudsman. Scrutiny involvement would be welcomed and KPIs could be considered. Regular reporting was needed now that a first year benchmark had been established.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Noted the proposed improvements to the process for administering and responding to Ombudsman enquiries in paragraph 2.7.
- b) Noted the proposed practice improvements set out at paragraph 2.8. 4.

82. **Household Support Fund 3 Proposal: Distribution of Funds and Recipients for HSF3**

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments:

- It was disappointing that due to timing the Anti-Poverty Oversight Group were not able to see the report beforehand.
- What were the staffing costs – and was this existing staff, redeployment or recruitment?
- A long term funding review was needed, together with campaigning the government for an uplift.
- Money in the Hardship Fund and that set aside for Covid needed to be used. It was difficult to get a list of which Councillors had not used funds.
- The work of the debt advice team needed to be expanded beyond South Northants.
- Concern was expressed that the time and effort required for voluntary organisations to distribute funds detracted from their main role.

Councillor Matt Golby presented the report and advised £2.6m would be distributed between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023 focussed on residents in work and on a low wage. He expressed thanks to voluntary groups for their support. There were three issues to be dealt with – poverty now, prevention of poverty and influencing government. The spending would be reviewed at 31 January 2023.

It was advised that the administration costs of the scheme were below the threshold at £130k. There would be a temporary team with additional staff to backfill.

Councillor David Smith advised that the Covid Support Fund ran until the end of the financial year and there would be assistance for councillors who had not yet spent the money.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Noted that the Household Support Fund (3) investment was to be managed locally.
- b) Approved the Recommended Scope and Diversity of Distribution as set out in section 4 of the report.
- c) Approved the control and oversight approach to be undertaken through a central operational team.
- d) Authorised any funds that had not been assigned or committed to by 31st January 2023 according to the distribution methodology set out in section 4, to be redistributed in line with the wider Department for Work and Pensions Guidelines (attached to the report as Appendix A).
- e) Agreed that Table 1 at paragraph 5.6 of the report be amended to clarify that the amount available per foodbank is “up to £20k per food bank as assessed on a case-by-case basis”

83. **New Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for the former Daventry District and former South Northants administrative areas of West Northamptonshire Council**

At the Chair’s invitation councillors made the following comments:

- The enforcement issue had not been addressed in the report.
- Balance was needed – it was important not to stigmatise dog owners.

Councillor David Smith presented the report and noted that the consultation had received a large number of responses. Targeted enforcement and education could be carried out. There would be further consultation around dog fouling on marked sports pitches. Councillor Adam Brown advised that he had lobbied extensively for this.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Approved the introduction of a new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) across the former Daventry and South Northants District administrative areas of WNC with all nine proposed measures set out at paragraph 2.4 above to be included, to remain in force for a period of three years until September 2025.
- b) Resolved that the Draft PSPO at Appendix A shall be made by the Council as a result.
- c) Delegate the power to formally make the PSPO and to comply with the remaining statutory requirements to bring it into force (as set out in the legal implications at paragraph 7.2 below) to the Executive Director for Place and Economy.
- d) Agree to the gathering of further evidence take place between October and December 2022 and consultation to commence in January 2023 to determine if additional measures may be required regarding dog fouling on sports pitches. The consultation to be agreed with the Portfolio Holder prior to start.

84. Procurement of Elections Stationery and Printing Services

Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report on behalf of Councillor Mike Hallam and advised that the current contract would come to an end in April 2023. It was important that the supplier was able to meet the specific requirements for printing election materials.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Agreed that the Council proceeds with the procurement of a maximum five-year year contract for the supply of elections stationery and printing services; and
- b) Delegated to the Director for Legal and Democratic Services authority to conduct the procurement in accordance with paragraph 6 of this report and award to the successful bidder

85. Adoption and community use of assets

At the Chair's invitation councillors made the following comments:

- Had parishes been engaged in the consultation?
- How could relationships with parish and town councils be strengthened?

Councillor Malcolm Longley presented the report and advised that further consultation would be carried out, including with parishes.

Councillor Adam Brown stated that it was vital that WNC maintained oversight of properties. Councillor David Smith advised that NCALC would be undertaking an asset mapping project.

Councillor Adam Brown proposed an amendment to paragraph 3.2 on page 559 to state that the list would be agreed in consultation with Cabinet and thereafter published on the Council's website. He explained this was proposed in order to retain member oversight and input on assets being listed as available. This proposal was agreed.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Authorised consultation on the draft Adoption of Assets Policy.
- b) Adopted on an interim basis the draft Adoption of Assets Policy, pending the results of the consultation.
- c) Adopts the draft Policy on Voluntary, Community, Social Enterprise, and Faith Group use of Council Property.
- d) That paragraph 3.2 on page 559 to be amended to read "The lists will be agreed in consultation with Cabinet and thereafter..."

86. Office Optimisation Stage 1 building adaptations budget and disposals

To supplement the published report and in order to aid clarity, the Chair advised that an information sheet had been circulated summarising the savings which would result from office optimisation.

Councillor Longley explained that the office optimisation programme was seeking productivity gain by better utilisation of assets. The estimated cost of upgrading the Abbey centre would be £1m. All current voluntary sector partners would be retained. £306k was the saving that would be made by exiting the Lodge Road premises. There were two options – to lease or sell and the estimated annual savings from each option were outlined - £507,909 for lease and £343,749 (plus £4.5m capital receipt) for sale.

Plans for the Leisure Centre were a work in progress and would only proceed if financially viable.

The office optimisation programme would result in a substantial productivity gain – including that from the Planning team’s move to Towcester.

At the Chair’s invitation, councillors made the following comments:

- Local residents were unhappy about the closure of Lodge Road – would it be possible to retain the office and move other organisations in to the surplus space?
- Had a building survey been carried out on the Abbey and Leisure Centre?
- Voluntary organisations felt they had not been consulted about the plans.
- The impact of the closure on staff needed to be considered.
- The briefing note should be made available on the WNC website.
- Work on the Abbey building should be undertaken in line with the net zero pledge.
- Outreach sessions should be increased so that residents can access support and services.
- The rationale of one council culture was accepted, but this should be balanced across West Northamptonshire.

It was explained that the first phase of office optimisation had looked at the model of support and the model of using hubs to deliver local services was being used. There was too much office space for modern ways of working. Consultation with voluntary organisations had taken place and each one had been spoken to. Consultation with staff had also been undertaken.

Councillor Adam Brown noted that the plans represented a great step forward in productivity. The public wanted the council to work in their interests with the best use of buildings and retention of public facing services. He proposed an amendment to the recommendation (recommendation d) below) which was agreed by Cabinet.

Councillor Rebecca Breese advised that a key part of transformation was to improve resilience and productivity. Staff would be supported, including financially.

RESOLVED: that Cabinet;

- a) Agreed to the proposed new capital budget of £2 million to carry out Stage 1 of the Office Optimisation project and recommended to Council that the Capital budget is amended to reflect the proposed change.
- b) Authorised the Assistant Director Assets & Environment to procure and award the contracts to deliver the Stage 1 works.
- c) Authorised the Assistant Director Assets & Environment in consultation with the Executive Director Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance to dispose of the Lodge Road offices, in whole or part, by leasehold or freehold, for the best consideration reasonably obtainable.
- d) Agreed that the Lodge Road offices be vacated by 31st March 2023 in order that the revenue savings and/or capital gains be achieved as quickly as practicable thereafter.

However, it is also possible that the building might deliver greater benefits from other Council uses. These will also be tested prior to any decision to dispose.

87. **Urgent Business**

None

88. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph(s) 3 and 4 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

89. **Options and Business Case relating to the future delivery of legal services - EXEMPT**

Minutes exempt from publication.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

8 NOVEMBER 2022

CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE: Councillor Phil Larratt

Report Title	Report of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Tree Policy and Strategy
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List of Appendices

Appendix A - Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the findings and recommendations of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Tree Policy and Strategy.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee established the Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group (the Task and Finish Group) with the purpose of making informed and evidenced based recommendations to Cabinet to achieve a harmonised current Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

- 2.2 The Task and Finish Group undertook a comprehensive Scrutiny review over a period of ten months and presented its final report to Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was approved at its meeting on 18 October 2022.
- 2.3 Both written and spoken evidence was received from expert advisors and desktop research was undertaken. Representatives of the Task and Finish Group undertook site visits to various places within West Northamptonshire. All of which produced a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this Scrutiny review.
- 2.4 Following the collation of a wealth of evidence, the Task and Finish Group drew various conclusions and recommendations that are detailed within the report. **(Appendix A)**

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:
- 3.1.1 A Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northants Council is prepared no later than March 2023.
- 3.1.2 A review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock to a suitable standard considered when reviewing the budget.
- 3.1.3 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be concise but clear. The use of diagrams and illustrations to aid understanding was encouraged.
- 3.1.4 The Tree Policy and Strategy should include:
- The purpose of the Policy - to empower officers and encourage collaboration and communication between all relevant departments to apply the Policy and setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
 - Trees planted are appropriate to their location
 - A requirement for replacement of any non-woodland trees in situ or in close proximity that unavoidably have to be removed
 - A plan stating the approach to tree and woodland preservation orders
 - Details that encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical
 - Prioritisation of planned as opposed to reactive works
 - Direction and guidance on how to protect trees
 - A canopy cover target
 - Details of relevant statutory obligations.

- Frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.
- A section regarding the planting and re-planting of trees, together with the species of trees that should be planted. This would include an Urban Tree List
- Identification of ancient woods
- An audit of Council land for potential woodland

3.1.5 The Tree Policy & Strategy should address:

- Promotion of the Policy and community grants available
- Trees on both private and public land
- Woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside
- How it aligns with the Council's wider strategy and targets, to give clear focus and direction
- Eliminates ambiguity and gives clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.
- How to hold contractors to account.
- Specify how issues will be resolved
- Differentiate between the terms – urban, rural, open areas and built-up areas.
- Reflect the needs of residents
- Trees which are lost to be replanted immediately where it is safe and appropriate to do so and where it is not appropriate, suitable local alternatives are found

3.1.5 Working with other organisations and communities is incorporated in the Tree Policy and Strategy.

3.1.6 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places and

- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, food provision, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.
- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making. **Page 23**

- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring, and future updating.
- 3.1.7 Valuable urban trees are replaced in situ when taken out. The right tree for the right place is important.
 - 3.1.8 The Tree Policy and Strategy must be applied consistently.
 - 3.1.9 The Council should seek to allocate sufficient funding to achieve the 'gold' service level detailed above. Indicatively this would cost an additional £1.6m pa across West Northamptonshire.
 - 3.1.10 Pollarding is used as a solution to manage trees in specific areas only when absolutely necessary.
 - 3.1.11 Where bulk planting takes place, a full maintenance, protection, and viability programme is implemented, and environmental measures are followed.
 - 3.1.12 The CAVAT tool is introduced, publicised, and applied.
 - 3.1.13 A canopy project is undertaken for the Council at an early stage as this will be able to give accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show what potential there is for planting.
 - 3.1.14 There is collaborative working across all services in respect of trees and tree maintenance.
 - 3.1.15 In development proposals, mature trees in situ are by default considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.
 - 3.1.16 When planning applications are received the assumption should be that important trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), rather than relying on planning conditions alone.
 - 3.1.17 WNC offers developers a paid-for service to plant and water trees on their sites.
 - 3.1.18 A variety of template letters that supports parish councils when dealing with issues of tree planting, removal and maintenance are devised.
 - 3.1.19 Consideration is given to the implementation of Community Orchards, food jungles and parklets with a clear plan and marketing strategy to take this forward.
 - 3.1.20 The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group supports the recruitment of a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer. The salary should be investigated if it continues to prove difficult to recruit to this post.
 - 3.1.21 A consultant is employed to help build the policy for the Council whilst ongoing recruitment takes place for the post of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

- 3.1.22 Relevant contracts are examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost is satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy & Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost.
- 3.1.23 A separate landscaping contract that would give better cost and focus on delivering the service is implemented as the existing arrangements come to an end, or earlier if the opportunity arises.
- 3.1.24 Parishes/Community projects are encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.2.1 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Task and Finish Group with the purpose of making recommendations to Cabinet to achieve a harmonised current Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 3.2.2 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 18 October 2022 approved the report of the Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group (Task and Finish Group) for submission to Cabinet for its consideration at its meeting on 8 November 2022.

4 Report Background

4.1 The objective of this in-depth Scrutiny Review was to achieve a harmonised current Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents, in particular, climate change and improving air quality
- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals

- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.
- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways
- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.
- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4.2 The required outcome of the Scrutiny Review was to make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy.

4.3 Following approval of its work programme for 2021/2022, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 31 August 2021 commissioned the Task and Finish Group to undertake the review – Tree Policy and Strategy. An in-depth review commenced in October 2021 and concluded in July 2022. A Task and Finish Group was therefore established comprising seven Councillors.

4.4 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Green and Clean.

4.5 A significant amount of evidence was received, which is detailed within the report. After gathering evidence, the Task and Finish Group established its key findings and conclusions:

Public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

4.6 There is a need for a holistic policy and strategy should be formulated to derive a way forward for West Northamptonshire and felt there was a shift in people's perceptions of tree maintenance and towards the importance of the planting of trees. There is real understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by trees and the benefits to climate. Schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat which would be beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife.

4.7 Should Parishes and Community projects be forthcoming they should be encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.8 The opinions of residents often differed depending on the proximity of the residents to the tree, as one resident may live next to a tree causing issues whereas another would admire the tree and not want it to be removed. Ideally the policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved. From the consultation process, the consensus was that residents were for the planting of trees but emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be better at maintaining and coordinating the planting of trees. The survey results showed a very strong view among respondents in favor of

retaining street trees in almost all circumstances, even where they were causing problems of some form. The feedback from the consultation highlighted that more people in Northampton were seeing the green and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. Evidence gathered supported the idea of creating a communal green space and encouraging communities to become part of a community orchard.

4.9 It should be recognised that the Tree Policy and Strategy is a journey and Cabinet should look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy. The need for the Council to continue to work with organisations and the community going forward was recognised. It was welcomed that Moulton College was interested in working with the Council on projects to help educate students and provide skills for younger generations.

Ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works of trees

4.10 The Tree Policy and Strategy should contain general principles for Council trees and prescribe circumstances where trees would not be cut down unless they cause serious issues to the health and wellbeing of a resident. From the survey results, the majority of respondents wanted trees to remain or be replanted. The Task and Finish Group agreed that people wanted trees to be planted, specific trees to be in the right place and the Group supported the list of recommended trees provided by Save our Street Trees. The criteria for the removal and work surrounding tree maintenance should be robust, clear, and transparent and that there needed to be a focus on replacing trees that had been removed, either in situ or with a plan to plant elsewhere before the tree is removed.

Review the contracts for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

4.11 The new Tree Policy and Strategy should have more stringent restrictions for developers and who was responsible for checking trees and landscaping. It was acknowledged that this could only be the case if the land was adopted as highway. If so, a commuted sum would be provided by the developer and this was used to fund future maintenance. If not, the case would be managed by planning enforcement. WNC could also offer developers a service to plant and water the trees for a fee so land gets adopted quicker. Some developers could like this option and so do some local authorities as they receive commuted sums quicker. This could make the implementation of planning conditions more effective.

4.12 The Council should aspire, whether through income or grants, or both, to a high standard of provision of maintenance. It noted the likely costs of the desired level of service, described as gold' below:

Service Level	Description	Annual Cost, £k
Bronze (current)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactive works which fall into P1 and P2 classification only Contract wide epicormic growth (sign a tree is functioning properly) program. 	450
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above, plus: 	1,200

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further planned survey works • Deal with all P1, P2, P3 and some P4 classification enquiries. • An increase in the management, supervision, surveyors, and operational teams. • This level of service would over a period of time provide a good planned and reactive service for the Council and its residents 	(increase of 750)
Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above, plus: • Large amount of the surveyed work to be planned in line with the surveyors' recommendations. • Managing the stock as assets to the Council's portfolio. • 'Nice to have' items that most residents expect Council to be able to provide. • Provide data and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tree stock and health ○ Biodiversity benefits 	1,700 (increase of 1,250)

Key
P1 Priority 1
P2 Priority 2
P3 Priority 3
P4 Priority 4

These costs are for Northampton. Given the intensity of work required in Northampton compared to other parts of West Northamptonshire, it would probably be reasonable to add 25% to the increase in costs above the baseline to achieve a similar level of service across the area. This would mean the additional cost to achieve Silver or Gold levels of service would be:

- Silver: £938k
- Gold: £1,563k

4.13 The Policy needs to look at “the how” and it should be ensured that the Council’s Tree Policy and Strategy would eliminate ambiguity and give clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance. The Council’s Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, and could cause detrimental effect to a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

4.14 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to implement a Tree Policy and Strategy and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council’s Tree policy to align with the Council’s wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. It would be useful for the Policy to comprise frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

Examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan, other Planning Policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

- 4.15 The Tree Policy should be accessible to all stakeholders. The urban woodland areas should be within a short walking distance of all residents. Information should be provided to encourage residents to forage.
- 4.16 Evidence gathered highlighted the benefit of incorporating the emergency tree plan into the Tree Policy and Strategy, rather than having two separate policies. The Council should be more proactive in using all legislation and planning policy tools available to the Council to reach appropriate agreement with developers and followed up with appropriate enforcement.
- 4.17 Pollarding is sometimes useful but needs to be started when the tree was young, and that topping was not a good method. Pollarding is a short-term solution but in the longer-term the Council could seek to plant trees that would not need pollarding and should set out pruning expectations in their policy. Historically, trees were planted that needed pollarding as the Victorians found that no other trees would grow with the amount of pollution that existed. This was no longer the case. A canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced. The closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact on the Council's organisational goals

- 4.18 Evidence gathered highlighted that it is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is currently available is prioritised against routine and reactive works.

Consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- 4.19 There is a need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. It was further recognised that there is a need for a review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock considered when reviewing the budget. Current contracts should be reviewed in the future to see if the Council were obligated to use the contract and align the predecessor councils' contracts under a harmonised West Northamptonshire Council contract in the future and the potential for this to be separate

wider waste contract. A detailed policy is needed to ensure there are no grey areas when dealing with tree maintenance to support officers. The Task and Finish Group compared Birmingham and Bristol Councils' policy documents and Epping Council's which was photographic. A summarised policy would be useful but one that was clear and concise.

4.20 Council management contracts should be examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost was satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy and Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost and replanted. Evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need for the Council to hold contractors to account, for example with Delapré park maintenance work had not been done. The Council needs to review the work undertaken by contractors. The current contract deems that the contractors will deal with problematic trees and the provision for this took precedent over the general maintenance of trees and the service was driven by the cost.

Examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can enforce infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

4.21 The Task and Finish Group emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments. The Council could save on cost by making use of larger planning developments and influencing the planting and species of trees at the earlier stages as the developer usually leads on landscape planning and would select the cheapest species to plant and may not maintain the trees properly. If the Council had a tree policy and strategy that could identify the species required and other relevant information, it could help the Council meet its environmental targets and other performance targets. The Council can not specify numbers but the role and purpose of trees, as the national model design code stated that new streets should be lined with trees. In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable. The right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4.22 The impacts of trees varied in different places, such that, for example, a tree in a rural setting would have different impacts to one planted on an urban street close to houses. However, there were places in towns and villages where the impacts of a tree were more like those in a rural area. It was recognised that tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking. With the community, the Council needs to manage expectations particularly with residents and Parish Councils, that the tree policy would be an ongoing process and may take some time for longstanding issues to be resolved.

4.23 There is increasing interest in the environmental and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. It felt that it would be desirable for the Council to work more with community groups, such as on projects developing community orchards. It would be beneficial for the project team currently working on the Queen's Green Canopy project to take this forward once their current project finishes and that the Sustainability Group is approached for consideration and assistance.

with community projects. Any Parishes/Community projects planted for the Jubilee should be encouraged to register the trees for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

- 4.24 Working with other organisations and communities should be incorporated in the tree policy and strategy. The documentation submitted by the resident highlighted the need for trees to be planted in the right way and with the right tree in place and emphasised the need for trees to be maintained properly. A template letter for Parish Councils would be useful to help with enforcement matters.

Explore how the CAVAT tool can be implemented

- 4.25 Evidence gathered suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees. By CAVAT introducing and enforcement it would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees.

Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

- 4.26 The Task and Finish Group supports the role of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer but was concerned that the first round of recruitment had not ended with someone in post. It was felt the salary and the grading process for this post should be investigated as it has proved difficult to recruit to this post. The Council should be proactive in looking for opportunities to create areas such as urban food jungles and parklets which can support residents and are beneficial to wildlife. The Council should rigorously enforce planning requirements related to the planting and maintenance of trees as part of development, including replacement and care of trees which fail within five years of planting.

Site visits

- 4.27 The site visits had been very informative and valuable, as they gave the Task and Group an insight into the challenges and positives of maintaining trees across West Northamptonshire. The impact on residents' homes was seen, and how tree placement affected the number of light homes received and where lack of maintenance had negatively impacted residents and for they helped the Task and Finish Group to understand the separate rural and urban needs and the need for integrated management, for example there were examples of street sweepers not cleaning leaves away properly.

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny and provide a response to the Committee to the recommendations.

6 Implications (including financial implications)

Resources and Financial

6.1 The recommendations of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee may have manpower and financial implications in relation to the production of a Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council.

Legal

6.2 The role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to make recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet will need to reach decisions based on the usual public decision-making criteria including that members consider relevant considerations and no irrelevant considerations. The views of a relevant Scrutiny Committee supported by evidence can be decided upon 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.

Risk

6.3 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee had regard to any risks and mitigation factors associated with a Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northamptonshire Council and have made recommendations accordingly.

Climate Impact

6.4 These proposals have direct positive impact on the climate and sustainability as trees provide climate benefits and contribute to the landscape of West Northamptonshire.

Consultation

6.5 The Task and Finish Group received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.9 of the report of the Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Group.

Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

6.6 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and approved the report of the Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 19 October 2022.

Community Impact

6.7 The Tree Policy and Strategy will be for the whole of West Northamptonshire with a positive impact on communities.

7 Background Papers

Place Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021 -2022

Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group Agendas and minutes – October 2021 – July 2022

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**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

West Northamptonshire Council

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tree Policy and Strategy Scrutiny Review

October

2022

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APPENDICES

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Appendix D	Results of the Survey – Management of Trees

Chair's Foreword

The objective of this in-depth Scrutiny Review was to achieve a harmonised current Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents, in particular, climate change and improving air quality
- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals
- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.
- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways
- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.
- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

The required outcomes being to make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

The Task and Finish Group was made up from members of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Myself (Chair); Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford; together with three further non-Executives Councillors Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts

and Brian Sargeant. 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 meetings of this Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group received both written and spoken evidence from these expert advisors and Desktop research was undertaken by the Deputy Democratic Services Manager. Representatives of the Task and Finish Group undertook site visits to various places within West Northamptonshire. All of which produced a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this important Scrutiny review.

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 between October 2021 and July 2022.

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



Councillor Pinder Chauhan

Chair, Task and Finish Group – Tree Policy and Strategy

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

- Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford, Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant who sat with me on this Review
- Councillor Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, Fiona Unett, Assistant Director – Highways and Waste, Peter Hackett, Environment, Countryside & Parks Manager, Chris Carvell, Environmental Services Contract Manager, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) for providing a collective response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group, along with Benjamin Lloyd, Veolia and Michael Mitchell, Idverde.
- Blisworth Parish Council, Hollowell and Teeton Parish Council, Marie Weller Primary School, Towcester, Rectory Farm Primary School, Great Houghton Parish Council, Queen Eleanor Primary Academy, Daventry Town Council, Eastonneston Parish Council, West Hunsbury Parish Council, Spratton Parish Council, Deanshanger Parish Council and Weston and Weedon Parish, Dodford Parish Council, Brixworth Parish Council, Holcot Parish Council, Kingsthorpe Parish Council, National Association of Local Councils (NALC), Northampton Town Council – Environmental Services Committee, who provided a written response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group and/or attending a meeting to provide further details
- Save our Trees, the Woodland Trust, Northampton Partnership Homes, an independent Chartered Arboriculturist and Garden Organic who provided a written response to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group and/or attending a meeting to provide further details
- Mr Grimes a local resident for attending a meeting of the Task and Finish Group and providing information to inform the review
- Members of the public and various groups and organisations who took the time to complete the management of trees survey that the Task and Finish Group had put together

Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents, in particular, climate change and improving air quality
- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals
- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.
- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways
- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.
- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

2.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2021/2022, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 31 August 2021 commissioned the Task and Finish Group to undertake the review – Tree Policy and

Strategy. An in-depth review commenced in October 2021 and concluded in July 2022.

- 2.2 A Task and Finish Group was therefore established comprising Councillor Chauhan (Chair); and Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler, Jo Gilford, Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant.

Corporate Priorities

- 2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Green and Clean.
- 2.4 A significant amount of evidence was received by the Task and Finish Group which is detailed within the report.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

After gathering evidence, the Task and Finish Group established that:

Public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

- 4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group highlighted that there is a need for a holistic policy and strategy should be formulated to derive a way forward for West Northamptonshire.
- 4.1.2 The Task and Finish Group felt there was a shift in people's perceptions of tree maintenance and towards the importance of the planting of trees. The Group heard that there was real understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by trees and the benefits to climate.
- 4.1.3 From the evidence received, the Task and Finish Group felt that schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat which would be beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife.
- 4.1.4 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should Parishes and Community projects be forthcoming they should be encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.
- 4.1.5 The opinions of residents often differed depending on the proximity of the residents to the tree, as one resident may live next to a tree causing issues whereas another would admire the tree and not want it to be removed. Ideally the policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.

- 4.1.6 From the consultation process, the consensus was that residents were for the planting of trees but emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be better at maintaining and coordinating the planting of trees.
- 4.1.7 The survey results showed a very strong view among respondents in favour of retaining street trees in almost all circumstances, even where they were causing problems of some form.
- 4.1.8 The feedback from the consultation highlighted that more people in Northampton were seeing the green and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces.
- 4.1.9 Evidence gathered supported the idea of creating a communal green space and encouraging communities to become part of a community orchard.
- 4.1.10 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that it should be recognised that the tree policy and strategy is a journey and Cabinet should look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.
- 4.1.11 The need for the Council to continue to work with organisations and the community going forward was recognised. It was welcomed that Moulton College was interested in working with the Council on projects to help educate students and provide skills for younger generations.

Ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works of trees

- 4.1.12 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Tree Policy and Strategy should contain general principles for Council trees and prescribe circumstances where trees would not be cut down unless they cause serious issues to the health and wellbeing of a resident.
- 4.1.13 From the survey results, the majority of respondents wanted trees to remain or be replanted.
- 4.1.14 The Task and Finish Group agreed that people wanted trees to be planted, specific trees to be in the right place and the Group supported the list of recommended trees provided by Save our Street Trees.
- 4.1.15 The Task and Finish Group felt that the criteria for the removal and work surrounding tree maintenance should be robust, clear, and transparent.
- 4.1.16 The Task and Finish Group felt that there needed to be a focus on replacing trees that had been removed, either in situ or with a plan to plant elsewhere before the tree is removed.

Review the contracts for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

4.1.17 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the new Tree Policy and Strategy should have more stringent restrictions for developers and who was responsible for checking trees and landscaping. It was acknowledged that this could only be the case if the land was adopted as highway. If so, a commuted sum would be provided by the developer and this was used to fund future maintenance. If not, the case would be managed by planning enforcement. WNC could also offer developers a service to plant and water the trees for a fee so land gets adopted quicker. It was felt that some developers would like this option and so do some local authorities as they receive commuted sums quicker. This could make the implementation of planning conditions more effective.

4.1.18 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should aspire, whether through income or grants, or both, to a high standard of provision of maintenance. It noted the likely costs of the desired level of service, described as gold' below:

Service Level	Description	Annual Cost, £k
Bronze (current)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reactive works which fall into P1 and P2 classification only ● Contract wide epicormic growth (sign a tree is functioning properly) program. 	450
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As above, plus: ● Further planned survey works ● Deal with all P1, P2, P3 and some P4 classification enquiries. ● An increase in the management, supervision, surveyors, and operational teams. ● This level of service would over a period of time provide a good planned and reactive service for the Council and its residents 	1,200 (increase of 750)
Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As above, plus: ● Large amount of the surveyed work to be planned in line with the surveyors' recommendations. ● Managing the stock as assets to the Council's portfolio. ● 'Nice to have' items that most residents expect Council to be able to provide. ● Provide data and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tree stock and health ○ Biodiversity benefits 	1,700 (increase of 1,250)

Key	
P1	Priority 1
P2	Priority 2
P3	Priority 3
P4	Priority 4

These costs are for Northampton. Given the intensity of work required in Northampton compared to other parts of West Northamptonshire, it would probably be reasonable to add 25% to the increase in costs above the baseline to achieve a similar level of service across the area. This would mean the additional cost to achieve Silver or Gold levels of service would be:

- Silver: £938k
- Gold: £1,563k

4.1.19 Members agreed that the Policy needed to look at “the how” and it should be ensured that the Council’s Tree Policy and Strategy would eliminate ambiguity and give clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

4.1.20 The Council’s Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, and could cause detrimental effect to a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

4.1.21 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to implement a Tree Policy and Strategy and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council’s Tree policy to align with the Council’s wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. It would be useful for the Policy to comprise frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

Examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan, other Planning Policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

4.1.22 It was acknowledged that the Tree Policy should be accessible to all stakeholders.

4.1.23 The Task and Finish Group felt that the urban woodland areas should be within a short walking distance of all residents.

4.1.24 It was highlighted that information should be provided to encourage residents to forage.

4.1.25 Evidence gathered highlighted the benefit of incorporating the emergency tree plan into the Tree Policy and Strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

- 4.1.26 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should be more proactive in using all legislation and planning policy tools available to the Council to reach appropriate agreement with developers. It was further agreed that this should be followed up with appropriate enforcement.
- 4.1.27 The Task and Finish Group concluded that pollarding was sometimes useful but needed to be started when the tree was young, and that topping was not a good method. It was explained that pollarding was a short-term solution but in the longer-term the council could seek to plant trees that would not need pollarding and should set out pruning expectations in their policy. Historically, trees were planted that needed pollarding as the Victorians found that no other trees would grow with the amount of pollution that existed. This was no longer the case.
- 4.1.28 The Task and Finish Group concluded that a canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced.
- 4.1.29 Evidence gathered highlighted that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact on the Council's organisational goals

- 4.1.30 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to have a good working Tree Policy and Strategy in place and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's policies to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. The Task and Finish Group felt that frequently asked questions/topics should be incorporated into the Policy to aid officers with their work in the area.
- 4.1.31 Evidence gathered highlighted that it is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is currently available is prioritised against routine and reactive works.

Consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- 4.1.32 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. It was further recognised that there is a need for a review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock considered when reviewing the budget.
- 4.1.33 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the current contracts should be reviewed in the future to see if the Council were obligated to use the contract and align the predecessor councils' contracts under a harmonised West Northamptonshire Council contract in the future and the potential for this to be separate from the wider waste contract.
- 4.1.34 The Task and Finish Group discussed the length of the policies in comparison and felt that a detailed policy was needed to ensure there were no grey areas when dealing with tree maintenance to support officers. Members compared the Birmingham and Bristol Councils' policy documents and suggested Epping Council as photographic. It was felt that a summarised policy would be useful but one that was clear and concise.
- 4.1.35 Council management contracts should be examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost was satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy and Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost and replanted. Evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need for the Council to hold contractors to account, for example with Delapré park maintenance work had not been done. The Council needs to review the work undertaken by contractors. The current contract deems that the contractors will deal with problematic trees and the provision for this took precedent over the general maintenance of trees and the service was driven by the cost.

Examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can enforce infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

- 4.1.36 The Task and Finish Group emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.
- 4.1.37 Evidence gathering showed that the Council could save on cost by making use of larger planning developments and influencing the planting and species of trees at the earlier stages as the developer usually leads on landscape planning and would select the cheapest species to plant and may not maintain the trees

properly. If the Council had a tree policy and strategy that could identify the species required and other relevant information, it could help the Council meet its environmental targets and other performance targets.

4.1.38 It was realised, however, that the Council could not specify numbers but the role and purpose of trees, as the national model design code stated that new streets should be lined with trees.

4.1.39 In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.

4.1.40 Evidence gathered highlighted that the right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4.1.41 The impacts of trees varied in different places, such that, for example, a tree in a rural setting would have different impacts to one planted on an urban street close to houses. However, there were places in towns and villages where the impacts of a tree were more like those in a rural area.

4.1.42 It was recognised that tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking.

4.1.43 With the community the Council needs to manage expectations particularly with residents and Parish Councils, that the tree policy would be an ongoing process and may take some time for longstanding issues to be resolved.

4.1.44 The Task and Finish Group noted increasing interest in the environmental and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. It felt that it would be desirable for the Council to work more with community groups, such as on projects developing community orchards.

4.1.45 It would be beneficial for the project team currently working on the Queen's Green Canopy project to take this forward once their current project finishes and that the Sustainability Group is approached for consideration and assistance with community projects. The Task and Finish Group concluded that any Parishes/Community projects planted for the Jubilee should be encouraged to register the trees for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.46 The Task and Finish Group emphasised that that working with other organisations and communities should be incorporated in the tree policy and strategy.

4.1.47 The documentation submitted by the resident highlighted the need for trees to be planted in the right way and with the right tree in place and emphasised the need for trees to be maintained properly.

4.1.48 Members recognised that a template letter for Parish Councils would be useful to help with enforcement matters.

Explore how the CAVAT tool can be implemented

4.1.49 Evidence gathered suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

4.1.50 Evidence suggests that by CAVAT introducing and enforcement it would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees.

Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

4.1.51 The Task and Finish Group supported the role of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer but was concerned that the first round of recruitment had not ended with someone in post. It was felt the salary and the grading process for this post should be investigated as it has proved difficult to recruit to this post.

4.1.52 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Council should be proactive in looking for opportunities to create areas such as urban food jungles and parklets which can support residents and are beneficial to wildlife.

4.1.53 The Council should rigorously enforce planning requirements related to the planting and maintenance of trees as part of development, including replacement and care of trees which fail within five years of planting.

Site visits

4.1.54 Members felt that the site visits had been very informative and valuable, as they gave Members an insight into the challenges and positives of maintaining trees across West Northamptonshire. Members could see the impact on residents' homes, and how tree placement affected the number of light homes received and where lack of maintenance had negatively impacted residents. The site visits helped to understand the separate rural and urban needs and the need for

integrated management, for example there were examples of street sweepers not cleaning leaves away properly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- 5.1.1 A Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northants Council is prepared no later than March 2023.
- 5.1.2 A review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock to a suitable standard considered when reviewing the budget.
- 5.1.3 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be concise but clear. The use of diagrams and illustrations to aid understanding was encouraged.

The Tree Policy and Strategy should include:

- The purpose of the Policy - to empower officers and encourage collaboration and communication between all relevant departments to apply the Policy and setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
- Trees planted are appropriate to their location
- A requirement for replacement of any non-woodland trees in situ or in close proximity that unavoidably have to be removed
- A plan stating the approach to tree and woodland preservation orders
- Details that encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical
- Prioritisation of planned as opposed to reactive works
- Direction and guidance on how to protect trees
- A canopy cover target
- Details of relevant statutory obligations.
- Frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.
- A section regarding the planting and re-planting of trees, together with the species of trees that should be planted. This would include an Urban Tree List

- Identification of ancient woods
- An audit of Council land for potential woodland

The Policy & Strategy should address:

- Promotion of the Policy and community grants available
- Trees on both private and public land
- Woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside
- How it aligns with the Council's wider strategy and targets, to give clear focus and direction
- Eliminates ambiguity and gives clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.
- How to hold contractors to account.
- Specify how issues will be resolved
- Differentiate between the terms – urban, rural, open areas and built-up areas.
- Reflect the needs of residents
- Trees which are lost to be replanted immediately where it is safe and appropriate to do so and where it is not appropriate, suitable local alternatives are found

5.1.4 Working with other organisations and communities is incorporated in the Tree Policy and Strategy.

5.1.5 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places and

- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, food provision, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.
- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.

- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring, and future updating.
- 5.1.6 Valuable urban trees are replaced in situ when taken out. The right tree for the right place is important.
- 5.1.7 The Tree Policy and Strategy must be applied consistently.
- 5.1.8 The Council should seek to allocate sufficient funding to achieve the ‘gold’ service level detailed above. Indicatively this would cost an additional £1.6m pa across West Northamptonshire.
- 5.1.9 Pollarding is used as a solution to manage trees in specific areas only when absolutely necessary.
- 5.1.10 Where bulk planting takes place, a full maintenance, protection, and viability programme is implemented, and environmental measures are followed.
- 5.1.11 The CAVAT tool is introduced, publicised, and applied.
- 5.1.12 A canopy project is undertaken for the Council at an early stage as this will be able to give accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show what potential there is for planting.
- 5.1.13 There is collaborative working across all services in respect of trees and tree maintenance.
- 5.1.14 In development proposals, mature trees in situ are by default considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.
- 5.1.15 When planning applications are received the assumption should be that important trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), rather than relying on planning conditions alone.
- 5.1.16 WNC offers developers a paid-for service to plant and water trees on their sites.
- 5.1.17 A variety of template letters that supports parish councils when dealing with issues of tree planting, removal and maintenance are devised.
- 5.1.18 Consideration is given to the implementation of Community Orchards, food jungles and parklets with a clear plan and marketing strategy to take this forward.

- 5.1.19 The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group supports the recruitment of a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer. The salary should be investigated if it continues to prove difficult to recruit to this post.
- 5.1.20 A consultant is employed to help build the policy for the Council whilst ongoing recruitment takes place for the post of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer
- 5.1.21 Relevant contracts are examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost is satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy & Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost.
- 5.1.22 A separate landscaping contract that would give better cost and focus on delivering the service is implemented as the existing arrangements come to an end, or earlier if the opportunity arises.
- 5.1.23 Parishes/Community projects are encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1.24 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' from when Cabinet responds to the recommendations, and then as part of the Committee's agreed monitoring schedule.

West Northamptonshire Council
Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group

1 Purposes and Rationale

1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny review was to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents, in particular, climate change and improving air quality

- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals
- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.
- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways
- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.
- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

- 2.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2021/2022, Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 31 August 2021, commissioned the Task and Finish Group to undertake the review – Tree Policy and Strategy. An in-depth review commenced in October 2021 and concluded in July 2022.
- 2.2 A Task and Finish Group was therefore established comprising Councillor Chauhan (Chair); Councillors Janice Duffy, Louisa Fowler and Jo Gilford; Penny Flavell, Emma Roberts and Brian Sargeant.

Corporate Priorities

- 2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority - Green and Clean.
- 2.4 The Task and Finish Group established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Evidence Collection

Background data, including:

- Scene-setting presentation – To identify any issues with trees and tree maintenance
- Information regarding trees helping to alleviate flooding when planted in the right place.

Carried motion – full Council July 2021:

“Council agrees that planting trees has a significant benefit to health, well-being, the environment and to helping tackle climate change. This Council agrees to fully embrace “The Queen’s Green Canopy Scheme” launched to mark Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

Council agrees to develop an action plan to work with Schools, Colleges and Community Groups alongside the Woodland Trust to co-ordinate a campaign across West Northamptonshire to apply for the free saplings available as part of the Scheme and to encourage tree planting between Oct 2021 to the end of 2022.”

Proposed by Cllr Hallam, seconded by Cllr Morgan.”

Relevant local policies and strategies

Relevant national and local research, such as Woodland Trust “Local Authority Tree Strategies”

Draft Tree Policy for West Northamptonshire

Examples of good practice from West Northamptonshire and other comparable areas

Various site visits as determined by the Task and Finish Group; to include a visit to another local authority noted for its best practice for the implementation of a Tree Policy, such as Birmingham City Council or Bristol City Council.

Views from internal expert advisors

- Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste
- Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs
- Executive Director of Place, Economy & Environment
- Assistant Director Assets & Environment
- Assistant Director Highways & Waste
- Assistant Director Growth, Climate & Regeneration
- Environmental Services Contract Manager
- Tree Maintenance Officers
- NPH service lead for tree issues

Views from external expert advisors

- Community Groups, such as Save our Trees, Garden Organic
- Conservation Groups such as the Woodland Trust
- Environment Agency
- Construction developers
- Grand Union Housing, Futures Homes, and other relevant registered providers of affordable housing
- Parish and town councils
- Local residents, via a survey
- Residents’ associations

- Schools and colleges

3. Desktop Research

- 3.1 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group agreed that desktop research be undertaken into the Tree Policies of Bristol City Council and Birmingham City Council.

Bristol City Council

- 3.2 Bristol City Council has a Tree Management Policy (the Policy) that sets out its approach to the management of the Council's own trees.
- 3.3 The Policy is set out in various sections. Within the sections are sub-sections. Common Law Right – The Policy states: “You have a Common Law right to remove a nuisance associated with trees. The following advice is given if you wish to exercise your Common Law right:

a) You can only consider removing those parts of the tree from the point where they cross the boundary of your property. You have no legal right to cut or remove any part of a tree that does not overhang your property.

b) You are strongly advised to consult an Arboriculture Association Registered tree surgeon (www.trees.org.uk) for guidance on how best to prune back encroaching trees, unless the works are small enough to do with hand secateurs or similar. c) Before you consider doing any works to a tree(s) you should find out if it is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or are within a Conservation Area. If the trees are protected, you will need to gain consent by making an application / give notice to the council You are advised to discuss with your neighbour your intention to prune overhanging branches. Legally you do not own the overhanging branches and you should offer these to your neighbour. But in all likelihood, you should consider disposing of the cuttings yourself. If the overhanging branch is from a council owned tree, any cuttings must be disposed of appropriately and not returned to City Council land.”

Maintenance and Safety Inspections - The Policy states that Council owned trees are inspected for safety on a cycle of between one and five years, according to the level of public use in the area immediately surrounding the tree. It further states that the Council is progressively bringing all trees into an active programme of management. It details ongoing maintenance that includes:

Removal of dead wood Formative pruning Removing low branches from pathways. Removal of trees when they come to the end of their

safe and useful life The Policy highlights that the way in which trees are managed very much reflects where they are and the amount of space they have grown. Trees in education facilities are the responsibility of the education establishment. Maintenance and safety inspections also cover growth around tree trunk and pollarding. Private trees A key section in relation to private trees is detailed in the Policy: "Policy: If a tree or branch from a privately owned tree is causing a danger to the highway the landowner will be contacted and instructed to make the tree safe under the Highways Act (1980). If it is necessary, that the council undertake this work to make it reasonable safe then the owner will be charged in full for the council's costs. Information and advice. An emergency is defined as a tree that is in immediate danger of collapse or a tree that is causing an obstruction requiring urgent attention. Our tree contractor will be instructed to attend site within 1 hour to make the situation safe" The Policy states that in a non-emergency situation: "a site inspection will be carried out within 12 working days of notification. The owner of the tree will be informed of what works they are responsible for to make the situation safe. If it is decided that the council should undertake the works after the appropriate notices have been given, then instructions will be issued to our Main Contractor" The public can report an emergency situation using a tree report form which is an online form. Reports regarding non-Bristol City Council trees causing an obstruction can be made using a separate online form. This section refers to private trees causing a nuisance to a neighbour and it is stipulated within the Policy that the Council cannot intervene in a dispute between neighbours.

The section of the Policy - Council tree issues contains sub- sections:

Bird droppings – Trees are not pruned to stop or reduce bird droppings Blossom Low tree branches – road, cycle, or footpath – The Policy states that the Council will carry out work to Council owned trees to maintain a minimum: Road – 5.5 metre height clearance, cycle path next to a road or highway – 3 metres height clearance; footpath next to a road or highway – 2.5 metre height clearance

Tree overhanging property - The Policy states the Council does not remove or prune a Council owned tree to stop a nuisance of overhanging branches.

Drains Policy: The Policy states that the Council does not prune, remove, or cut the roots of a council owned tree to prevent roots entering a drain

that is already broken or damaged Fruit / berries / nuts / seeds - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop or reduce the nuisance of fruit, berries, nuts, or seeds, or remove fallen fruit, seeds or seedlings from private land including gutters. The public is advised to contact the Police should there be significant anti-social behaviour problems.

Poisonous berries: The Policy states that there is no general policy to remove trees bearing poisonous fruit / foliage (such as yew trees), however where it is claimed or known that unsupervised young children or livestock are likely to be exposed to poisonous berries or foliage, such cases will be investigated, and appropriate action considered.

Leaves - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop or reduce leaf fall or remove fallen leaves from private property.

Light - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to improve natural light in or to a property including solar panels Suckers from tree roots the Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a Council owned tree to stop or reduce the nuisance of sucker growth on private land. Personal medical condition - complaint - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree where a request has been made to do so because of a personal medical condition.

Pollen - The Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to stop or reduce the release of pollen. Trees affecting street lights, signs, and traffic view - The Policy states that the Council will undertake work to a council owned tree to maintain clear sight lines (where feasible) at junctions, access points (associated with a street, road, or highway), traffic signals and street signs.

Sap/honeydew – The Policy states that the Council does not prune or fell a council owned tree to remove or reduce honeydew or other sticky residue from trees.

Subsidence damage to property (tree-related) - The Policy states that the council has in place active tree management systems to avoid damage being caused to buildings and other structures as a result of the action of council owned trees. Telephone wire - The Policy states that it does not prune or remove council owned trees to stop or reduce interference with telephone wires.

Trip hazard - The Policy states that the council will make safe an unacceptable trip hazard caused by the growth of council owned trees.

Tree touching building - The Policy states if a council owned tree is touching a property (house, boundary wall, garage etc.) the Council will take action to remove the problem.

Tree too big / too tall - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree because it is considered to be too big or tall
Tree and TV / satellite reception – The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to prevent interference with TV / satellite installation / reception. **View** – The Policy states that the Council does not prune or remove a council owned tree to improve the view from a private property.

Wild animal / insect pest - The Policy states the Council does not prune or remove council owned trees to stop or reduce incidents of perceived pests such as bees, wasps, or wild animals.

Tree next to a building site - The Policy states that the Council is not required to prune or remove a council owned tree to allow building works to proceed, whether planning consent was necessary or via permitted development.

Vandalism – The Policy states that the Council will look into any reports of vandalism to a council owned tree and try to correct any damage where we can.

Each section contains information and advice, for example regarding a tree too big/tall:

“Information and advice. A tree may seem too big for where it is, but this doesn’t make it dangerous. Our trees (excluding woodland areas) are inspected for safety. We inspect them everyone to five years, depending on how much the area surround them is used. Maintenance will be carried out, if necessary.”

At the end of the Policy a section regarding information is detailed and it advises where advice and information can be obtained on:

- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- High Hedges

➤ Installation of a dropped kerb and that the Council is not required to agree to the pruning or removal of roots from a Council owned tree to allow the installation of a drop kerb.

➤ Logs/woodchip

➤ Tree and tree protection – Tree Preservation Order, Conservation Area - The Policy contains information and advice why a tree is going to be removed/has it been removed and why a tree was or is to be pruned. Further information and advice is detailed regarding why tree stumps are left in the pavement. The Policy concludes with a section regarding tree planting, and should the public be interested in sponsoring or the replanting of a tree that has been felled they can contact the Council.

Birmingham City Council

3.4 Birmingham City Council does not publish its Tree Policy in its entirety on its website but publishes various sections: Tree Maintenance Council trees affecting your property Trees on private land or gardens Tree Planting Tree Maintenance The information states that the Council is responsible for trees on land owned by the council. The Council prunes or remove our trees when they are:

- diseased, damaged, or dying
 - dangerous, because the tree or part of the tree has fallen or is at risk of falling
 - causing damage to a property
 - getting in the way of vehicles or pedestrians
 - blocking street lighting, road signs or traffic lights
- The Council also carries out pruning when it's needed to keep trees healthy. It is stated that the Council does not prune every tree each year. Priority is given to trees that are dead, diseased, or dangerous. The public can report and track progress of any reports they make by registering for a "BRUM account" they can then identify where the tree is on the map. Council trees affecting your property

The information states: "Overhanging branches If branches from a council tree are overhanging your property, you can cut them back yourself, unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a conservation area. You may prune the branches back to the boundary of your property but no further. The work must be done from your own property. You must dispose of any cuttings yourself, do not leave them on Council land. "

Trees blocking light or affecting television reception - The council does not prune or cut down trees which are blocking light or affecting television reception. Bird droppings, sap, or pollen Unfortunately pruning a tree won't stop sap or pollen falling, or birds sitting on the remaining branches. The Council does appreciate that droppings, pollen, and sap from trees can be inconvenient.

Tree damaging property - The information advises that If you think a tree is damaging your property, the first thing to do is contact your home insurance company for advice. If it is proved that a council tree has damaged your property, or could cause damage in the future, we may carry out work on the tree.

Tree damaging pipes - It is very rare for underground water pipes to be broken by tree roots. Tree roots don't break into undamaged pipes but will take advantage of a pipe that is already damaged. The Council does not carry out work on trees to prevent roots entering damaged pipes, as repairing the pipe is the only certain solution. The public is advised that if they think a tree is damaging pipes on their property, the first thing to do is contact your home insurance company for advice. Fallen leaves and fruit If leaves or fallen fruit are causing a hazard, the public is advised to contact street cleansing services. Trees on private land or gardens It is stated that the Council is not responsible for trees in private gardens. Individuals are responsible for maintaining trees on your property and making sure they are safe.

The website details a list of qualified tree surgeons on the Arboriculture Association's website. The information advised that before carrying out any work on a tree in the individual's own garden, check whether the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order or is in a conservation area. In extreme circumstances, and when all other avenues have been explored, the Council can take action to ensure that dangerous trees on private land are made safe.

Tree planting - The information states that the Council plants new trees between October and March. These usually replace trees that had to be removed. Individuals can request for a tree to be planted on council land. The Council will check if this is possible and get in touch. The Council also accept requests for memorial trees; the public is advised to use the map on the website to submit their request. The Council is not able to add plaques to or near trees as the plaque may get damaged. During a long dry spell, the Council always welcomes the public's help in watering new trees. If a tree dies within the first year it will be replaced in the next planting season.

3.5 In addition to undertaking desktop research, the Democratic Services Officer met remotely with the Principal Arboriculturist who provided a wealth of information regarding the Tree Policy of Birmingham City Council: Planning key points:

- Use CAVAT (Capital Asset Amenity Trees) to give monetary value to trees to help rationalise tree maintenance and works and account for trees as part of the Council's asset mapping process.
- CAVAT process helps planning with agreeing landscaping with new developments, to ensure planning has control over which type of trees are planted where and can help with tentation and tree gardens.
- Tree policy empowers planning officers to amend planning conditions relating to landscaping as they can put in place maintenance conditions (for example, developers have responsibility for maintenance for first 3-5 years).
 - Embed the maintenance of trees in highways policies (i.e., footway policy) and create a process that the Council follow and write this into highways contracts (for example, with the replacement of trees Birmingham City Council has a period of 8-10 months for trees to be replanted).
- Tree planting calculated by root volume; species matched to the root volume.
- Create a tree mitigation strategy as with Birmingham's urban development of the rapid bus transit, 500 trees were lost and because of the strategy 1158 needed to be planted to replace the oxygen and canopy cover gains lost.

3.6 The Principal Arboriculturist stated that Birmingham City Council go further than "right tree right place", as they have "right reason right place right tree right way" to include rationale and planting method, as roots can cause issues on footpaths and need to use constructed trees in city centres:

Important to look at contracts as contract providers often inflate the cost to include tree maintenance but it is rare that trees will be problematic. Landscape works are often part of a waste contract, rather than specific to trees.

Council needs to use social value, climate, and public health benefits as well as light and biodiversity to promote investment of tree stock and maintenance strategy.

Engagement with community is crucial and volunteers can help to reduce cost as tree strategy is ultimately a long-term process and future risk will be mitigated by trees being planted properly and efficient planning.

Integrating officers in projects so cost can be accounted for from different budgets and encouraging collaborative working.

Tree plotter system helps to map which trees are there and contains data relating to each tree as well as oxygen levels and monetary value so can be accounted for if the tree is lost to justify planting of more trees.

3.7 Other key points:

- Many Councils try to reinvent the wheel but lots of expertise and knowledge readily available that has existed for years and not really changed.
- Need to look for engineering solutions rather than overcomplicating issues, for example street trees use flexi tarmac to ensure roots don't cause damage to pavements. • Signposted to British best practice policy documents relating to tree maintenance BS8545 Tree Planting, BS3998 Tree works and pruning and BS5837 Conservation of trees.
- Important to do survey to keep as a data source, arboriculture survey shows age profile of trees.
- Create a masterplan with a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and embed within policies so strategy links together

Background reports

- 3.8 Parks and Open spaces strategy for Northampton 2013 published by the Cabinet Members for the predecessor Council - Northampton Borough Council <http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/documents/s40472/Appendix 1.pdf>

3.8.1 ['How do trees influence the air we breathe?'](#)

The Forest Canopy published its succinct document - how do trees influence the air we breathe? Key points within the document:

Why is air important

How do trees influence air quality - Trees provide a localised air quality regulation service through the filtration of airborne pollutants. This can happen either by internal absorption of pollutants via stomatal uptake or the deposition of pollutants on external surfaces including leaves and bark. Although all tree species filter air of pollutants to an extent, certain species have been shown to

have adverse effects on the atmosphere through the release of biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCS). These BVOCs are used by some species to attract pollinators and repel harmful insects.

How can woodlands be designed to best improve air quality? Several factors play a role in the capacity of a woodland creation scheme to improve local air quality. As the effects of trees on air are highly localised, the location of planting is key to mitigate pollution from point sources. Planting in areas where levels of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) are high, typically surrounding industrial centres and major transport links, will be the most effective. species choice is important. Planting a mix of species with a relatively high Leaf Area Index (LAI) will increase a woodland's ability to filter air as greater surface areas of biomass increase pollutant capture capacity. Large schemes should avoid overuse of species that may offset their benefits to air quality through the release of BVOCs. the woodland's structural design is also important. Trees should be placed strategically in shelterbelts to screen emission sources and buffer sensitive habitats.

3.8.2 Presentation to set the scene

Salient points:

Over the next 12 months Officers will:

- Identify scope, key priorities and content
- Appoint specialist consultants
- Tree condition surveys as needed
- Working with all relevant teams, stakeholders and the public
- Review draft policies and action plan to ensure fit for purpose
- Agree final policies and action plan prior to submission to Cabinet

Result:

- Single coherent WNC tree policy and strategy
- 'Right tree in the right place'

Current very limited resource:

- C1.5 FTE posts – dedicated to responsive planning matters
- Contractor roles – dedicated to day-to-day works management
- One-off arrangements to support QGC

- No resource for strategic work

Schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat – beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife

The costs of the upkeep of trees would be embedded within various budget codes from the legacy authorities.

A work project had begun to investigate the existing tree pits as it had been noted removal of trees had occurred in some areas. Consideration of the option to plant within tubs for later transferal to land would bear a significant cost, in the region of £10,000 each.

Small local parks were not considered to be suitable for large scale tree planting.

3.9 Core Questions

3.9.1 The Task and Finish Group devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a cycle of meetings (Copy at Appendix B).

3.9.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Task and Finish Group on 24 January 2022, 2 February 2022, 2 March 2022, 6 April 2022 and 23 May 2022.

3.9.3 Salient points of evidence:

Collective response Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste, together with Officers of West Northamptonshire Council and Employees of Veolia and Ideverde

Currently, under the highway contract no differentiation is made regarding how trees are maintained based on geographical areas. Other trees tend to be managed according to their location and historical connections, resulting in some different treatment reflecting their location and context.

Going forward, canopy cover could be split into two categories within West Northamptonshire, rural and urban. This would allow for prioritisation of funding, as managing existing tree stock and introducing new tree stock would require substantial financial investment. As is commonly understood canopy cover in towns is a lot less than in rural areas where trees are allowed to grow to their natural heights and self-sets are allowed to thrive. In urban areas many trees have to be controlled or removed to protect property and highways. To mitigate those future issues in urban areas, specific parks and open spaces within the towns could be identified for targeted tree planting, but ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place. Planting trees in rural area is important but offers fewer immediate benefits as it would to areas of higher population.

The statutory obligations and guidance that are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area: Highways Act 1980 – duty to maintain the highway in a safe condition, Environment Act 2021 – impacts how this is carried out e.g., the need to consult before removing trees. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 – Bird nesting season, etc. More generally, the Council has a duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act and ensuring that the requirements for tree maintenance are met within each of the contracts affecting trees operated by the Council.

Highway tree maintenance is currently carried out by KierWSP under its highways contract duties for all areas of West Northamptonshire other than Northampton and Daventry urban areas. Urban Northampton is maintained by Veolia via the ex-NBC environmental services contract, and highway trees in Daventry are handled by Daventry Town Council (which in turn uses West Northamptonshire Norse). Within urban Northampton, the environmental services contract is running and managed well between WNC, Veolia and the sub-contractor, idverde. The tree maintenance element of the contract is the only part of the contract governed by a set budget rather than a specified outcome or process. The budget is only £350k per annum with an additional £100k to be spent on enhancement works for the first five years of the contract. Unfortunately, this does mean there are only funds available to provide a reactive service. The service is mainly driven by requests for service and a smaller amount through the results of inspections.

Trees are then maintained by priority, for instance if there is a storm, this takes priority over all other works and schedules are put on hold until these works are completed. As an example, the hurricane of 31st October 2021 is likely to take until end February 2022 to clear and cost in the region of £130k-£160k out of the £350k budget. The management resource (1 x Tree and Woodlands Officer, 2 x Surveyors and 1 x Support Officer), also come out of the budget. The contract covers around 1.6 million trees: with the budget available, this makes it very challenging.

All trees looked at are surveyed and logged on the OTIS Tree Management System.

The contract requires replanting of whips, but other than that is vague, and the costs of planting also have to come out of the budget. As part of the commitment to replanting/ replacing trees, the contractor plants larger trees as the whips tend to get vandalised and in their experience do not survive. Around 40 trees are planted twice per annum, spring and autumn. This planting programme is enhanced through working with other groups, gaining further funding from WNC and donated trees.

Highway trees are usually only removed where they are considered to be unsafe, i.e., dead, dying or diseased and pose a risk to the safety of highway users, or they have grown such that they are causing damage to property. This represents a relatively small number which isn't quantifiable each year given the reactive nature of this. Other trees may be removed to accommodate new highways or improvements.

Under the Northampton environmental services contract, approximately forty trees are planted each year through the contract and up to 500 trees and whips are planted through donations, other funding and groups.

Removals per annum:

- 2018 – 128
- 2019 – 175
- 2020 – 155

Examples of why a tree is felled and the reasons for its removal are listed as follows:

- a) Decay caused by fungi resulting in structural weaknesses in the tree or partial or complete tree death.
- b) Bacterial infections resulting in partial or complete tree death.
- c) Removal of trees causing subsidence as recommended in Insurance claims from private properties.
- d) Uprooted and failed trees due to inclement weather.
- e) Failed limbs or branches due to inclement weather which can cause structural weaknesses, or leave the tree unbalanced and not safe to be retained.
- f) Dead trees due to points a) and b) above that deem the tree unsafe and no longer retainable.
- g) Roots in the highway causing the tree to be unsafe to cyclists and motor vehicles using the road. (No cases on record regarding this in Northamptonshire).
- h) Irreversible decline due to points a) b) c) and e).

Wherever possible, the approach is to try and leave standing timber (monoliths) for natural ecology and 1 metre stumps for safety and for reservation of the spot to later replant.

At present, the various services are operating an essentially minimal safe service, rather than making a significant contribution to the Council's objectives.

In relation to highways, Highways Development Management would expect developers to detail site layout plans with accurate positions for tree and shrub planting, and not as is often the case random planting indicated on site layout plans, this is particularly important at Reserved Matters stage. The Standards for Highway Layouts contain these details

The Guidance Note for Highway Cultivation are the standards we apply for trees in and adjacent to adoptable highways. We also require root protection to prevent damage to the highway. We do relax the 2.5m offset requirement in the Standards for Highways Layout (clause 10) to 1.5m on request subject to suitable species being provided and with agreed root protection

New tree planting is secured in local plans. For example, the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) – NE4, points four and five of the policy provide for:

4. Where the loss of existing trees, woodland or hedgerows is unavoidable, suitable replacement planting will be required within the development site or secured via planning obligation to be provided at another location with direct links to the development site.
5. Planting schemes should, where possible, use native or similar species and varieties, and maximise the benefits to the local landscape and wildlife, details of tree protection for existing trees on development sites how these planning commitments can be enforced.

New tree planting is secured by inclusion of a condition, where suitable, with any approved planning application. The condition will require the submission of planting details to be approved.

Where trees are identified to be retained or there is a desire to do so due to their quality and value a condition is included with the development approval for trees to be protected:

These are the two standard conditions commonly used:

Standard condition 1 No development shall take place until the existing tree(s) to be retained [describe identity and location and add 'subject of a Tree Preservation Order' if that is the case] have been protected in the following manner unless otherwise previously agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a) Protective barriers shall be erected around the tree(s) to a distance not less than a radius of 12 times the trunk diameter when measured at 1.5m above natural ground

level (on the highest side) for single stemmed trees and for multi-stemmed trees 10 times the trunk diameter just above the root flare.

b) The barriers shall comply with the specification set out in British Standard BS5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Construction – Recommendations' that is steel mesh panels at least 2.3m tall securely fixed to a scaffold pole framework with the uprights driven into the ground a minimum of 0.6m depth and braced with additional scaffold poles between the barrier and the tree[s] at a minimum spacing of 3m.

c) The barriers shall be erected before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of development [and / or demolition] and shall be maintained until all equipment, machinery and surplus material has been removed from the site.

d) Nothing shall be stored or placed within the areas protected by the barriers erected in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavations be made, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

Standard condition 2 - No development shall take place until the existing tree(s) to be retained [describe identity and location and add 'subject to a Tree Preservation Order' if that is the case] have been protected in accordance with the approved Tree Protection Plan [drawing number and date received] and Arboricultural Method Statement dated [**] unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The barriers shall be erected before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought onto the site for the purposes of development [and / or demolition] and shall be maintained until all equipment machinery and surplus material has been removed from the site. Nothing shall be stored or placed within the areas protected by the barriers erected in accordance with this condition and the ground levels within those areas shall not be altered, nor shall any excavations be made, without the written consent of the Local Planning Authority.

The type of tree protection approved for use will be in accordance with the principals of BS5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations and will vary in type dependant on the specific requirements of the trees, site and development but put simply be 'fit for purpose'.

There are generally two avenues were a breach of any condition is brought to the attention of the Council. Either through public notification or through monitoring of the site by Council officers. Any reported breach by a member of the public will be dealt with in accordance with the West Northamptonshire Local Enforcement Plan. In the first instance officers will endeavour to negotiate and appropriate outcome, i.e., no further activity to take place within the exclusion zone and implementing required tree protection within 24 hours. If this is not successful a temporary stop notice may be

served, in the case of tree protection breach and/or a breach of condition notice, which is more likely to be served in respect to landscaping/tree planting matters.

There is no specific programme for the review/reassessing of existing Orders at this time. TPO trees in Northampton and former Daventry District are recorded on the geographic information system.

A more proactive approach would be highly desirable. Unfortunately, due to only providing a reactive service as a result of the many years of financial restraints, it would take a quadruple investment and a 10-year strategy to get back to a full proactive planned service

It is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is available is prioritised against routine and reactive works

All 'urban' trees have been valued using CAVAT tool and any highway trees that are impacted by works, we are then able to recover value to aid tree replanting

A canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced. The Northampton urban contractor is rarely given permission to restock, presumably to save ongoing maintenance costs, not only in replacing a tree, but maintenance cost of paths from root damage as an example. Conversely, there are areas like NN3 for instance that are over-stocked and this needs to be balanced as much as under-planted/ lack of replacement in other areas. Before a target can be set, WNC needs to know what the current tree canopy cover status is.

The new Tree Policy & Strategy will have the greatest impact on the Strategic Plan and other policy documents if it is:

- Based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places.
- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.
- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
- Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.
- Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring and future updating.

The Council is in the process of recruiting to a new Tree Strategy & Projects Officer. This will provide key resource to develop the strategy and guide implementation of it.

The policy and strategy should be applied consistently, such that over time and expectation is developed that they will be followed

Trees in urban areas were valuable and responded that trees in urban areas required significant investment as they were expensive to manage; as trees planted close to roads or pathways as an example, needed to be actively managed in comparison to, for example, a sycamore in a park. He emphasised that the placement and type of trees in different areas needed to be managed.

The cost of planting trees in containers rather than directly into the ground was typically quite expensive, for example recently received quotations for potted trees around the drapery in Northampton. Prices received from quotations were showing costs of £5,000 per container, with the price of the container, the tree, and soil plus the placement of the container. These containers would weigh over a tonne. They also needed to be fixed to the pavement and the trees in them would require regular watering and treatment, which had its own costs. For the same cost of planting one tree container costing £5,000, 36 trees in could be planted in open spaces. Surveyors could look at 20 trees per day and there was an estimated total of 1.6m trees in West Northamptonshire. There needed to be five times the current resource for an active service to be provided in maintaining the Council's trees.

The policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.

The policy could differentiate by the terms 'open areas' and 'built up areas' rather than rural and urban and shared the opinion that the policy needed to reflect the needs of residents.

There were issues with trees being built in areas where there were new build homes; trees on the edge of park spaces affecting resident's television aerials; and trees impeding on property. Pollarding could be a useful solution to manage trees in some places.

With climate change there were increased extreme weather events, such as storms and periods of droughts. These could harm trees. The costs of taking action would need to be determined. However, already climate change impacts were considered in the long-term plan as there were trees coming to their end of life. With each tree replaced the appropriateness of the location and other factors were be considered.

A record of tree stumps is kept but nonetheless stumps were often left to stop pits being tarmacked over. They were not always able to replant as it would cause issues with subsidence.

With any major development there is likely to be impacts, including the loss of trees. These losses would be considered in the planning balance. The need for housing often took priority with decision making. Sometimes trees could be preserved in detailed planning.

With the establishment of the West Northamptonshire Council, there were a number of inherited services and contacts which provided tree-related services. The aim was to move to one policy that would enable them to consistently manage the service irrespective of service provider.

Canopy cover was assessed with the use of aerial and satellite imagery. Probably this would be done no more than annually.

Schools, Colleges and Parish Councils

Key Points:

Spratton Parish Council

The region in this part of Northamptonshire (Spratton) is extremely poorly off when it comes to the number and quality of trees. The woods which do exist are of small scale and on the whole, created by the land owners in the form of coverts used for hunting. Such trees as there were growing in the hedgerows have been removed along with the hedges which are sparsely disbursed owing to the expansion of large-scale farms and indiscriminate enlargement of arable fields over the last 70 years. To get a sense of the lack of trees in this area one need only look at the OS Explorer Map of Northampton and Market Harborough(1:25000) and the absence of trees is plain with the only reasonable sized wood being the conifer plantation of Harlestone Firs near Northampton. The nearest former forests of Rockingham, Salcey, Wittlebury and Everdon with their remnants of old forest, do not appear on the OS map mentioned which emphasises the paucity of trees.

The loss of trees has only relatively recently been recognised as a significant factor in the whole ecosystem which includes water retention, species loss, soil degradation and many other things affecting climate change. There are clearly numerous statutory or other obligations which advise or compel local governments to reverse the historic decline in tree cover. WNC could well lead the way in pursuing the aims of the England Trees Action Plan but at the same time innovate new ways of educating the public in the importance of trees in the whole ecosystem and moving to restore at least some of the lost woodlands in West Northants. There will always be the inevitable conflicts between land use and the need to protect trees, flora and fauna and the soil but hard decisions must be made if the exponential loss of species and soil quality is to be slowed down. This conflict may be reduced if there are good explanations given for pursuing a rigorous tree planting programme, changing the planning laws to ensure planting where possible and continuous education using positive examples of programmes that are

working. The planning of trees cannot be divorced from the need to create habitat for birds and wildlife and, for example, when considering new build houses or removal of existing potential wildlife habitat, the planning rules should ensure the creation of new habitat wherever possible. The planning legislation should include consideration of the planting of trees (as well as the existing TPO rules) but should not consider these in isolation. An awareness of the present and future diseases in trees such as Ash Dieback is necessary in all consideration of the planting of trees.

Even relatively small-scale policies such as preventing the removal of trees that grow in hedgerows, by indiscriminate flailing or cutting of trees at the level of the hedge cutting, should be discouraged.

There is a need for a more joined up thinking and sharing of expertise among charities, voluntary organisations, experts, universities, and government using real data as the climate changes and a willingness to adapt policies based on that data. The WNC could also participate by becoming a member of such organisations as the Tree Council which facilitates a system of Tree Wardens to local authorities around the country and the Woodland Trust, among others.

There needs to be communication between the Council and residents concerning tree maintenance and more liaison between West Northamptonshire Council and Parish Councils. A Tree Policy and Strategy was welcomed that should include hedges and wildlife corridors.

Litchborough Parish Council

The main problem for residents in the area was falling trees causing road blockages and fallen telephone wires.

The Parish Council is keen to get involved with tree planting initiatives and would work in collaboration with local farmers to mitigate climate change.

Lampport and Hanging Houghton Parish Council

- Support the work that is taking place to create a new policy and strategy
- Lampport Estate is keen to develop woodland in the area.

Great Houghton Parish Council

Great Houghton Parish Council has been most concerned with the previous authority's tree management policy which has for too many years, not been applied fully or in part. Having been subjected to financial restraints and lack of appropriate timely action. Resulting in a number of trees being lost or becoming dangerous and thereby an increasing risk to residents and properties, to pedestrians and motorists, to telephone,

electricity and drainage supplies and services. The Parish council has little ownership of land and therefore little responsibility for tree management. It does receive a great number of complaints and concerns from residents regarding tree risk and tree damage. Complaints and concerns that the Parish Council often had great difficulty in getting addressed by the appropriate landowner authority.

There is a statutory obligation of 'due care' on the 'Landowner' to ensure the maintenance and safety of trees. Throughout this parish, as like many other parishes, the greater number of existing trees are on land owned by the previous authorities and now WNC Unitary Council.

Planning for, and the planting of new trees, is both welcomed and appreciated. Trees play an incredible role in combating climate damage caused by carbon emissions into the environment. Considerably more must be done to protect and preserve existing trees and forests. All developments, both housing and commercial, must therefore include tree planting as a requirement.

Great Houghton Parish Council believes that the final policy & Strategy would be best utilised by ensuring that it is clear, precise, fully transparent, and widely shared with all stakeholders and delivery agents. Adherence with the policy must be a condition for all future development and planning applications. Most importantly, defined maintenance schedules and responsibilities must be included in the policy and firmly adhered to. The Policy must ensure that, always, there is a clear, transparent record of ongoing responsibilities. Especially with developed sites, residential or commercial, where the builder/developer may no longer be operating or apparent.

The planned maintenance schedule included in the policy & strategy must be shared with all stakeholders along with a clear definition of maintenance work to be undertaken, which service agents must comply with. Scheduled Tree inspections should be conducted in conjunction, or consultation, with relevant stakeholder whether that be the Parish Council, the voluntary sector or managed agencies and service areas. A copy of the subsequent inspection report must be provided to the relevant stakeholder. If scheduled inspection or work cannot be conducted the relevant stakeholder must be kept informed and advised of alternative arrangements.

Deanshanger Parish Council

The new Tree Policy and Strategy needs to be accessible on the Council's website.

Parish Councils could be involved to help survey areas. Deanshanger Parish Council is creating its own tree strategy, and this could join up with West Northamptonshire Council. Trees should be replaced, and a one in one out policy applied to tree maintenance. As well as regular hedge trimming, to preserve the landscape and give light to trees and ensure trees remain healthy.

Developers should be held accountable for old and new tree stock for a period of 5 years as once trees had grown their own root system, they would be easier to maintain as they could draw water from the ground.

There should be more species of trees available to be planted to match the landscape, as more variety was needed.

Brackley Town Council

There needs to be a regular tree stock inspection to ensure no risk to the public.

In terms of mature trees, there needed to be a care plan in place and there needs to be a mechanism for replacing lost trees and the types of trees analysed and planting trees in the right places. In Brackley there are many trees that were not suitable or appropriately placed. there needs to be more community engagement.

Tree nurseries could contribute to climate change.

Blisworth Parish Council

There must be enforcement of the Tree Policy and Strategy. There are examples within the parish of trees being damaged or removed although they are key to the environment and the character of the village. The Parish does not have TPO records

Hollowell and Teeton Parish Council

The Parish Council manages a variety of trees located around the parish adjacent to highways and within the Pocket Park. These are surveyed every three years and maintained as advised in the survey. Trees have been planted to enhance the locality but care should always be taken to ensure appropriate species are planted at each location, particularly adjacent to highways and in parks. Account should be taken of the medium to long term growth of trees and the space available, in addition to the ground condition for species.

By careful selection of sites and species, the planting of trees can add benefit to the overall design of a development

The Tree Policy and Strategy should be available as supplementary guidance to policy makers to assist with decision on planting of trees.

To aid cohesive working between all stakeholders, clear advice and guidance on mandatory obligations and discretionary requirements for tree planting.

Daventry Town Council

The Town Council has recently taken on open spaces and trees, as well as maintaining highway trees in its parish.

There is little support for parish councils in terms of insurance claims and there should be more emphasis on mitigation and removal of problematic trees.

There should be more emphasis on developments and conversations should take place with developers in terms of maintenance. Daventry Town Council audited their trees through a software program which worked very well; there should be emphasis on the highways service doing its own audits.

Daventry Town Council takes the management of its tree stock very seriously and regularly inspects and surveys trees on land owned by the Town Council. Working with our contractor the Town Council is continually mapping its trees, recording age, height, species, health and required works. This is viewed by the Town Council as good practice and has noted that other landowners (i.e. Highways) do not survey or map trees on their land, which results in trees being felled rather than being retained through remedial arboricultural works. Also, by surveying trees and maintaining a record you can easily identify areas for replanting or planting. Key issues are not to plant in areas that will in the future cause problems to nearby structures, as the tree will always be felled in favour of retaining the structure.

A Tree Policy should ensure a sustainable programme of proactive surveying, conservation and detailed criteria for the decision to fell a tree. It should also identify areas for re-planting and new planting to ensure the re-planting and new planting is sustainable, provides long term benefits and no risk of being felled due to nearby structures. A Tree Policy should ensure a sustainable programme of proactive surveying, conservation and detailed criteria for the decision to fell a tree. It should also identify areas for re-planting and new planting to ensure the re-planting and new planting is sustainable, provides long term benefits and no risk of being felled due to nearby structures.

To aid cohesive working between all stakeholders, create a forum that meets annually or bi annually to ensure consistency throughout the WNC area by giving advice to Parishes and sharing good practice.

Eastonneston Parish Council

More native trees planted in appropriate locations through the area to increase canopy cover, reduce air pollution and provide areas of woodland for people to enjoy. No more removal of hedgerows. More trees specifically planted along roadsides. Maintenance of trees in Conservation Areas prioritised

To support good infrastructure design and avoid or reduce conflict, be specific about the detail of planting schemes, with clarity of maintenance procedures and enforcement. Have effective enforcement.

All contributions to the Tree Policy and Strategy and West Northants Strategic Plan be utterly devoid of difficult language, and over-complicated ways to respond. That is, it is currently very difficult for the lay person to respond to your publications.

Weston and Weedon Parish Council

Castle Mound is the Parish Council's primary focus as far as trees are concerned, because of its historical importance and its value as an amenity and asset for the community.

The Parish Council also reports and notes any trees on the highway that it perceives could be dangerous.

Barby & Olney Parish Council

The Parish Council's main concern is identifying tree ownership, and which authority should be carrying out maintenance on the trees.

Brixworth Parish Council

The Parish Council hopes that the Policy and Strategy would provide clear and easily accessible guidance that could be used; the parish council is working hard to achieve net zero carbon but needed guidance. There is an urgent need to sequester carbon and the tree canopy is an obvious opportunity to do this. Within Brixworth the Parish Council has an ambitious plan to plant trees and hedgerows to futureproof old canopy. For such an ancient settlement the Parish has relatively few old or ancient trees and there has been little tree succession planning within the confines of the village. With the increasing weather challenges in the forms of storms and rainfall it is imperative that all is thinking ahead and planting to allow for any disease or damage to the tree canopy. There are often planning applications granted to remove trees from land and properties for good reason however, the requirement to replace any trees felled within the conservation area appears to be difficult to measure or enforce. According to the committee on climate change the UK needs 1.5 billion more trees to reach its zero carbon emissions and the UK Government has a target to plant around some 30,000 hectares of woodland by the end of 2024. Northamptonshire, as a largely rural area needs to be taking a large and leading approach to make sure we are working towards a zero-carbon target. With the storm pattern as is trees are lost faster than they can be replanted. Maintenance and monitoring of the existing canopy must form part of the tree strategy. There is one dedicated resource for this and even though there appears to be money in the budget for an additional resource this is still far short of what is required. There is a need to ensure there is an appropriate, effective and efficient way of recording tree planting to ensure the net gain is achieved for tree numbers in the county.

The importance of tree planting is recognised as a means of reducing water run-off and thus providing a natural means of mitigating flood risk, as a way of enhancing and

protecting biodiversity (utilising native species) to tackle the biodiversity emergency, as a way to providing recreation and health benefits.

The Climate Change Act 2008 and amended 2019: includes encouraging activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions or remove greenhouse gas from the atmosphere as well as making provision about adaptation to climate change. The Environment Act 2021 will have implication on the biodiversity crisis as well as implications for air quality and the dependant health benefits of a healthy biosphere. The UK Forestry Standard 2017 applies to all UK forests and woodlands and whilst it probably has little implication for the parish of Brixworth, it may well have implication with the county as a whole to ensure woodland operation and activities are sustainable.

Any infrastructure or build will include embodied carbon. All planning should include a full calculation of the embodied carbon so that there can be a clear and evidenced calculation of the impact on the environment. An example would be phase one of the northern relief roads. According to the officer's report the climate impact of this was deemed to be negligible which clearly cannot be the case. Without full understanding of the impact of infrastructure design it will be impossible to make mitigating plans, including the extent of increase to the tree canopy required. There are still developments being built particularly within the Sustainable Urban Extension (SUEs) that often have inadequate green space and lack of trees. Developments need to be built with 'green lungs' as part of the masterplan. Our view is there is an opportunity for wider use of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which could be used to address these issues. Every opportunity to plant a tree should be taken but clearly there needs to be appropriate planning to ensure the right trees are sited in the right locations. There have been instances of the wrong trees planted, in particular in urban setting that are clearly too big for their location so result in problems as they mature. Local councils should be engaged with and supported by the tree strategy: many parish councils are fearful of tree maintenance responsibilities and shy away from increasing their canopy cover.

It is key that all are aligned – the Tree Policy and Strategy must be part of the Climate Strategic Plan and also should inform any planning policy. It needs to be practical, accessible, easy to interpret and provide clear guidance.

More resource would be available to provide guidance, education, support and expertise. More should be done to engage with volunteers who for whatever reason chose not to involve WNC. Transparency of agendas and careful consideration on how the council chooses to structure itself will ensure trees, biodiversity and the climate emergency are given full and appropriate focus.

Dodford Parish Meeting

Within the Parish there are not any trees which are owned or maintained by the Parish Meeting, this being the responsibility of private landowners. We do however support tree planting and hedging initiatives in planning applications and are of course in full

support of the worldwide need to plant trees to help reverse climate change. The practicalities of mass tree planting seem fraught with red tape, since anything other than planting on council or highways owned land transfers this responsibility to private landowners, mainly farmers also committed to maximising food output yields from their land. Farmers are already under pressure to provide wildlife margins around arable fields which reduce yields, and it seems unlikely that many would further commit to large swathes of land being planted with trees. The Parish Meeting applauds the vast tree planting programme we have seen recently along the cuttings and embankments of the new A45 Daventry Development Link Road; however, one also has to consider the contradiction of this in relation to the corresponding tree losses resulting from the ongoing expansion of Daventry.

Boughton Parish Council

Trees underpin green infrastructure, they are exceptional carbon stores, precious habitats and a natural beauty. We should have more ambition to grow the “urban forest”. London manages to achieve 20% of the city being covered with trees, making it 3rd in a country-wide league table, after Surry at 31% and Exeter at 20.5%. Camden is in the Top Ten most tree covered area of England. Health benefits & cost savings. A report by Forest Research reports that visits to woodlands boosts mental health and is estimated to save £141million in treatment costs annually in England. It is reported that the value over the next 100 years is estimated to be £1billion for the mental health benefits of street trees, alone. Whilst National Planning Policy will largely dictate new developments, WNC should be innovative and utilise their power from the outset. The Tree Policy should be factored in when agreeing s.106 agreements and applying planning conditions. Overall green infrastructure should be delivered in excess of the minimum planning standards.

The Local Plan should include the Tree Policy, so it is incorporated into the 30,000 houses to be delivered by the spatial options. When agreeing large scale development consideration should be given to woodland areas to provide wildlife habitats and mitigate flooding (not just open space with a simple LEAP/NEAP). New development planning conditions should refer to the Tree Policy and enforce:- Replacement of trees where they have been felled for development, even if there is no TPO. Specialist horticultural advice sought on plant species to reduce flooding. Despite Buckton Fields complying with planning standards there is very little tree canopy. The inflation basis sits dry whilst the open space pools with water on boggy land. Protection of existing canopy cover, mature trees and iconic views:

- Extend conservation areas
- Grant more TPOs on worthy trees Flooding - Despite seasonal flooding evident on Devonshire Close/Howard Lane and Boughton pocket Park residents feel they have no avenue to address this as the surrounding fields are privately owned.

Consider specific environmental officers to work with local communities to provide advice as to how to deal with flooding issues. Possible grants may also be beneficial.

Woodland - The National Forest Inventory reveals that only 5% of Northants' 8000 hectares are covered in woodland. The Environment Bill 2021 is aiming for 12% woodland cover in England by 2050. Work with land owners where fields are deemed low grade pasture, to see increased planting and woodland creation. Consider woodland provisions as part of s.106 agreements to improve health and wellbeing, reduce NHS costs to health services and protect the natural beauty of the land.

The Tree Policy and Strategy support good infrastructure design and avoid (or reduce) conflict by having sections in relation to flooding, traffic and pollution, rambling/dog walking etc, green belt protection, privacy and property values

The plan should take into account effective environmental planning

There should be cross departmental meetings or working parties to ensure open communication, shared targets and concerns and engagement with key partners

Northampton Town Council – Environmental Services Committee

Planting new trees: There are areas in Northampton town which are almost without any trees at all, some of which would rate highly on the criteria of deprivation, poor health and wellbeing, in addition to zero canopy cover. These should be a priority for planting, though I guess tree planting would be more expensive in some of these areas (e.g., due to the area being high density housing, with small pavements) than the easier places to plant, such as current green areas whether parks or grass verges on roads.

Managing current trees: introducing the CAVAT tool and publicising this to the public would help make people aware of an economic component to the value of trees. Also publicising a broader 'pro-tree' campaign by WNC is essential – e.g., to include the 1] climate change, 2] reducing air pollution, and 3] increased sustainability of wildlife diversity reasons for valuing trees. Overall, I should like to see a tree planting program supported by sustainability focused and ambitious West Northants Council tree policy. E.g. – adequate urban tree planting can reduce town temperatures by 3-6 deg C, mitigating one of the effects of worsening climate change, and the associated physical and mental ill-health effects of high levels of heat.

Introduce use of the CAVAT tool – and publicise and enforce it. CAVAT introducing and enforcement would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees. WNC's Tree Policy and Strategy needs to include a requirement that all components of the Strategic Plan and other Council policies stipulate that a consideration of tree planting be included, and for developments

that involve renovation of areas are 100% required to significantly increase the number of trees in the area - e.g., the proposed Market Square and Abington Street plans have together c. £13m to spend. A defined percentage of this spend should be on 'greening the town' initiatives, including tree planting (e.g., £250,000 - leaving £12,750,000 for concrete, paving, seating, water feature, etc.)

A dedicated set of web pages on WNC website - This could have a library section on trees, their benefits, etc.; a news section on plans for planting or maintenance, resources for the public to obtain low cost, appropriate trees for them to plant on their property, and for schools etc. to get batches of 'whips' that can safely be planted on their property, etc. An annual or more frequent conference bringing together all the groups you mention in the question.

Kingsthorpe Parish Council

As a new Parish Council, Kingsthorpe did not have many assets in terms of trees but welcomes the new policy and acknowledged the challenge West Northamptonshire have with addressing the urban and rural landscapes. Historically trees were an issue with roots getting in the way of footpaths, for example, Trinity Avenue as trees were viewed as obstacles.

There needs to be a continued effort with replanting in vacant tree pits where possible.

There needs to be clear guidance in the policy regarding what point trees needed to be removed and replaced as well as consideration for providing canopy and green spaces, planting the right tree in the right place.

The Parish Council asks that WNC considers planting in urban areas, with an aspiration to improve St David's area. The tree planting strategy should be developed that replacement trees will be required to be planted on site where appropriate at a rate of two new trees for each tree lost . Reinstatement of tree-lined streets and increase the area of, and more accessibility to green spaces. Planting of underused urban areas across the Parish to benefit wildlife, biodiversity, enhance areas, and public amenity. Concentrate on urban densely populated areas, so the health and well-being of residents is improved. Ensure the policy is considered when planning and delivering infrastructure projects. Ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and compatible with highways. Encourage tree planting to help mitigate and adapt climate change. The Tree Policy should give direction and guidance on how to protect trees. Investigate funding to create a tree corridor. Promote the policy and community grants available. Produce a comprehensive Trees Policy Strategy as part of the Local Plan

West Hunsbury Parish Council

The lack of maintenance was the parish council's biggest concern; hedgerows are also becoming overgrown. Where trees had been regrown or self-seeded, some areas continued as part of the ongoing maintenance of trees. Where trees had been Free-grown or self-seeded, some areas had also become overcrowded.

West Hunsbury Parish Council is concerned about trees planted as hedges that are just left to grow. Photographic evidence was provided to the Task and Finish Group of trees that were over 3 meters high and out of control.

Syresham Parish Council

The local highway authority has the ability to require the property owner to take action. Where trees are planted on highway land and the parish council has not specifically agreed that the planting was done on its behalf, the parish council has no responsibility for those trees.

Little Houghton Parish Council

It is not clear which authority has responsibility for which tree in the parish. There is no room for new trees, as well as gaps in hedgerows. The parish council would like to see some sort green corridors between the villages.

Holcot Parish Council

a) Northamptonshire is a rural County, the fact that Northamptonshire has been administratively split up does not mean the County's countryside Environment should find itself isolated dependent on which Administration is in place. The boundaries should not make a difference, active co-operation complimentary to each other / not contradictory should be the Policy / Philosophy.

b) Trees take years to grow, mature and produce Seed etc. There is little regard paid to the growth cycle, excuses are found to cut down / remove long established trees / hedges / 'wild areas' because in our 'Planning culture' there is now a presumption of 'Development Approval' and little regard for the Value of the existing Environment and Wildlife that has taken decades / centuries to adapt to the surroundings.

c) Planting of Trees by Local Authorities in Towns ends up with a 'monoculture' of the same tree type, planted for picturesque blossom of no benefit to insects / bees etc. because of little nectar / pollen value from the variety propagated commercially. The majesty of our large trees is almost absent from large areas of the Towns and when they get old a presumption that, for 'Safety reasons', they have to be removed when a little bit of care and maintenance would be us with many more years allowing younger trees to acquire their maturity to be an immediate replacement when the old tree eventually dies, even in this state it is a Wildlife resource.

d) Trees symbolise Life, Nature, Humanity in the local area. A complete contrast to Urban Concrete Jungles, the decay and inclination towards people having depression / hopelessness. Improving air quality serves to compliment the 'Health and Well-being' Policy. 2 e) Towns and Villages without Trees and Hedges / Shrubs etc. are artificial / Sterile Environments. The exposed soil areas around increased use of Trees / Hedges help control surface water run off / prevent storm drainage overflow with the consequence that Anglian Water (and other Water Authorities) can justify releasing untreated Raw Sewage Discharges. f) Any planting of trees / shrubs and hedges MUST reflect an effort to build up and encourage insect life (not just bees) which has been decimated by overuse / inappropriate spraying of Insecticides by Farmers etc. The loss of insect food supply for Birds has contributed to the sharp drop in their numbers.

Experience of a number of Ash Trees in the hedges was provided. A large Ash, about 140 years old died completely, others suffered from Ash Dieback. This meant picking up the Cost of Felling a diseased tree, and removal of the timber etc. Cost was several £thousand, not covered by Insurance but required due to risk to Road Users. Key point being Tree Disease required this work but no financial help available. Many Householders who have a diseased tree would have great financial difficulty in paying for the tree removal, therefore the diseased tree STAYS and continues providing a source of infection to other trees. There has to be a way that the Local Authority can assist in the removal of trees that are infectious / diseased to stop the spread of the contagion. A Grant, a Loan, Subsidy, Recovery of Cost through Council Tax over several Years, Council 'Tree Surgeon Team' provided for the work?

Mass tree planting without recognition of the need to diversify away from monoculture and beneficial varieties for Insects etc. would just compound the present problems. Limited reasoning to provide 'carbon dioxide removal' is short sighted and a waste of Opportunity provided by the money / resources / investment that is our attempt to address Climate Change. The rapidity of Climate Change on the Environment needs the foresight to lessen the burden of the existing damage to the Environment by intelligent Planting to stave off the decline, provide an environment in the County to act as a buffer for Wildlife which includes insects. Mass tree planting is a first step, the obligation remains to nurture to maturity these trees which logically includes a budget to Fund this work. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) can provide the long term funding of this Environmental Infrastructure of the County, not just West Northants limited area. Policy Co-operation with other Local Authorities is the most efficient and effective way to achieve this.

Value of trees must be placed on their age, maturity, benefits to insects etc.

The biggest issue with 'Street Trees' is the Council's total lack of priority given to address the multitude of unrepaired cracked, lifted paving slabs in paved areas near trees. Fix the paving and most of the Public Issues go away, maintain the trees so that low level suckering / branches are removed promptly instead of left for years until the number of

Complaints reaches the level to trigger a 'Work Order' but have built up a resentment in the Community. Introduce a specific Bye Law to penalise those who wilfully damage trees etc. and prosecute the Vandals (Parents as well) until it is second nature for the Community to protect its local Environment and it's contribution fighting Climate Change. Removal should only be considered as a very last resort because of the value placed upon a Mature Tree having a greater CO2 removal potential than planting a small, young replacement.

Developers will submit Plans to remove a Stand of trees because they are inconvenient, no Value placed upon their maturity and CO2 Removal potential compared to a proposed tree planting scheme as a mitigation to the Mature Trees destruction. Planners are not factoring in the loss of CO2 Removal and the time for the mitigation planting to achieve the existing level of CO2 removal before felling, which of course is only half of the equation as you need to ALSO ADD the increased potential maturity of the existing trees over the same time frame for CO2 removal. Example : - Felling of 20 assorted maturity trees would require planting not just 20 tree whips (in mitigation) but in fact the impact is far more dramatic : - Young trees absorb far less CO2 than mature trees.(29) It can take decades for them to absorb large quantities of CO2. Scientists have found that "in more than 30 years, the regrowth of secondary forests in the Brazilian Amazon has offset less than 10 per cent of emissions from the loss of old-growth forests".(30) The carbon offset that old-growth trees provide cannot be quickly and easily replaced simply by planting new seedlings.

Recognition of the significance of the Anglian Water Region being classified as an area of serious water stress is required.

This Rural County does not have any idea about the location and numbers of major, mature trees in the County. Suggest Commissioning an extensive Tree Survey via Parish and Town Councils, Volunteers etc. organised to upload their Survey Results of the Tree Population / Location onto a Website, don't limit it just for West Northants, make it capable to cover Countywide. This data can provide areas where the tree loss / absence can be addressed, wildlife corridors built up (gaps filled) and the large areas available for tree planting on the extensive land acreage in Countryside Highway Verges. There are Grants available for large scale acreage Planting, the verges provide this land area.

There needs to be long term projects with 10-year commitments for a Tree Policy.

Consideration needs to be given to Elm Tree protection from Dutch Elm disease.

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

Most of the 165 civil parishes in West Northamptonshire have a parish council of some description and are experts of their local areas; they are best placed to consult when

the Council came to deciding where to plant new trees. They will be invaluable with work on local nature recovery strategies since their purpose was to look at biodiversity at a local level. The news of the reinstatement of a Tree Officer was welcomed .

The website www.righttrees4cc.org.uk is a helpful resource for planners, developers and ecologists when deciding which trees to plant in which area, in the face of climate change.

Hawksmore Learning Trust, Marie Weller Primary School, Towcester

Grounds maintenance at the school is responsible of the few trees within the grounds of the school and would welcome any assistance in the siting of new trees on the grounds of the Radstone Primary School.

Rectory Farm Primary School

Details of our perspectives and priorities for the tree management are to ensure trees are maintained, cut and canopy cover is kept to a minimum. Trees are maintained, to ensure health and safety and to limit the risk of large falling branches, but also to a health and safety stand of limiting risk of damage to properties in bad weather, such as storms and high winds. Where possible limit and manage the growth of trees to a height restriction to reduce the damage caused by roots and over hanging branches.

To help avoid conflict, WNC to take into consideration the boundaries which the trees create. To help maintain these boundaries to a high standard, cut branches and maintain the trees. Take into consideration fences and property boundaries which the trees may encroach and possible damage caused to pathways, gardens, houses and roads from large trees and their roots.

A wider view to communication within all sectors and opening channels showing opportunities and a clear definition of stakeholders' responsibilities.

Save Our Street Trees Northampton

Saveourstreettrees.org has been running since 2016 with the aim of promoting, protecting and (re)planting street trees in Northampton. It has been working with councillors and council officers, as well as partners such as The Woodland Trust and the urban forester at Woodland Dwelling, to engage with residents about urban trees, and retain and plant more street trees in the town.

It considers street trees are any trees located on roads, highways, pavements, or grass verges in urban areas and encourages and supports tree planting projects in urban parks, and urban community orchards. With more than 80 per cent of UK residents living in the built environment, access to green spaces and/or green views has never been more important.

Save our Trees would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment and reinstatement of Northampton street trees. It feels strongly that valuable urban trees should be replaced in situ when taken out. Trees are not being routinely replaced in Northampton. Research conducted for the Group by the University of Northampton in 2019 showed 58% of street trees had disappeared in Far Cotton alone in the last 50 years. There is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

The Group would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees. In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable. There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in Northampton, which will measure current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting. There should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance. Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.

The following legislation and guidance is most relevant:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024>
- The National Planning Policy Framework contains many references to trees in planning.
- <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/common-sense-risk-management-of-trees/>
- <https://www.tdag.org.uk/> has several very good research documents about urban trees and planning.
- <https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/tree-strategies/>
- The Occupiers Liability Act and Health and Safety at Work Act for risk management of trees by the local authority.
- The Town and Country Planning Act has the statutory obligation to protect and plant trees by the local authority, also administering TPOs and assessing planning applications.

It would be good to tie any work into the upcoming obligations under the Duty to Consult England Trees Action Plan (above) with any existing work of Save Our Street Trees.

There should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge

benefits trees bring to people and wildlife. Studies have shown urban trees boost social cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour and littering, as well as improve air quality, and provide biodiverse corridors that breathe life into urban areas. Recent research shows people who have trees within walking distance of their homes also have a lower risk of developing psychological distress.

The right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Lack of regular maintenance is a key area of concern for residents. Environmental contractors should be tasked to regularly maintain and carefully manage Northampton Street trees wherever possible. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential problems further down the line.

Alternatives to felling should be made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them.

There should be an Arboriculture Officer(s) at the heart of plans. We believe West Northants Council's Tree Strategy and Projects Officer role needs to be reinstated and funds put aside to ensure that there is a key, expert contact at council level to oversee all tree policies, planning and planting.

A strategy/policy adopted across the council will work across multiple departments such as highways and housing with more coherent working, planning and decision making around tree management. This will help influence decision making at a more strategic level, including budget commitments, and increase protection of existing trees on developments, as well as boost tree planting and management.

Good strategic planning requires councils to have a holistic view of future development and growth across its area, and importantly have a good understanding of the impact this will have on residents. Key to this is striking a balance between the need for new development with the protection and enhancement of the environment and quality of life. Responsibility for hitting local and national climate targets, as well as delivering public health (especially mental health) and social care have become, and will continue to be, some of the highest priorities for councils. A good Tree Policy and Strategy is key to this. It gives the council a better understanding of how urban tree planting can help deliver against many of its objectives – for example, enhancing wellbeing, beneficial heating/cooling effects, reducing road wear, etc. A clear tree strategy will define how and where trees need to be maintained and planted, the cost benefits and how this will deliver against overall strategy.

There should be a single point of contact for tree issues i.e., Tree Officer(s), would provide the nexus to encourage joined-up thinking about tree policy and strategy. This person/s would have the necessary overview to coordinate between stakeholders. Engagement with a Tree Forum would also allow residents and community groups to have their voices heard and considered, allowing for greater cohesion, and understanding between residents' concerns and council decision making. Beneficial for Local Tree Champions or community engagement officers for trees.

Save Our Trees recommended an Urban Tree List:

Large Canopied Species

- Oak Family - Red, turkey, English
- Elm – Ulus New Horizon – disease resistant
- Maples (Acer) – freemanii Autumn Blaze, Freemanii Armstrong, rubrum
- Sycamore
- Beech – **needs a verge**
- Horse chestnut – Carnea (Red), Yellow Buckeye, Indian
- Hornbeam
- Tulip
- Sweet Chestnut
- Turkish Hazel
- Magnolia Graniflora – **Needs a lot of sunlight so not in between buildings**
- Dawn Redwood – **good for centres of roundabouts**
- Nothofagus – Antarctic beech – **needs a verge**
- London plane
- Lime – platyphlos, euchlora – **NOT x europeae which whilst cheaper produces a lot of epicormic growth so is very expensive to maintain.**

Medium Canopied Tree

- Birch – many cultivars – **needs grassed verges, struggles in street pits**
- Field Maple, including varieties Elegant, Elsrijk, William Caldwell - **specifically for streets**
- Maple – Acer cappadocicum aureum, platanoides
- Ginko biloba
- Liquidamber
- Magnolia – Galaxy, Heaven scent, kobus, spectrum
- Pine – Scots
- Cherry (prunus) – Avium plena, x schmittii, tai haku

Small Canopied Trees

- Amelanchier – Robin Hill, Ballerina, Lamarckii
- Maple – acer griseum

- Judas Tree – *Cercis siliquastrum*
- Magnolia – susan, star wars
- Cherry (*prunus*) – accolade, amanogawa, hillieri spire, kanzan, maackii, pandora, sargentii, shirotae

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

The Housing Revenue Account land which is managed by NPH on behalf of the Council. He advised that areas of responsibility are split into 2 areas:

- 1) Trees in gardens, which under the tenancy agreement (WNC's tenancy) are the responsibility of the tenant; and
- 2) Trees in communal areas which are managed by NPH and the responsibility is the Councils which is managed by NPH, who have a 4-year cycle of inspection, each tree being categorised into essential, planned, no work required. All survey work is carried out by a qualified arboriculturist.

In respect of point 1, where a tree is identified as a potential problem or danger, NPH will inspect to discharge the "duty of care" and where considered to be potentially dangerous, NPH will fund and undertake the work. Regarding possible changes to the tenancy agreement, NPH is keen to be involved in any review process.

Woodland Trust

The Woodland Trust is the UK's largest woodland conservation charity. We own over 1000 woods all over the UK, covering more than 20,000 hectares. Its aim is to see a UK rich in trees and woods. In Northampton, it has been working with the Council and its predecessor authority and with a local community group, Save our Street Trees, to help local people value their street trees and get more planted in the town. It believes that all councils should have a trees and woodland strategy, so we very much support the work that the Task and Finish group is undertaking. It is discussing with senior management at West Northants Council a bid that they have made to the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund to help provide staffing support for development of a tree strategy including mapping of the current tree canopy cover and public engagement and then delivery of the recommendations of the strategy.

The Woodland Trust believes that the best tree strategies include trees on both public and private land and thus include management of the council's own trees and woods and also trees and woods on development sites, which links with the planning system. In early 2020, the Woodland Trust published its Emergency Tree Plan <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2020/01/emergency-tree-plan> which outlines how it believes trees and woods can contribute to tackling both the climate and the biodiversity emergencies. During the Covid pandemic and resultant lockdowns it also became very apparent how much people see walking in woodland and seeing trees

as vital for protecting their mental and physical health. Its Emergency Tree Plan sets out a number of points that the Trust would like to see included in a local authority tree strategy or equivalent document:

1. *Measure the current tree canopy cover, either just on council land or across the council area and set ambitious targets for its expansion*
2. *Identify and map ancient woods, veteran trees and others of conservation importance and ensure they are on relevant national inventories and ensure that you have planning policies in place to give them the highest possible levels of protection. Further information on the importance of ancient woods and ancient trees in the planning system can be found at: <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/06/planners-manual-for-ancient-woodland>*
3. *Carry out an audit of council land to find suitable locations for woodland creation or other tree planting. Encourage partner organisations (e.g., the NHS, housing associations etc) to carry out similar exercises*
4. *Set out the contribution that trees and woodland and their expansion can have in meeting the Council's climate and biodiversity commitments and targets (e.g., getting to net zero carbon).*
5. *Assess what sources of funding are available to implement your tree cover expansion targets and set annual budgets to ensure that the necessary funding is made available*
6. *Ensure that enough qualified staff and/or contractor support are available to implement your targets*
7. *Commit to planting with UK sourced and grown trees and consider setting up a community tree nursery, either yourself, or in conjunction with neighbouring councils.*
8. *Commit to procuring UK sourced timber from FSC certified sources and encourage use of locally produced timber where possible.*
9. *Promote active involvement of community groups, schools and volunteers to help deliver your tree canopy expansion targets*
10. *Look to amend your planning policies to ensure that there is at least 30% tree canopy cover in all new development. Until this can be put into local plan policy, commit to working with developers to encourage them to maximise tree canopy cover, particularly in new housing developments.*

11. *Support healthy lifestyles by promoting access to woodland for relaxation, exercise and community development.*
12. *Support agroforestry by working with the council's tenant farmers and with private landowners to seek out opportunities for tree planting and woodland creation.*

Some other issues suggested for inclusion in the Tree Policy and Strategy include:

1. At the beginning of the document setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
2. Set out a presumption in favour of retaining trees wherever possible and clear policies on circumstances in which the Council would not consider removing a tree (e.g., where it is blocking out satellite TV reception or dropping leaves onto a parked car).
3. Include a policy for replacement of any non-woodland trees that unavoidably have to be removed. We advocate specifying at least two or three to one replacement and higher ratios may be appropriate for older trees. For example, some councils have adopted a formula whereby the number of replacement trees increases in proportion to the diameter or circumference of the tree that is being removed.
4. Have policies which set out clearly your approach to tree and woodland preservation orders and trees in conservation areas, in respect of those aspects where local authorities have discretion.
5. Have policies which encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where this is practical. This can be particularly valuable when seeking to create new woodland adjacent to existing ancient woodland, as natural regeneration encourages species which inhabit the ancient wood to migrate over time into the new woodland.

Relevant statutory obligations: Government launched a consultation paper on tree protection in which they floated the idea of tree strategies becoming obligatory for principal councils in England. In the England Trees Action Plan (2021-24) published in 2021, it states:

The enriched treescape we need across England will often be created with the help of local authorities. Local tree and woodland strategies offer an opportunity for local communities to decide where new trees will be planted and how existing trees will be protected. Local tree and woodland strategies will also dovetail with Local Nature Recovery Strategies to help target woodland creation opportunities.

The following is listed as an action:

1.12. Publish guidance for local authorities to develop their own local tree and woodland strategies.

This guidance has not yet been published but, when it is, it will obviously be an important source of information as to what the Government would like to see included in council tree strategies and hence highly relevant to the one that West Northants is developing.

The Trees Action Plan also includes a “Call to Action” for everyone in England to work with Government to help them deliver their long-term vision for trees and woodlands in England. In particular, the call for action asks that people and organisations:

- Apply for grants for establishing and managing trees and woodlands.
- Access more and better advice and guidance on establishing and managing trees and woodlands.
- Work with the Woodland Trust (i.e., Government) to unlock more private finance to invest in trees and woodlands.
- Plant trees particularly where they make the most difference - for water, biodiversity, climate resilience and close to where people live, work and play.
- Responsibly enjoy our wonderful, wooded landscapes

Also relevant to the tree strategy is the Environment Act (2021), which creates a requirement for at least 10% biodiversity net gain to be achieved in new development via the planning system and it imposes a requirement that upper tier councils develop in 2022-23 local nature recovery strategies: Government worked with five councils on pilots for the new LNRS and we understand they are shortly to publish guidance outlining how the LNRS programme is going to be rolled out across the country.

While most of the Environment Act’s provisions came into force on 9th of January the duty on local authorities to consult on the felling of street trees will be implemented sometime in mid to late 2022. Prior to this Defra intends to hold a public consultation on guidance for the duty to consult provision sometime in Spring 2022. This guidance when published will assist local authorities in their preparations for being ready to implement the duty when a date is set. The guidance will provide timescales and advice on how to interpret the requirements of the duty imposed. This guidance will be in addition to the Forestry Commission’s Operations Note: Advice to local authorities on evidencing exemptions to the need for a felling licence.

The Woodland Trust understands that there are also provisions in the Highways Act about street trees and in the Public Liability Act about liabilities created by falling tree

branches etc, but I am sure your council trees officers would be able to supply suitable references to include in your tree strategy if felt appropriate.

Trees, and particularly those in densely populated areas, have an ability to enhance the quality of people's lives in many ways and they are being increasingly recognised as important in providing a range of what are called "ecosystem services": helping to reduce the danger of surface water flooding, improving air quality, providing shade for farm animals, and reducing the "urban heat island" effect in towns and cities. However, particularly in densely populated areas, trees can sometimes become a subject of controversy and even low-level conflict between residents or between residents and the Council. Having strong policies in your tree strategy can help to provide a policy framework within which such disputes can be resolved. It is important that the Tree Strategy sets out clearly why trees are generally beneficial to local people but also sets out circumstances in which the Council will not remove a tree or where some other form of management (such as pruning or pollarding) may be the best course of action. This will help council tree officers, local councillors, or contractors in dealing with the many tree related queries that they get from residents. Having strong policies on how the Council will administer tree preservation orders or how they will deal with instances of trees on private land causing issues, will also be helpful. A key principle in including trees as part of infrastructure design is to design them in from the start, to avoid situations in which trees or other green infrastructure are added later as an afterthought. Some councils have adopted urban design guides to specify how various aspects of the urban environment can be blended in with each other to maximise benefits. It is particularly important that trees are considered as a key component of new housing development and as mentioned earlier, the Woodland Trust advocates that all areas of new development should have at least 30% tree canopy cover. The Woodland Trust has also produced a guide to residential development. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/publications/2019/01/residential-developments-and-trees>

Adequate provision should be made in council budgets for management of any trees and woods that are on council land. It would be good if your tree strategy could specify a cycle of proactive inspection and management of street and other non-woodland trees every few years to ensure that any issues are identified and dealt with at an early stage. In the case of woodland, the Trust would recommend that the Council has a management plan in place for each of their woods and preferably has them registered with an accreditation body such as the Forest Stewardship Council, which will ensure that management plans are assessed against nationally and internationally recognised standards.

Involvement of the community wherever possible in tree and woodland management is something that we would like to see encouraged in your tree strategy. The Woodland Trust has worked closely with the Save Our Street Trees community group in Northampton to get more street trees planted in the town and on wider tree related

issues: we understand that your task and finish group will be talking to them as part of your development of the Tree Strategy. Involvement of local schools in tree planting and in visits to areas of woodland can also be beneficial in encouraging an appreciation of trees in young people and possibly reducing the possibility of vandalism of newly planted trees in the future.

The draft Tree Policy & Strategy be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents: Spatial objective 2 in the emerging West Northants Strategic plan (for which a consultation on spatial options was carried out at the end of 2021) states:

Objective 2: Green Infrastructure and Natural Capital

To conserve natural habitats and species, provide net gains in biodiversity and enhance West Northamptonshire's network of natural capital and green infrastructure by improving existing areas and designing green and blue infrastructure into development

The Group believes that the proposed Trees and Woodland Strategy provides an opportunity to give more detail on how trees and woods as part of new development can contribute to achievement of this spatial objective, given that trees and woods are an important component of green infrastructure. Spatial Objective 1 on climate change is also relevant, as trees and woods can both capture carbon emissions and enable adaptation to climate change that is already occurring.

Policy BN3 of the West Northants Core Strategy (2014) provides existing policy on the importance of protecting ancient woodland and aged and veteran trees but it will need to be updated to reflect the wording in para 175c of the revised National Planning Policy Framework which now requires that any development impacting on these irreplaceable habitats should be “wholly exceptional”, which is a much stronger test than that applied in Policy BN3.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of trees amongst the public and particularly an awareness of the need to sequester carbon as part of tackling climate change and getting councils and the country to net zero carbon. For example, we are aware that the former Northampton Borough Council had a policy of getting the town to net zero carbon by 2030. Government has a 2050 net zero target and we stated earlier how in their England Trees Action Plan they state a commitment to working with councils and other stakeholders to get many millions more trees planted. The Government's Independent Advisory Panel on climate change has stated <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/land-use-policies-for-a-net-zero-uk> that in order for the Government to have any chance of meeting its 2050 net zero carbon target, at least 90 million trees will need to be planted in the UK every year. In pursuance of these

government targets, statutory agencies such as Natural England and the Forestry Commission have put in place a range of grants to encourage tree planting in both woodland and non-woodland contexts. The Government website contains a list of grants that are available <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table/woodland-grants-and-incentives-overview-table> but new ones are being added on a regular basis. Some of these schemes also include allocations of funding for ongoing management costs, at least for the first few years after planting. We believe it is important that the Council has an officer of appropriate seniority who is able to ensure that the action plan in your tree strategy is delivered and that relevant grant aid is applied for. Such an officer could review the contracts that the Council has in relation to tree planting and maintenance and ensure that these are delivering best value for the Council and its residents. They could also, through working with relevant cabinet members, help to ensure that the tree strategy is owned by and delivered via all departments of the Council. In some councils, this process is helped by making the tree strategy part of the Council's major policy framework, which would require that the strategy is agreed and adopted at a Full Council meeting. The Woodland Trust also offers grant aid support for tree planting through our More Woods and More Hedges schemes, <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/trees-for-landowners-and-farmers> which are mainly aimed at farmers and landowners but are also open to local authorities. As part of these schemes, the Woodland Trust also offers advice to landowners in return for a small contribution (usually 25%) towards the cost of the trees. Where councils work with the Woodland Trust find opportunities for planting on private land, the 25% contribution can be split between the Council and the landowner. For smaller areas of woodland planting by community groups or schools, the Woodland Trust also offers free community tree packs.

The Woodland Trust would like to see the tree strategy have a clear action plan which sets out what planting can be delivered, when and by whom and how it will be funded. The Trust would recommend that the Council through the action plan seeks to involve schools and community groups both in planting of new trees and woods and in ongoing management. Some councils have introduced schemes, for example, where people can sponsor a tree to be planted on a council owned grass verge outside their house. In other parts of the country, community woodland groups have been set up to manage (and even in some cases take on ownership of) local woods which are valued by local people.

The Woodland Trust suggested content for the West Northamptonshire Council tree policy and strategy:

- The Council should set out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
- Cover trees on public and private land
- Include woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside

- Set out a presumption in favour of retaining trees wherever possible and clear policies on circumstances in which the Council would not consider removing a tree
- Include a policy for replacement of any non-woodland trees that unavoidably have to be removed. We advocate specifying at least two or three to one replacement.
- Set out clearly your approach to tree and woodland preservation orders and trees in conservation areas
- Provide support and context for Local Plan policies on trees/woods
- Have policies which encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical.

The Woodland Trust provided support for building woodland and had worked with councils to create their tree policies previously and had created their own policy papers on Local Authority Tree Strategies and an Emergency Tree Plan for the UK to assist councils. The emergency tree plan into the tree policy and strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

Chartered Arboriculturist

Any policy needs to be driven by data, it is therefore important that the Council collects basic data on the tree under its management e.g., species composition, age, and size characteristics etc. Without this basic information it is difficult to manage your stock effectively, e.g., to deal with pest and disease outbreaks, to make long term planting decisions, to understand what tree works you spend your budget on so that when you issue contracts you know which rates are best for the works you require.

Before any policy is produced, it is important for the council to look at its existing policy frameworks and set out systematically how and when these can be improved, this will help your new Tree Policy officer work effectively and also see how other policy documents will fit.

The Arboriculturist also recommended that a canopy project is undertaken for the unitary at an early stage as this will be able to give you accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show you what potential there is for planting. A recent poor example is Gloucestershire Council who in October 2020 announced they would be planting 35 million trees over 10 years which then made it into a corporate strategy in February 2021. In an article on 1st July 2021 when it was pointed out they would need to plant 10,000 a day to meet this target did it start to unravel as potentially being overly ambitious, especially when by this date they had only planted 10,380 trees over an entire season !

A good canopy example is where Birmingham Council has worked with Birmingham Tree People to produce a canopy map that is open to the public, this is then informing targets. Such maps can be produced in 4 weeks, and can bring in information such as flooding, pollution etc and then allow the council to model where best to plant based on the outcomes it decides. It also allows you to incorporate failure rates, so can help show why maintenance is worth investing in. This type of map also allows you to look at either Ward or LSOA level and can provide numbers of trees based on final canopy size, which will then allow the authority to plan. Their map: www.uk.pg-cloud.com/BTP/

The same group is also using technology to inform the public of the benefits of trees, and this type of website can also show next inspection dates, works on order, which then can limit enquiries sent to officers: <http://birminghamtreepeople.org.uk/where-are-our-trees/> It is also really important to realise that planting is not the only way to meet any ambitious target its part of the answer. You also need to invest in management of existing stock and new stock to ensure that it grows to its full potential.

Statutory obligations and guidance are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area, and what implications they have. (For example, the England Tree Action Plan, the Environment Act 2021.) include:

Planning Obligations via TPOs, Conservation Area notifications, and to look at tree related issues under planning.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-preservation-orders-and-trees-in-conservation-areas>

Highway tree management operations note 51:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highway-tree-management-operations-note-51>

Ability to gain funding for trees via community infrastructure levy, highways act S278 or section 38.

Tree Production Innovation Fund:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/tree-production-innovation-fund>

Environment Act – right to consultation on felling

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tree-and-woodlands-introducing-measures-for-felling-street-trees>

Far too landscape design lead schemes are seen which look to squeeze too many trees into schemes for instant impact to sell properties or buildings. Longer term this then can become a burden for local authorities who adopt roads and parks as younger trees

need to be felled to allow others to mature. This is also a waste of limited resources as buying UK sourced trees is a challenge and this puts pressure to import trees which can then bring in pests and diseases into the country. A good “poor” example of this is in the central reservation and adjoining open spaces of the A4500 – Weedon Road at Foxfields, where pyrus chanticleer (flowering pear) has been planted. This is a small/medium tree which is short lived (40 years). This has been planted en-mass very close together, it would have been better to plant half as many trees but of a larger species such as elm, lime etc which once established should easily live for 100-200 years in these locations. Once lower branches were lifted these could easily be managed with the occasional deadwood without interfering with highway infrastructure. Within 20 years the Council will now be left with a bill to remove and replace these trees, better species choice in the design phase would have avoided this. It is therefore important that your new tree officer is allowed to influence such choices in future and is consulted on major schemes and any schemes where the council will be adopting land.

Also, the choice of trees on development sites can be limited as landscape architects have a limited palette of tree and these also tend to be smaller species. The benefits of trees are relative to their size, with larger tree providing more benefits. By having multiple schemes with the same trees, there is also a greater risk that pests and disease will then cause more trees to be lost, as has been seen with ash dieback recently.

By having a good policy document with a lot of different acceptable approaches to tree planting on new developments, can influence and ensure better design, as well as producing a tree'd landscape that will cost less for an authority to manage over its lifetime. Good practice examples of how this can be done can be found in documents such as TDAG (Trees and Design, Action Groups), tree in hard landscapes.

The council should look to adopt CAVAT as this will reduce the number of council trees lost to development and where they have to be lost will provide monetary funding which can be used for further tree planting across the Council.

It would also be beneficial for the council to adopt a system where trees on planning sites are lost they are either replaced on site, or a commuted sum given to the authority to plant on its land for the great public good. Bristol's tree replacement standard is now one of the most well-known since having been adopted by other councils across the UK (DM17: Development Involving Existing Green Infrastructure) page 20:-

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/34520/SPD%20Final%20Doc%20Dec2012.pdf/daf75908-50fd-4138-afed-770310a6a431>

A well-designed tree planting and engagement program will also be needed, as this can leverage funds into the council, work effectively with businesses and local groups. A well-designed program can also easily be turned into a sponsorship scheme to allow

residents and businesses to sponsor trees (you would already be planting), which will allow your revenue budgets to go further, good examples of this in practice are:-

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/museums-parks-sports-culture/treebristol-planting-trees-in-bristol>

The Arbiculturist's experiences of working within the Authority are that the current contracts are poor value for money and the contracts limit your ability to effectively tender work to your advantage. In order for any new policy or strategy document to be effective these need to be looked at urgently or it will be very expensive to improve your tree management, planting and ultimately tree cover. Tree works both management and planting are carried out on day rates, and it is almost impossible to get the councils contractors to provide reasonable rates, we have seen rates on Penrhyn road double between years for the same planting, when if anything there should have reduced as the risk was lower once the first years pits were dug. In the first year of trying to gain a price for the work the initial contractor we were advised we had to use offered a day rate with no guarantee on how many trees could be planted. Most councils operate contracts with a set schedules of rates (SORS) for individual items for a period of 5-7 years, the opportunity to employ day rates when the council chooses, and also the opportunity to tender work. The reason for this is certain operations work better on SORS such as highway works, parks works if the job is small are usually done on SORS, but where works are greater it is usually more cost efficient to tender operations. In my 20 years of managing councils external tree teams the only times I have seen day rates effective for the council is where in a park a lot of low hanging branches need removing and using SORS for individual branch removal would be really high, and where an officer is on site to supervise and choose which branches need removing. At the moment the Council is paying higher rates to plant trees in highways than councils in London are paying. Working with local groups the Arbiculturist is now starting to experience similar problems/costs when looking to plant into parks, verges and schools and these groups are also being advised they have to use your set contractors, which he queries. Without getting to grips with these costs and also the variation it is impossible for groups to raise funds which would support what the council is doing. These groups have the ability to access money through grants not open to the council on its own, and also where there are government grants such as the Urban Tree Challenge fund the rates (which are reasonable for the operations) are so below what you are paying that your bids are unlikely to be a success when you compete with other councils.

There will need cross party-political backing to make a tree strategy effective and also senior officer support to ensure that it is enacted across council departments. Without this lead, it is likely that council silo working will mean opportunities are lost. Longer term there is the need for more than one Tree Strategy and Project Officer for the council to be effective, you will need further officers to better manage your contracts, tree planting and community engagement and also for fund raising and working with local groups.

The Chartered Arboriculturist recommends that a supplement salary be provided to the Tree Strategy and Projects officer as it was hard to recruit and retain talent, and the salary may not allow for an experienced individual.

The tree policy and strategy should be recognised as a journey and look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.

There is the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. Tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking. He alluded to issues with highways and emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.

The Arbiculturist recommends that the Council adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

Garden Organic

Garden Organic is a national charity that aimed to promote organic growing and biodiversity with over 60 years engagement with communities to give them empowerment to take action and get involved with waste and composting advice and food growth, by sharing experience within local communities. Garden Organic welcomed the tree policy and strategy and stressed the onus of the tree strategy to connect with processes to help residents and any challenges they had with tree maintenance, with trees impacting residents with planning and proximity issues. The tree policy should be pro-active with strong ambitions for appropriate new tree planting as well as sensible in its approach for the maintenance and care for existing trees. Trees as being an important factor in the wider biodiversity agenda being positive for wildlife, the wider environment and for people. Much of the work with national charity Garden Organic is about empowering people and communities with the confidence and skills to undertake positive environmental actions. Tree planting is obviously one such action but it's important that people feel confident to care for these trees, nurture them and support their growth. Communities need to feel able to take pride in their green spaces and instigate tree planting activities as well as broader activities including habitat creation and even possibly the creation of community gardens. There should be a connected network or support mechanism for people around the county keen to initiate and share positive environmental messages – this should be a collaboration of various stakeholders, charity's, community organisations etc. This would help promote behaviour change and move away from the often repeated phrase in local communities / parish councils of 'that's the county councils responsibility... `nothing we can do there'. Trees / hedgerows should be valued more in planning applications. There is the need

for the right species of tree in the right place as trees were valued but needed proper consideration.

Local resident, West Hunsbury

The local resident supports the need for the tree strategy and policy to consider the proximity of trees in residential area and provide an example of roots of trees that had damaged his patio. had not witnessed the trees being maintained or pruned in his area and the hazards that loose branches and leaves could cause if not cleaned up and maintained.

3.10 Site Visit

3.10.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would undertake a site visit to inform its evidence base.

3.10.2 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group suggested site visits to:

- Northampton East and Talevera
- Deanshange
- West Hunsbury, in particular Main Road
- Penrhin Road, Northampton
- Tiffield, with a focus on the Ash trees

3.10.3 Councillors undertook the site visits, key findings:

In Talevera tree branches growing too close to houses was observed as was tree roots causing a potential trip hazard, creating a need for tree maintenance. Leaf fall was very deep, causing a slip hazard. A number of unmaintained trees and shrubs was observed.

In Tiffield, the site raised a few potential issues: the beauty of the approach to the village is clear, and as this is an area which floods, the potential of the canopy cover to slow down the rainfall and thus to minimise flooding is also apparent. However, the leaves from the trees regularly block the drains, emphasising the importance of regular street sweeping in urban areas. The trees are on private land, but the owners of the trees are not in contact with the parish council and have made no overtures to discuss maintenance. If the trees are not monitored, then there is a chance they will crash onto the road if they are weakened by disease – notably Ash die back. The Parish Council is not responsible for the trees. The Council's Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish

Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

Along Penrhyn Road and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton, it was highlighted The Far Cotton project has had and continues to have a big impact on the ward and specifically the road. The project is heavily supported by residents and tree wardens/guardians who take very good care of the trees including their watering. It is important to note the project organisers felt that any planting must have a committed to group of people/contractors to water. They would rather not plant, than plant trees that were not going to be looked after and therefore our policy on maintenance including watering of anything we plant has got to be key. Their tree pits are tended (and planted up regularly with bulbs and wildflowers) by their team of tree guardians, which means they are full of life - beetles, ladybirds, and worms. They have already found bird nests in our two-year-old trees. The project faced a number of hurdles which had to be overcome. Increasing cost between two projects on the same road, who would plant, who could purchase the plants, which contractors carried out the work and who would authorise the work to name a few.

Hornbeams are a great choice for urban areas because they are shade tolerant, and they keep their leaves for longer (like beech) during winter. This means over winter insects have a place to hibernate. The flowering cherries are also excellent for early pollinators.

Other benefits of urban/street trees, in brief:

- Trees remains one of the most cost-effective methods of controlling CO₂. Particulate levels on tree-lined streets can be up to 60% lower than those without trees.
- Shading helps cool buildings and reduce the heat island effect. One mature tree has the same cooling effect as 10 room-sized air conditioners.
- Trees stabilise land and buffer storm water, preventing erosion and flooding. 100 mature trees can capture up to 300,000 gallons of rainwater each year.
- Trees create habitats and early pollen for insects and biodiverse corridors through urban (and rural to urban) areas that link pockets of nature.
- They help us feel good – by improving asthma, stress, and our wellbeing.

3.10.4 Detailed at Appendix C are their full findings

3.11 Management of Trees Survey

3.11.1 A survey was conducted comprising a number of questions regarding the management of trees:

1. What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages, woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2. Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

6. How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

8. How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups, and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

9. Which laws, regulations or Government guidance do you think West Northamptonshire Council should be paying particular attention to? What would this mean in practice? (This question may be of most interest to specialists, but responses from anyone are welcome.)

10. Are there any other issues you think the Council should consider about trees in West Northamptonshire and what is covered by the new Policy & Strategy

There were 88 responses in total to the consultation; 64 completed the whole questionnaire and 24 didn't complete all questions

Headline results of the survey are detailed below:

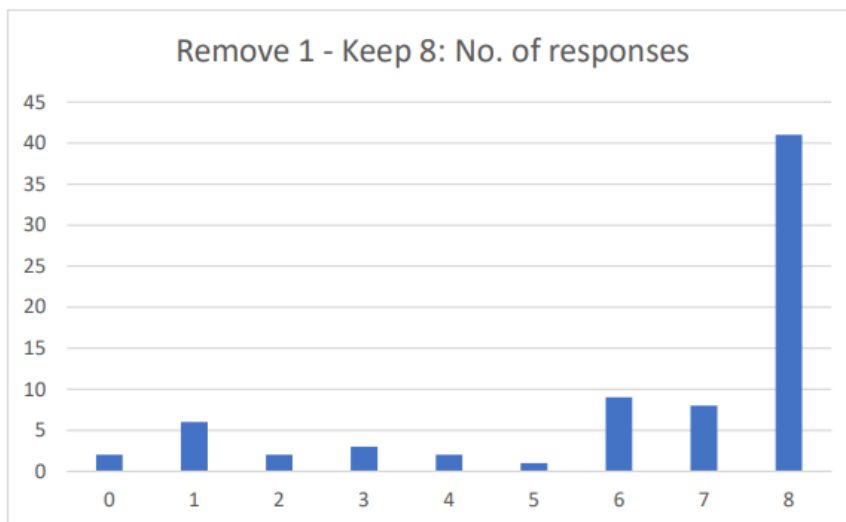
Management of Trees Survey Results

Total completed responses (at least one question complete)	74
Total blank responses	14
Overall total	88

Keep/remove question (1-8 scale, 1 - remove, 8 - keep)

Average	6.35
Median	8.00
Mode	8.00

Breakdown of scores:



Comprehensive results from the survey are contained within Appendix D.

4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas

- 4.1.1 The Task and Finish Group highlighted that there is a need for a holistic policy and strategy should be formulated to derive a way forward for West Northamptonshire.
- 4.1.2 The Task and Finish Group felt there was a shift in people's perceptions of tree maintenance and towards the importance of the planting of trees. The Group heard that there was real understanding of the health and wellbeing benefits provided by trees and the benefits to climate.
- 4.1.3 From the evidence received, the Task and Finish Group felt that schools could be involved to plant fruit trees for the students to eat which would be beneficial as a good community project and environmentally sound, uneaten fruit would be consumed by wildlife.
- 4.1.4 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that should Parishes/Community projects be forthcoming; they should be encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.
- 4.1.5 The opinions of residents often differed depending on the proximity of the residents to the tree, as one resident may live next to a tree causing issues whereas another would admire the tree and not want it to be removed. Ideally the policy should specify how issues such as this should be resolved.
- 4.1.6 From the consultation process, the consensus was that residents were for the planting of trees but emphasised that there was a need for the Council to be better at maintaining and coordinating the planting of trees.
- 4.1.7 The survey results showed a very strong view among respondents in favour of retaining street trees in almost all circumstances, even where they were causing problems of some form.
- 4.1.8 The feedback from the consultation highlighted that more people in Northampton were seeing the green and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces.

- 4.1.9 Evidence gathered supported the idea of creating a communal green space and encouraging communities to become part of a community orchard.
- 4.1.10 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that it should be recognised that the tree policy and strategy is a journey and Cabinet should look to engage the community and voluntary groups to help with projects and inform the tree strategy.
- 4.1.11 The need for the Council to continue to work with organisations and the community going forward was recognised. It was welcomed that Moulton College was interested in working with the Council on projects to help educate students and provide skills for younger generations.

Ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works of trees

- 4.1.12 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Tree Policy and Strategy should contain general principles for Council trees and prescribe circumstances where trees would not be cut down unless they cause serious issues to the health and wellbeing of a resident.
- 4.1.13 From the survey results, the majority of respondents wanted trees to remain or be replanted.
- 4.1.14 The Task and Finish Group agreed that people wanted trees to be planted, specific trees to be in the right place and the Group supported the list of recommended trees provided by Save our Street Trees.
- 4.1.15 The Task and Finish Group felt that the criteria for the removal and work surrounding tree maintenance should be robust, clear and transparent.
- 4.1.16 The Task and Finish Group felt that there needed to be a focus on replacing trees that had been removed, either in situ or with a plan to plant elsewhere before the tree is removed.

Review the contracts for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire

- 4.1.17 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the new Tree Policy and Strategy should have more stringent restrictions for developers and who was responsible for checking trees and landscaping. It was acknowledged that this could only be the case if the land was adopted as highway. If so, a commuted sum would be provided by the developer and this was used to fund future maintenance. If not, the case would be managed by planning enforcement. WNC could also offer developers a service to plant and water the trees for a fee so land gets adopted quicker. It was felt that some developers would like this option and so

do some local authorities as they receive commuted sums quicker. This could make the implementation of planning conditions more effective.

4.1.18 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should aspire, whether through income or grants, or both, to a high standard of provision of maintenance. It noted the likely costs of the desired level of service, described as gold' below:

Service level	Description	Annual cost, £k
Bronze (current)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reactive works which fall into P1 and P2 classification only Contract wide epicormic growth (sign a tree is functioning properly) program. 	450
Silver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above, plus: Further planned survey works Deal with all P1, P2, P3 and some P4 classification enquiries. An increase in the management, supervision, surveyors, and operational teams. This level of service would over a period of time provide a good planned and reactive service for the Council and its residents. 	1,200 (increase of 750)
Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above, plus: Large amount of the surveyed work to be planned in line with the surveyors' recommendations. Managing the stock as assets to the Council's portfolio. 'Nice to have' items that most residents expect Council to be able to provide. Provide data and information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree stock and health Biodiversity benefits 	1,700 (increase of 1,250)

Key	
P1	Priority 1
P2	Priority 2
P3	Priority 3
P14	Priority 4

These costs are for Northampton. Given the intensity of work required in Northampton compared to other parts of West Northamptonshire, it would probably be reasonable to add 25% to the increase in costs above the baseline to achieve a

similar level of service across the area. This would mean the additional cost to achieve Silver or Gold levels of service would be:

- Silver: £938k
- Gold: £1,563k

4.1.19 Members agreed that the Policy needed to look at “the how” and it should be ensured that the Council’s Tree Policy and Strategy would eliminate ambiguity and give clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.

4.1.20 The Council’s Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land, but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled.

4.1.21 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to implement a Tree Policy and Strategy and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council’s Tree policy to align with the Council’s wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. It would be useful for the Policy to comprise frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

Examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan, other Planning Policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents

4.1.22 It was acknowledged that the Tree Policy should be accessible to all stakeholders.

4.1.23 The Task and Finish Group felt that the urban woodland areas should be within a short walking distance of all residents.

4.1.24 It was highlighted that information should be provided to encourage residents to forage.

4.1.25 Evidence gathered highlighted the benefit of incorporating the emergency tree plan into the Tree Policy and Strategy, rather than having two separate policies.

- 4.1.26 The Task and Finish Group felt that the Council should be more proactive in using all legislation and planning policy tools available to the Council to reach appropriate agreement with developers. It was further agreed that this should be followed up with appropriate enforcement.
- 4.1.27 The Task and Finish Group concluded that pollarding was sometimes useful but needed to be started when the tree was young, and that topping was not a good method. It was explained that pollarding was a short-term solution but in the longer-term the council could seek to plant trees that would not need pollarding and should set out pruning expectations in their policy. Historically, trees were planted that needed pollarding as the Victorians found that no other trees would grow with the amount of pollution that existed. This was no longer the case.
- 4.1.28 The Task and Finish Group concluded that a canopy cover target would probably be sensible. It would better reflect the impact of trees than a count of tree numbers, because a large mature tree has much greater impact than a new whip. Such an approach, might include, for instance, redressing the canopy cover on highways, where trees are rarely replaced.
- 4.1.29 Evidence gathered highlighted that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact on the Council's organisational goals

- 4.1.30 Evidence gathered suggested that it could take up to 2 years for the Council to have a good working Tree Policy and Strategy in place and the Task and Finish Group felt that it would be beneficial for the Council's policies to align with the Council's wider strategy and targets to give clear focus and direction. The Task and Finish Group felt that frequently asked questions/topics should be incorporated into the Policy to aid officers with their work in the area.
- 4.1.31 Evidence gathered highlighted that it is essential that trees planted are appropriate to their location – some trees flourish in their environment, e.g., roadside, parks, etc. and some do not, some will grow to become a maintenance liability requiring frequent works and other do not. It is also essential that trees are planted in appropriate locations so as not to damage infrastructure due to root growth damaging footways or removing water from the ground resulting in subsidence to highway or properties. What little budget is currently available is prioritised against routine and reactive works.

Consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- 4.1.32 The Task and Finish Group acknowledged the need for officers to review existing contracts and see the cost breakdown for tree management and for tree planting as most work was accounted for with day rates which would inflate the cost. As well as parish council rates being too high for maintaining trees as they would be charged higher rates, and parks and open spaces would be contractor managed. It was further recognised that there is a need for a review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock considered when reviewing the budget.
- 4.1.33 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the current contracts should be reviewed in the future to see if the Council were obligated to use the contract and align the predecessor councils' contracts under a harmonised West Northamptonshire Council contract in the future and the potential for this to be separate from the wider waste contract.
- 4.1.34 The Task and Finish Group discussed the length of the policies in comparison and felt that a detailed policy was needed to ensure there were no grey areas when dealing with tree maintenance to support officers. Members compared the Birmingham and Bristol Councils' policy documents and suggested Epping Council as photographic. It was felt that a summarised policy would be useful but one that was clear and concise.
- 4.1.35 Council management contracts should be examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost was satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy and Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost and replanted. Evidence gathered highlighted that there is a need for the Council to hold contractors to account, for example with Delapré park maintenance work had not been done. The Council needs to review the work undertaken by contractors. The current contract deems that the contractors will deal with problematic trees and the provision for this took precedent over the general maintenance of trees and the service was driven by the cost.

Examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can enforce infrastructure design and avoid conflict.

- 4.1.36 The Task and Finish Group emphasised the importance of working closely with highways and planning departments.
- 4.1.37 Evidence gathering showed that the Council could save on cost by making use of larger planning developments and influencing the planting and species of trees

at the earlier stages as the developer usually leads on landscape planning and would select the cheapest species to plant and may not maintain the trees properly. If the Council had a tree policy and strategy that could identify the species required and other relevant information, it could help the Council meet its environmental targets and other performance targets.

- 4.1.38 It was realised, however, that the Council could not specify numbers but the role and purpose of trees, as the national model design code stated that new streets should be lined with trees.
- 4.1.39 In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.
- 4.1.40 Evidence gathered highlighted that the right tree for the right place is important. More appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.

Explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

- 4.1.41 The impacts of trees varied in different places, such that, for example, a tree in a rural setting would have different impacts to one planted on an urban street close to houses. However, there were places in towns and villages where the impacts of a tree were more like those in a rural area.
- 4.1.42 It was recognised that tree planting within areas such as school grounds are beneficial as they can provide much needed shade for children, and education with healthy eating and fruit picking.
- 4.1.43 With the community the Council needs to manage expectations particularly with residents and Parish Councils, that the tree policy would be an ongoing process and may take some time for longstanding issues to be resolved.
- 4.1.44 The Task and Finish Group noted increasing interest in the environmental and wellbeing benefits from trees and green spaces. It felt that it would be desirable for the Council to work more with community groups, such as on projects developing community orchards.
- 4.1.45 It would be beneficial for the project team currently working on the Queen's Green Canopy project to take this forward once their current project finishes and that the Sustainability Group is approached for consideration and assistance with community projects. The Task and Finish Group concluded that any

Parishes/Community projects planted for the Jubilee should be encouraged to register the trees for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

4.1.46 The Task and Finish Group emphasised that that working with other organisations and communities should be incorporated in the tree policy and strategy.

4.1.47 The documentation submitted by the resident highlighted the need for trees to be planted in the right way and with the right tree in place and emphasised the need for trees to be maintained properly.

4.1.48 Members recognised that a template letter for Parish Councils would be useful to help with enforcement matters.

Explore how the CAVAT tool can be implemented

4.1.49 Evidence gathered suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to adopt the Capital Asset Value for Amenity Trees (CAVAT) method for creating a monetary value for trees to help ringfence funding for trees.

4.1.50 Evidence suggests that by CAVAT introducing and enforcement it would hopefully stop – or significantly reduce - this type of premeditated, and other incidents of damage to trees.

Tree Strategy and Projects Officer

4.1.51 The Task and Finish Group supported the role of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer but was concerned that the first round of recruitment had not ended with someone in post. It was felt the salary and the grading process for this post should be investigated as it has proved difficult to recruit to this post.

4.1.52 The Task and Finish Group agreed that the Council should be proactive in looking for opportunities to create areas such as urban food jungles and parklets which can support residents and are beneficial to wildlife.

4.1.53 The Council should rigorously enforce planning requirements related to the planting and maintenance of trees as part of development, including replacement and care of trees which fail within five years of planting.

Site visits

4.1.54 Members felt that the site visits had been very informative and valuable, as they gave Members an insight into the challenges and positives of maintaining trees across West Northamptonshire. Members could see the impact on residents' homes, and how tree placement affected the number of light homes received and

where lack of maintenance had negatively impacted residents. The site visits helped to understand the separate rural and urban needs and the need for integrated management, for example there were examples of street sweepers not cleaning leaves away properly.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group recommends to Cabinet that:
- 5.1.1 A Tree Policy and Strategy for West Northants Council is prepared no later than March 2023.
- 5.1.2 A review of historic issues in relation to tree maintenance is undertaken and the cost of maintaining current stock to a suitable standard considered when reviewing the budget.
- 5.1.3 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be concise but clear. The use of diagrams and illustrations to aid understanding was encouraged.

The Tree Policy and Strategy should include:

- The purpose of the Policy - to empower officers and encourage collaboration and communication between all relevant departments to apply the Policy and setting out a clear case for the importance of trees and woods and their value for both people and wildlife
- Trees planted are appropriate to their location
- A requirement for replacement of any non-woodland trees in situ or in close proximity that unavoidably have to be removed
- A plan stating the approach to tree and woodland preservation orders
- Details that encourage woodland creation by natural regeneration, where practical
- Prioritisation of planned as opposed to reactive works
- Direction and guidance on how to protect trees
- A canopy cover target
- Details of relevant statutory obligations.
- Frequently asked questions/topics to aid officers with their work in the area.

- A section regarding the planting and re-planting of trees, together with the species of trees that should be planted. This would include an Urban Tree List
- Identification of ancient woods
- An audit of Council land for potential woodland

The Policy & Strategy should address:

- Promotion of the Policy and community grants available
- Trees on both private and public land
- Woodland and standard trees in parks, streets, housing areas and the countryside
- How it aligns with the Council's wider strategy and targets, to give clear focus and direction
- Eliminates ambiguity and gives clear direction on how the Council would handle matters in relation to tree strategy and maintenance.
- How to hold contractors to account.
- Specify how issues will be resolved
- Differentiate between the terms – urban, rural, open areas and built-up areas.
- Reflect the needs of residents
- Trees which are lost to be replanted immediately where it is safe and appropriate to do so and where it is not appropriate, suitable local alternatives are found

5.1.4 Working with other organisations and communities is incorporated in the Tree Policy and Strategy.

5.1.5 The Tree Policy and Strategy should be based on a sound understanding of the different places within West Northamptonshire, and the types of trees which are most suitable for each of those places.

- Identifies key opportunities to secure benefits from tree planting, including public enjoyment, food provision, biodiversity, carbon capture and flood mitigation.

- Understands and responds to community desires and concerns.
 - Provides a clear framework for both strategic and operational decision-making.
 - Sufficiently resourced to enable ongoing implementation, monitoring, and future updating.
- 5.1.6 Valuable urban trees are replaced in situ when taken out. The right tree for the right place is important.
- 5.1.7 The Tree Policy and Strategy must be applied consistently.
- 5.1.8 The Council should seek to allocate sufficient funding to achieve the 'gold' service level detailed above. Indicatively this would cost an additional £1.6m pa across West Northamptonshire.
- 5.1.9 Pollarding is used as a solution to manage trees in specific areas only when absolutely necessary.
- 5.1.10 Where bulk planting takes place, a full maintenance, protection, and viability programme is implemented, and environmental measures are followed.
- 5.1.11 The CAVAT tool is introduced, publicised, and applied.
- 5.1.12 A canopy project is undertaken for the Council at an early stage as this will be able to give accurate figures in terms of trees both on public and private land, and also more importantly be able to show what potential there is for planting.
- 5.1.13 There is collaborative working across all services in respect of trees and tree maintenance.
- 5.1.14 In development proposals, mature trees in situ are by default considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.
- 5.1.15 When planning applications are received the assumption should be that important trees are subject to Tree Protection Orders (TPOs), rather than relying on planning conditions alone.
- 5.1.16 WNC offers developers a paid-for service to plant and water trees on their sites.
- 5.1.17 A variety of template letters that supports parish councils when dealing with issues of tree planting, removal and maintenance are devised.
- 5.1.18 Consideration is given to the implementation of Community Orchards, food jungles and parklets with a clear plan and marketing strategy to take this forward.

- 5.1.19 The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group supports the recruitment of a Tree Strategy and Projects Officer. The salary should be investigated if it continues to prove difficult to recruit to this post.
- 5.1.20 A consultant is employed to help build the policy for the Council whilst ongoing recruitment takes place for the post of Tree Strategy and Projects Officer.
- 5.1.21 Relevant contracts are examined to see if their contractors' performance and cost is satisfactory in line with delivering the Council's objectives for the new Tree Policy & Strategy, for example with the amount of tree planting for those lost.
- 5.1.22 A separate landscaping contract that would give better cost and focus on delivering the service is implemented as the existing arrangements come to an end, or earlier if the opportunity arises.
- 5.1.23 Parishes/Community projects are encouraged to register them for inclusion within the 'Queens Green Canopy' initiative.

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.1.24 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' from when Cabinet responds to the recommendations, and then as part of the Committee's agreed monitoring schedule.

APPENDICES



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW – SCOPE

1. Topic - Tree Policy & Strategy

2. Responsible Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC)

3. Purpose of the scrutiny review

The purpose of this Scrutiny review is to:

To achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Key lines of enquiry

- To identify public perspectives and priorities on tree management in West Northamptonshire, identifying issues which are important in different areas
- To examine the Council's current tree maintenance policy/practices to ensure they are robust, including the choice of tree species and the set criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees
- To review the arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire
- To examine how the draft Tree Policy & Strategy can be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents, in particular, climate change and improving air quality
- To identify the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and to understand the impact of this on the Council's organisational goals
- To examine tree planting within new developments, focussing on how planning commitments can be enforced.
- To consider whether available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways

- To examine how the Tree Policy and Strategy can support good infrastructure design and avoid conflict.
- To explore if and how the CAVAT tool should be implemented in West Northamptonshire.
- To explore how there can best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies, and service areas regarding the responsibilities in relation to trees

4. Outcomes

To make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

5. Approach

The scrutiny review will be carried out by a Task and Finish Group made up of the following councillors:

1. Councillor Pinder Chauhan (Chair)
2. Councillor Jo Gilford
3. Councillor Janice Duffy
4. Councillor Louisa Fowler
5. Councillor Emma Roberts
6. Councillor Penny Flavell
7. Councillor Brian Sargeant

Co-optees: None for this Task and Finish Group

The Task and Finish Group will make use of the standard working methods applicable to scrutiny reviews, including evidence-gathering meetings (either in-person or virtual); desktop research; targeted evidence-gathering by individual members; and site visits, as appropriate.

6. Information required

Background data

- Scene-setting presentation – To identify any issues with trees and tree maintenance
Information regarding trees helping to alleviate flooding when planted in the right place.
- Carried motion – full Council July 2021:

“Council agrees that planting trees has a significant benefit to health, well-being, the environment and to helping tackle climate change. This Council agrees to fully embrace “The Queen’s Green Canopy Scheme” launched to mark Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

Council agrees to develop an action plan to work with Schools, Colleges and

Community Groups alongside the Woodland Trust to co-ordinate a campaign across West Northamptonshire to apply for the free saplings available as part of the Scheme and to encourage tree planting between Oct 2021 to the end of 2022.”

Proposed by Cllr Hallam, seconded by Cllr Morgan.”

- Relevant local policies and strategies
- Relevant national and local research, such as Woodland Trust “Local Authority Tree Strategies”
- Draft Tree Policy for West Northamptonshire
- Examples of good practice from West Northamptonshire and other comparable areas
- Various site visits as determined by the Task and Finish Group; to include a visit to another local authority noted for its best practice for the implementation of a Tree Policy, such as Birmingham City Council or Bristol City Council.

Views from internal expert advisors

- Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport, Highways and Waste
- Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Built Environment & Rural Affairs
- Executive Director of Place, Economy & Environment
- Assistant Director Assets & Environment
- Assistant Director Highways & Waste
- Assistant Director Growth, Climate & Regeneration
- Environmental Services Contract Manager
- Tree Maintenance Officers
- [If required] NPH service lead for tree issues

Views from external expert advisors

- Community Groups, such as Save our Trees, Garden Organic
- Conservation Groups such as the Woodland Trust
- Environment Agency
- Construction developers
- Grand Union Housing, Futures Homes, and other relevant registered providers of affordable housing
- Parish and town councils
- Local residents, via a survey
- Residents’ associations

- Schools and colleges

7. Resources and support

- Simon Bowers, Assistant Director Assets & Environment
- Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager for evidence-gathering and for production of the scrutiny review report

8. Timetable and key dates

Inaugural Task and Finish Group meeting	13 October 2021 (remote over Zoom)
Confirmation of the scope of the review by the Place OSC	1 November 2021
Evidence-gathering (specific dates for meetings and other activity to be set by the Task and Finish Group)	November to February 2022
Approval of draft report by the Task and Finish Group	
Agreement of draft report by the Place OSC	April 2022
Chair of the Place OSC to present the final report to WNC Cabinet	

9. Follow-up/Monitoring

The Place OSC will review the impact of the scrutiny review 6 months after the presentation of the final report to decision-makers.

NB: Each OSC will have a monitoring Work Programme to monitor the impact of the accepted recommendations



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Core Questions

The purpose of this Scrutiny review is to achieve a harmonised Tree Policy and Strategy which includes initiatives, which support the goals of the Council's Corporate Plan and reduces the impact of climate change.

The required outcomes of the Review is to make evidenced based recommendations to inform the Council's Tree Policy & Strategy

Core Questions

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Task and Finish Group

Priorities

1. Please provide details of your perspectives and priorities for tree management in different areas of West Northamptonshire, and what issues you feel are important (for example deprivation measures, flood risk, health statistics, current canopy cover).
2. Please explain which statutory obligations and guidance are of most relevance to WNC's work in this area, and what implications they have. (For example, the England Tree Action Plan, the Environment Act 2021.)

Current position

3. Please provide details of the current arrangements for tree maintenance and potential tree planting programmes and the level of tree planting within West Northamptonshire. **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**
4. Please provide details of how available funding for tree maintenance and management is being used in the most effective and efficient ways **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers)**
5. Please provide details of the number of trees planted and removed each year and the reasons for this; and how you feel this impacts the Council's organisational goals **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**

6. Please provide details of tree planting within new developments and details of tree protection for existing trees on development sites and how these planning commitments can be enforced. **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers).**
7. Please provide details of how the Tree Preservation Order (TPO) records are kept up to date? **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers).**

The future

8. How can it be ensured that the Council's tree maintenance policy/practices meet best practice for the protection, planting, management, and maintenance of trees, including the choice of tree species and the criteria for the planting, removal and works to trees. How should it be ensured that adequate budget and resources are committed to this? **(core questions to the Cabinet Members)**
 9. How can the Tree Policy and Strategy ensure that tree protection, planting and management is considered from the outset of all new development and infrastructure schemes - including the use of tools such as CAVAT, to ensure that the full value of trees are factored into decision making processes? **(question to Cabinet Member and Officers)**
 10. In your opinion how can the Tree Policy and Strategy support good infrastructure design and avoid (or reduce) conflict.
 11. How should planting targets be set? Should WNC set a canopy cover target?
 12. *(I core questions to the Cabinet Members)*
 13. In your opinion, how can the draft Tree Policy & Strategy be utilised to enhance the emerging West Northants Strategic Plan and other policy documents of the Council and its delivery agents?
 14. How should the Council ensure that the draft Tree Policy and Strategy is adhered to and referenced across all relevant Council teams?
- (core questions to the Cabinet Members)**
15. How can contracts be reviewed and managed to ensure they are as cost effective as they can be? Is there a community engagement strategy and dedicated support for this, to ensure that residents/citizens are engaged in tree planting and maintenance? **I question to Cabinet Member and Officers)**
 16. In your opinion, how can there best be cohesive working between all stakeholders, the voluntary sector, managed agencies and service areas regarding the opportunities and responsibilities in relation to trees

NB: In addition to the core questions as listed above, the Task and Finish Group may ask supplementary questions on the response that you provide.



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Briefing Note: Site Visits

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, the Task and Finish Group agreed that it would include within its scope desktop research regarding other Tree Policies in the country.
- 1.2 In setting its scope (terms of reference), the Task and Finish Group suggested that desktop research be undertaken in:
- Northampton East and Talevera
 - Deanshanger
 - West Hunsbury, in particular Main Road
 - Penrhyn Road, Northampton
 - Tiffield, with a focus on the Ash trees
- 1.3 Councillors undertook the site visits and detailed below are their findings:

2 Site Visits

2.1 Northampton East and Talevera

- 2.1.1 Councillor Janice Duffy undertook this site visit and took some photographs and provided details of her visit. Tree branches are growing too near to windows on the houses, enabling wildlife such as squirrels to enter roof spaces. There is a need for the trees to be maintained



2.1.2 Councillor Duffy found from her site visit that there was an abandoned stump that she felt was a potential focus for vandals. She adds that the leaf fall was so deep and they had become slippery when wet and could cause a trip or a fall.



lots of leaf fall



2.1.3 Councillor Duffy observed unmaintained trees and shrubs that she felt to be an eyesore and could therefore encourage flytipping



2.1.4 Also during the site visit, Councillor Duffy observed tree roots caused undermining of nearby house's foundation. She felt that the tree was planted too close and was of wrong variety.



2.1.5 Councillor Duffy further observed issues with tree roots creating potential tripping hazards and undermining house foundations, clogging waterways, leaf falls creating slippery pavements, leaves blocking and has provided photographs below:

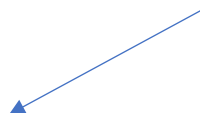


2.2 Tiffield

- 2.2.1 On Monday 4 April 2022 Councillors Emma Roberts and Louise Fowler visited Tiffield to view an area of land which they noted to be dominated by Ash trees. The ash trees are either side of Eastcote Road and form an attractive avenue into the village. They are built into an old railway line and there are already some trees which have weak branches which have fallen onto the bank.
- 2.2.2 Councillors Roberts and Fowler concluded that the site raised a few potential issues: the beauty of the approach to the village is clear, and as this is an area which floods, the potential of the canopy cover to slow down the rainfall and thus to minimise flooding is also apparent. However, the leaves from the trees regularly block the drains, emphasising the importance of regular street sweeping in urban areas. The trees are on private land, but the owners of the trees are not in contact with the parish council, and have made no overtures to discuss maintenance. If the trees are not monitored then there is a chance they will crash onto the road if they are weakened by disease – notably Ash die back. The Parish Council is not responsible for the trees.
- 2.2.3 The Councillors felt that it seems therefore, that the Council’s Tree Policy must create a framework in which Parish Councils can get in touch with landowners and encourage them to monitor the state of trees which are on private land but which could detrimentally affect a village due to road closures etc. Integral to this is ensuring that WNC will take enforcement action if private landlords do not act in a timely manner, suggesting that dealing with the trees themselves but billing the landowner. They further suggest that there is a need to work with the Wildlife Trust to see if it would offer landowners trees to replace areas of Ash which have to be felled. From the evidence gathered at the site visit, Councillors Roberts and Fowler noted that the Parish Council has looked at government websites, but there does not seem to be a council, as yet, with examples of good practice for dealing with areas of Ash.
- 2.2.4 Detailed below are various photos taken during the site visit to Tiffield:



The photo shows that the ash trees are planted either side of the avenue into Tiffield, and so if all of them are lost this would affect the approach into the village.



A blocked drain –



sludge of uncollected wet leaves.

Branches that have come down in the wind and been moved to one side to keep the road clear.



Councillors Roberts and Fowler at Tiffield



2.3 Penrhyn Road and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton

2.3.1 On 29 March 2022, Councillor Emma Roberts and Councillor Louisa Fowler visited Penrhyn Road, and the Far Cotton Tree Planting Project, Northampton.

2.3.2 The Councillors highlighted the key points from her site visit:

The Far Cotton project has had and continues to have a big impact on the ward and specifically the road. The project is heavily supported by residents and tree wardens/guardians who take very good care of the trees including their watering. It was important to note the project organisers felt that any planting must have a committed to group of people/contractors to water. They would rather not plant, than plant trees that were not going to be looked after and therefore our policy on maintenance including watering of anything we plant has got to be key. Their tree pits are tended (and planted up regularly with bulbs and wildflowers) by their team of tree guardians, which means they are full of life -

beetles, ladybirds and worms. They have already found bird nests in our two-year-old trees.

The project faced a number of hurdles which had to be overcome. Increasing cost between two projects on the same road, who would plant, who could purchase the plants, which contractors carried out the work and who would authorise the work to name a few.

Councillors Roberts and Fowler viewed the trees planted and their locations. They felt that Hornbeams are a great choice for urban areas because they are shade tolerant, and they keep their leaves for longer (like beech) during winter. This means over winter insects have a place to hibernate. The flowering cherries are also excellent for early pollinators.

2.3.2 The Councillors discussed other benefits of urban/street trees, in brief:

- Trees remains one of the most cost-effective methods of controlling CO2. Particulate levels on tree-lined streets can be up to 60% lower than those without trees.
- Shading helps cool buildings and reduce the heat island effect. One mature tree has the same cooling effect as 10 room-sized air conditioners.
- Trees stabilise land and buffer storm water, preventing erosion and flooding. 100 mature trees can capture up to 300,000 gallons of rainwater each year.
- Trees create habitats and early pollen for insects and biodiverse corridors through urban (and rural to urban) areas that link pockets of nature.
- They help us feel good – by improving asthma, stress and our wellbeing.

2.3.3 The Councillors highlight that Save our Street Trees did a survey with the University of Northampton in 2019 looking at the tree canopy cover in Far Cotton. It showed 58% of trees had been lost in the area and not replaced since the 1960s. I attach a [link to the survey here](#) . Detailed below are photos that show what St Leonard's Road looked like in the 1940s - courtesy of the Far Cotton History Group - and what it looks like now, with one tree. It provides a stark picture of the huge change in canopy cover in just this one street).



2.3.4 The Councillors felt that maintaining existing tree pits and not capping off the pit if a tree is removed was clearly essential. Stumps that prevent utilities being placed without notice are helpful.

2.3.5 Detailed below are further photos taken during the site visit:





OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

TREE POLICY & STRATEGY TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW

Briefing Note: Results of the Public Consultation

1 Introduction

1.1 The Tree Policy and Strategy Task and Finish Group published a short consultation document which contained the following questions:

1. What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages, woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2. Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them

unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

6. How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

8. How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups, and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

9. Which laws, regulations or Government guidance do you think West Northamptonshire Council should be paying particular attention to? What would this mean in practice? (This question may be of most interest to specialists, but responses from anyone are welcome.)

10. Are there any other issues you think the Council should consider about trees in West Northamptonshire and what is covered by the new Policy & Strategy?

1.2 The consultation was promoted widely and although Parish Councils had been invited to respond to the core questions of the Task and Finish Group, they were also given another opportunity to have their say.

2 Findings from the Consultation

2.1 There were 88 responses in total to the consultation; 64 completed the whole questionnaire and 24 didn't complete all questions. A short analysis of the results is attached at Appendix A.

2.2 A summary of responses is detailed below:

- 1. What do you think is most important about trees in West Northamptonshire and why do you think that? You might include the benefits or problems with trees in towns and villages,**

woodlands, the use of trees to reduce flood risk or absorb carbon dioxide, or anything else you think is important.

2.

Responses were mainly positive to this question comments included:

To look nice and placed in sensible spots

Trees are generally a good thing and an essential part of the environment

Help wildlife

Some trees give out fruit and flowers for insects and birds to feed on

They provide shelter, shade, and cool air

Trees are aesthetically pleasing

Trees are essential, especially in urban areas

They provide a green area

We need more green areas

More trees are needed

Trees are part of the heritage and fabric of the country

The right trees in the right place can help harmonise a landscape and provide a focal point for encouraging green activities

Some trees are planted too close to property and can cause subsidence

Need to ensure trees are maintained

We would like WNC to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment, and reinstatement of Northampton streets

Trees should be replaced when taken out

Investment and recruitment of officers such as a Tree Officer to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees

Mature trees should remain in developments

Have a formal tree mapping exercise which includes an audit to see if there are opportunities for tree planting

Better and more regular tree maintenance

Trees absorb carbon

Trees both capture carbon but also like all green plants take in CO2 and put out oxygen

Trees can help prevent flooding and can help to reduce road wear, and damage as cars tend to slow in tree lined roads.

Trees can improve mental health and wellbeing in residents

Trees are an important part of our ecosystem

Trees are essential for survival of the planet

Trees mitigate the heat-island effect which is a growing problem in urban areas

There is a real biological as well as environmental need for tree systems to be created: trees in isolation are great for birds and insects but the environment is dramatically improved where trees are part of a mixed ecosystem structure with connecting corridors. In this way you can create conditions for wildlife increase.

3. Do you have any personal experience with trees and tree management in West Northamptonshire you would like to share with the task panel? For example, are there trees which have caused you access problems, which you particularly appreciate or which you feel should have been removed or kept when the reverse happened?

Trees make an area look good, but they should be maintained.

Keen to maintain wildlife as well as appreciating their beauty

Bird's nesting

"because they are"

Groups of deciduous trees with appropriate undergrowth and safe and easy access and egress for animals from each area

They are a part of nature and we are products of nature, so we respond to them. Northants generally is not particularly well stocked with trees - a great pity.

If trees were not in park land areas these areas may be used for building projects

Trees are environmentally essential with so much building work

My father was a market gardener and he taught me much about growing, planting out, pruning and general maintenance of plants, shrubs, and trees. I have also read several books written by foresters for example "The Secret Life of Trees" which anyone considering planting trees should read. It is written by a forester who knows what he is talking about. Often when there are high winds there are problems with households losing power, quite often because of fallen trees. You must ask why these trees were planted so close to a power line or a railway line or too near to the road. All too often people plant trees in completely the wrong place due to lack of understanding how trees thrive. A little more thought and taking proper advice should be mandatory before planting.

Government evidence that trees are good for the environment

Just look at the deforestation of the rain forest, of vast areas in Northants completely cleared for houses (i.e., On the way to Wellingborough and Harlestone firs/Kings Heath, shocking) mud slides in third world countries etc.

Various scientific reports I have read, nature programs and personal observation

Having trees and woods close to where people live is important for a large number of reasons. Trees provide oxygen for us to breathe, they can clean pollutants out of the air and protect people from sources of pollution such as heavy traffic. Trees also give people in urban areas contact with nature, which can help in improving mental health, and woods provide areas where people want to go for healthy exercise. Trees are also good for absorbing carbon to help us tackle climate change and help us adapt to the climate change that is already happening. So, there is a need for a big expansion of tree cover in the district but also its really important to protect the trees that are already there.

Currently I think there are too many rules and regulations to get trees planted in Northamptonshire. Decisions have been made in the past that I think with good intentions at the time to try and keep the public safe but now are not needed. So many people want to get involved and help but are prevented with all the 'red tape' and paperwork. Planting trees is not difficult but has been made so by west Northamptonshire council.

Science shows us this.

For all reasons above - lots of research available which shows the numerous benefits of trees, particularly in urban areas.

The branches come down in high winds and residents are left to clear them.

The benefits of trees to nature and climate have been scientifically proven. Trees also improve people's wellbeing. 'Green canopies' improve mental health. Trees are crucial to your lives.

There are less & less trees & therefore less nature

Its fact

Greenery and countryside are good for people's mental welfare.

Wildlife, air quality, aesthetic

Trees are a vital part of achieving climate change targets. They've been proven to benefit health and wellbeing, wildlife, and the local economy. Alternatives to felling should be discussed and made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides.

I look around and see 1000s of plastic tree collars all over the place. About 40% look to have trees growing out of them. No aftercare at all? I see clumps of Aspen\poplar trees planted very close together that will never reach maturity without taking out at least 70%. Why are they planted so closely and only one species used? These are wasted

opportunities for reforestation. Money that should be used more wisely is wasted in thinning these. We need more considered and integrated approach to tree planting as a part of habitat creation for biodiversity rather than what appears to be thoughtlessly sticking any amount of tiny whips in anywhere and everywhere

Because the world is changing due to global warming and the people with it. (Just one example: there is conflict (i.e., people dying) because of a lack of fresh water in 17 countries already.) Because, if you walk through streets without a tree, then even Hunter Street in Northampton which has a couple, you notice your mood lifts.

Planting new trees, and maintaining current trees, will help combat climate change. Rewilding provides a home for wildlife hopefully increasing numbers. Trees and green space provide health and wellbeing benefits to people. Building developments often remove trees and green space without thinking about the loss means to wildlife and people

It's a scientific fact

Its proven

It's obvious really

Tree lined streets are massively more attractive

A mature tree is beautiful as well as contributing to biodiversity and counteracting climate change and air pollution. The loss of a large tree is tragic - they are irreplaceable within a lifetime - we should strive to maintain the legacy rather than lose it.

The tree planting by Long Buckby Parish Council has successfully visually improved the Station Road area.

Trees are aesthetically pleasing in as much as they 'break up' what could otherwise be a bland landscape both within urban and rural areas providing they are managed well.

This is not my opinion these are facts established by scientific studies. See reports published by the Woodland Trust on the benefits of trees for example. <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/research-and-evidence/>

It has long been documented about the advantages of having mature trees in the urban landscape. Destroying ancient trees to make way for development and planting saplings is not a solution to the problem

Because I studied Environmental Science and read numerous papers about the devastation deforestation is having on our planet.

Because green spaces - including trees - significantly contribute to our mental and physical health and wellbeing

It is important that the multitude of benefits is recognised, so that there are building controls. So, areas can't just be cleared and the trees 'replanted' elsewhere. You cannot

replace the utility, the look or feel of a mature, established tree. What is a baby acer compared to a mature lime for example!

Trees are not being routinely replaced in Northampton. Research conducted for us by the University of Northampton in 2019 showed 58% of street trees had disappeared in Far Cotton alone in the last 50 years. It is easy to extrapolate this could be the case in other areas of Northampton/shire. We are particularly interested in areas of deprivation where we feel there are increasing levels of tree inequality.

As many animals live in trees, they are important for keeping our local ecosystems healthy and we should strive to maintain trees and wooded areas well.

Trees have aesthetic value and have been proven to improve wellbeing just by seeing one. It also improves air quality and helps cool the air in summer increasing wellbeing. This is even more prominent with global warming. It also improves biodiversity, creates wildlife corridors, and provides food and shelter for animals. On top of which absorbs carbon from the atmosphere all of which improve the planet.

Healthy for our lives

Trees don't last forever and especially with diseases like ash die back. So, there should be a continuous tree planting plan. Trees already in place need monitoring and maintaining to ensure healthy and thriving. Development corporations should be held accountable for environment-based law. All new developments should enhance their environment and take account of the nature already in that area. Too much is being damaged or destroyed. Vital to help provide a healthy and beautiful environment to support our populations health and wellbeing. Contribute towards counterbalancing carbon emissions. The benefits are too numerous to mention here but are evidence backed.

They provide shelter and privacy to our properties in streets where homes are close together. They also block and absorb excess noise. The greenery is soothing to the soul and looking after them brings much joy and happiness. It is also a very good way to connect with neighbours and other likeminded people.

They clean the air, provide a vital habitat for nature, and provide shade and shelter. They make an area look prettier. They absorb sound and some pollution. They make us aware of changing seasons. They are good for our mental health.

It is vital that we reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere - trees do this. It is also important to plant native species of trees.

Experience, reading and scientific evidence.

I give up a lot of free time supporting the friends of Eastfield Park and want to see WNC support the group more

Because they provide habitats / break up concrete and green is generally good for us

From a people perspective, having access to trees in urban areas is vital for wellbeing, particularly in deprived areas where people may not have access to their own garden or many open spaces. They're good for mental wellbeing and their presence provides a cooler, calmer and more beautiful environment for people to spend time in/near. They also reduce/buffer noise and remove pollutants (particulates and greenhouse gases) from the air which have immediate health benefits. A good local tree plan can also be a magnet for community engagement which is something that so many people crave these days. Being part of a community can help individuals and groups to truly thrive and belong. From an environmental perspective, they are essential to the health and future existence of our planet. They absorb CO₂, remove pollutants, have a dramatic effect on the temperature of streets and can address the 'heat island' effect in urban areas. They are a flood defence, which is particularly relevant with the more extreme weather patterns that we are seeing which are exacerbated too by all of the extreme construction that we are seeing locally, coupled with many people paving over their drives and gardens.

The climate change mitigation effects are well documented. The benefits to mental health have been studied and are recognised by public health organisations. Trees will become important at the human level for: shade, well-being, cooling, absorption of pollutants, flood control along the river where flood plains need to be restored with species such as alder, Salix species, dogwoods and other marshy ground tolerant species or those who can survive wet and dry. At the biodiversity level trees provide nesting sites and if grown with the strata of a woodland or copse ecosystem i.e., as a corridor with ground level, shrubs, small and medium trees a range of animal classes can thrive. It is important to think in terms of connecting corridors that connect urban and rural tree environments. This would include parkland and allotments and traffic islands

For human mental health: The advantages/benefits are obvious. Support nature, improve places visually, reduce climate issues and improve people's well-being. 'Green canopies' help mental health. Science shows us that trees and plants are essential for life on earth. Important in maintaining clean air, supporting animals, birds and insects

We would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment, and reinstatement of Northampton street trees.

I am very concerned re the Climate and Ecological Emergency and I am aware of the importance of trees in the natural cycle

3. Should the Council pursue a programme of mass tree planting to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere? If it did, what else it should seek to achieve alongside removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere?

A number of respondents chose not to answer this question, however from those that did:

42 answered yes

18 answered no

Comments received, not all those who answered yes/no provided additional comments:

Comments with a **yes** answer:

Oak trees cut down when not necessary. Green Lane in West Hunsbury, trees were cut down because of proximity to houses. The trees had been there for hundreds of years before the houses were built, so why was permission granted to build the houses so close to the trees? Why are people allowed to cut down trees outside their property? Surely, local councils should have to grant permission and then only if the trees are dangerous.

Trees that over run roads have fallen which nearly caused a car crash

A prime example of how not to manage trees happened on Hilldrop Rd between The Hayride and Penn Gardens in East Hunsbury. A hedge planted some 20+ years previously which had not been managed, the Beech Trees which made up the hedge had grown to between 3 - 4 meters in height when these were complained about the Borough Councils answer was to treat these trees as if they were still a hedge, they were chopped down to 1 meter stumps. So 100 meters of trees were decimated. Similar hedgerows exists elsewhere. Also, at a time when much development is planned, trees must be protected. Having previously served on Leicester City Planning Committee I do have some experience with TPO's.

I love the trees in our own garden but particularly appreciate those in Abington Park and the Cherry trees behind Pyket Way, Weston Favell.

Living in Weston Favell the trees in and around Church Way are always a welcome sight when passing by.

W.N.C and the previous Borough council have no policy towards tree management or planning ,as witnessed by their inability to prune dead wood out of trees or to clear up broken branches that fall from trees on footpaths and roadways. Inappropriate trees have been planted alongside footpaths i.e. Rowan trees planted alongside footpaths so that rowan berries foul the footpaths in autumn. The leaf fall from deciduous trees are a yearly problem in that are left to rot where they fall and left to be blown into people's property.

I cannot believe that councils planted trees that would grow to quite large sizes in residential areas. Tree management in my area is very poor. Following recent storms branches (and trees) fell. These storms were in October 2021 and where fallen, are still in situ. It seems the council contract out to the cheapest sub- contractor who do the minimum of work for the price. Work never seems to be inspected. This estate has many "alley ways" between streets and the council planted many trees in these that are totally unsuitable- for example, why plant a Rowan that will produce berries, these drop to the floor and people then walk on them, making the paths both messy and dangerous. In the autumn leaves are rarely swept which again leaves paths dangerous to walk on. My husband has actually been to clear these himself at times! The area has many very

pleasant walks to complete but again, following recent storms these are now littered with fallen branches that have not been cleared up as promised

Live in a road with trees with TPOs and fear for their management

There are innumerable cases. I have taken up the case of pavement access due to badly planted hedges in Clumber Drive restricting access for pedestrians with Councillor Kilbride, but nothing has been done (I complained in September last year and several times since). Visibility of signposts for access to the A14 is another bone of contention when the trees are in full leaf. Also, it is impossible to walk from my house to that of a friend without being hit in the face by branches from trees belonging to homes where the trees have been planted too close to the pavement. I also complained to Councillor Kilbride about the fallen trees on the Billing Road which had been removed from the road and cut up but left on the verge. He told me that they would be collected later, though it would have been far more cost effective to do the job properly in the first place.

There outside property's they cause problems in storms should not grow trees near homes there's problems when trees grow underneath homes and causes a lot of subsidence

Trees at the abbey are important to remain. Trees need to be maintained better to prevent damage when they fall. Trees look good down the sides of main roads - block noise & make the town look more attractive.

Trees removed because of lack of care or not appropriate species for limited space. No replacements.

I work for the Woodland Trust and have been talking to the Council about how we might be able to support them in developing a tree strategy.

I am trying to get more trees planted in and around my village and I have found there is no consistency when getting permission. Answers change depending on who replies to my emails

The canopy needed to be cropped as this was causing danger to cars and pedestrians. Also, the roots are pushing up the pavement outside my house, but nothing has been done to help this tree.

Confusing and leading question! Not quite sure what it is asking but... Experience of trees and tree management tends to be that attitude is very negative - trees are seen as a problem which needs to be solved by removal, rather than a natural resource which we should make adaptations to in order to preserve. Tree management should not be about removing trees to solve issues with access for example, but more intelligent approaches to management and development design so trees can be maintained and more planted. Tree management to date appears to be underfunded, not focussed on maintaining trees, lacks a unified strategy, and too often resorts to removal (and lack of replacement) to solve perceived "problem" trees. Current system of single contractor with enforced monopoly on any tree planting/maintaining makes it artificially expensive and overly complicated to get trees planted, even when it is a simple project. Deal with

contractor also appears to make it more profitable to find reason to remove trees, rather than look after them.

I campaigned to save a local tree which was 200 years old. Despite numerous objections to it being cut down it was not saved by the planning committee of the council. It had a preservation order too. This tree was particularly appreciated by residents and visitors alike and its removal has affected the ambience of the area and left my house without natural protection from the sun and rain.

Yes, so so disappointed when trees are destroyed to allow development - e.g., a couple of years back close to Cheyenne Walk in town

We need to line more the streets of Wootton with trees and wildflower rather than just grass verges to mow. If we have space, put it to good use.

I feel that trees should only be removed when the case is justified and there should be a planting of more trees as a matter of course. In public spaces fruit trees should be planted so as to provide a source of fresh fruit for local residents.

I am an ex-farmer and lifelong conservationist. I have initiated and am leading a rewilding and tree planting initiative in my Parish and have started a local Wildlife Group to get others involved in this work.

I have also begun an initiative propagating and planting Dutch Elm Disease resistant Elm cultivars in an attempt to replace our lost elms. Since the M1 became a smart motorway. Most of the trees along its borders were removed. The noise level has increased several fold in our location due to this even to the extent we would not have chosen to live in a location as noisy as ours has become.

A huge tree was felled by the alley between Birchfield and Ashburnham Rd - all it needed was for the wall to be removed and the new fence to go around the tree. Each tree felled causes sadness to one or many.

I think the council are very quick to remove trees that should be looked after.

Sponsored trees at Charter wood Delapre. As trustee of local charities supported tree planting

Trees in my road have had to be removed by the council because of disease, but they have not been replaced.

I have watched HS2 felling so many beautiful trees - including large, mature oaks. I feel with a little more consideration and will, many could have been saved and worked around. Saving even one would have been an achievement.

I see a lot of mature (tall/big) trees which are now causing apprehension and nuisance for residents who live nearby. This is by no fault of the tree, but often comes down to a legacy of poorly thought-out planting schemes, or more often, poorly thought out building design and layout. Addressing these sorts of issues will be key in developing a sustainable coexistence between the built environment, those that live within it, and trees. Ensuring that large trees persist within the landscape is also particularly important

and so providing spaces where these big environmental/ecological/beautiful features can provide benefits without causing conflicts should be a major aim. Part of this relies on making sure there is suitable below ground space as well as air space for the tree to grow into in the long term. On the flipside, providing spaces within new developments for small and medium-sized trees should be a long-term aim. This requires input from multiple disciplines working together, as opposed to what is often a situation of opposing departments pulling in different directions.

I am particularly concerned about trees within our cemeteries as a number of them are overgrown and have not been managed in the past. In particular, the trees that line the avenues in Dallington Cemetery are far too large now and block out light making the cemetery an even more depressing place than it actually should be. I can remember some 40 plus years ago when these trees were a lot shorter in height and as very little tree management has taken place since that time, they are now out of hand.

Some trees have been removed from planting holes on park avenue north, Abington and not been replaced. Not enough street trees around Abington /Phippsville where there are many homes and school with increased traffic pollution

Having worked with the WLTBCN who manage trees for the benefit of wildlife, I know how valuable trees are and how proper management can mitigate future issues. Planting trees in the right places can help with flood defence as well as create habitat for birds. We are able to live alongside trees - it is important to include them in developments and urban environments.

When trees are cut down because they are old or diseased they should be replaced as a matter of course.

We had to fundraise to get this done and I ended up paying £400 of my own money to replace a tree cut down in a public place.

Our community group (saveourstreettrees.org) has been running since 2016 with the aim of promoting, protecting and (re)planting street trees in Northampton. We've been working with councillors and council officers, as well as partners such as The Woodland Trust and urban forester Russell Horsey at Woodland Dwelling, to engage with residents about urban trees, and retain and plant more street trees in the town. Lack of regular maintenance is a key area of concern for residents. Environmental contractors should be tasked to regularly maintain and carefully manage Northampton street trees wherever possible. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential problems further down the line.

We feel strongly that valuable urban trees should be replaced in situ when taken out.

- We would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees.
- In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable.
- There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in Northampton, which will measure

current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting.

- We believe there should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance.
- Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.
- We feel strongly that there should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge benefits trees bring to people and wildlife. Studies have shown urban trees boost social cohesion, reduce anti-social behaviour and littering, as well as improve air quality, and provide biodiverse corridors that breathe life into urban areas. Recent research shows people who have trees within walking distance of their homes also have a lower risk of developing psychological distress.
- We believe in the right tree for the right place. That more appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas – and more research is done on the kind of trees that can cope well with our increasingly warm urban climate.
- We believe alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them.

The trees planted on older streets in Northampton are particularly beautiful at different times of the year. Sadly, those that are lost seem not to be replaced. London planes on Wellingborough Road between Abington Park and Westone - huge and strong . Flowering trees on Clarence Avenue - old and beautiful - not being replaced Chiltern Avenue - old trees not being replaced. Queens Park Parade - mostly lines that help reduce pollution around two schools and a nursery on one of our busiest roads.

Supporting/tree warden of the Save Our Trees project in Penrhyn Road

The collection of trees in Abington Park is outstanding and should be cared for and conserved especially as they age and need replacement. The trees in the streets throughout Northampton are excellent and should be valued and expanded. I have a mature holly tree at bottom of my garden with several birds nests every year.

I have supported in a small capacity as a Tree Warden supporting a local campaign in Rushden & Higham Ferrers where trees are being threatened by a new housing development

Excellent collaboration with St Giles church / community group and the council to ensure succession of planting this year and replacement of old dead trees

I feel that people are too quick to remove trees. They take years/decades to establish yet can be cut down in a matter of minutes. I've seen examples of people cutting down or pollarding trees that are on council land (and that they do not have the right to cut) taking them down to improve their light/view. I feel that an awareness campaign on the benefit of trees would be very beneficial to help people protect trees rather than remove them. The removal of a tree here and there

may not seem like much, but the sum of the parts is having a devastating effect on our local environment and the biodiversity.

I was shocked that an entire row of trees along a footpath and brook on farmland adjacent to our village were felled a few years ago. I walked past these trees almost daily year-round, and they were alive with birds in the spring. I was informed by the Parish Council that they were deemed to be unsafe. It seemed to me that no attempt had been made to manage them. And to date no attempt has been made to replant. There is such widespread destruction of mature trees in our county to make way for housing, warehousing, and the rail freight interchange. A huge loss to habitats.

I have trees outside the back of my flat in the summer I get no sun or light into the garden, then in the winter I can rarely use my disability access due to fallen leaves making it slippery and getting caught up in my rollator causing it to get jammed, due to the fallen leaves.

As mentioned above the tree cover must be increased dramatically. Tree species can be planted that are appropriate for the specific locality as long as the overview includes reference to the long term and as wide a variety of different species and size and longevity of trees. I would like to see more gardens for wildlife created. There should also be a consideration of the concept of agroforestry systems for food production either as new common land systems or by rethinking the current allotment structures. If we think about biodiversity, we can also think about food production. Trees such as hazel, blackthorn, walnut (not exactly indigenous but will grow here as its warmer), fruit trees are all medium sized trees but will hit the biodiversity targets and begin to cement the idea that local food production is an important part of the resilience of a community whether urban or rural.

I was very disappointed that a 200-year-old tree near to where I live in Northampton Town centre was removed a year or so ago despite many objections from residents. I don't think enough consideration was given about its removal. I also work as a Park volunteer and would like to see more trees planted in our local parks. As a town resident I would like more trees to put into streets. Please just ensure any new planted trees get watered properly and consistently until they are established. I have seen newly planted trees die in parks due to lack of water or poor positioning.

I've had the joy of seeing 6 new trees planted in St Giles church yard. Putting something back that will last longer than me and benefit future generations.

I have known of several well-established trees be removed with a promise they would be replaced. This has not taken place to date

We have responsibility for managing approx. 8.5 acres of woodland and they are wonderful for the diversity of wildlife they support. However, they bring issues with neighbours who want us to cut down trees because they feel the tree is blocking their light or the leaves are blocking their downpipes, or they are too near their boundary etc. even though all the trees were there before the houses! People like trees so long as they look pretty from a distance and don't have any direct impact on them.

4. Street trees are recognised as important, but they can also cause problems for people through raising pavements, affecting TV reception and so on. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much value should the Council place on retaining street trees, and how much on removing them to manage these issues. On this scale, '1' means remove trees wherever they have an adverse effect of some kind, and '10' means keep them unless there is a legal duty to remove them? (For the purposes of this question, we call any tree in a town or village which is near someone's home a 'street tree'.)

Not all respondents answered this question.

1 Remove	6 responses
2	2 responses
3	3 responses
4	2 responses
6	9 responses
7	7 responses
8 Keep	40 responses

Most respondents chose to 8 to keep the trees

5. Please explain your answer to question 4 and explain in what types of cases you think street trees should be kept or removed, or what other action should be taken.

The responses have been detailed below from the comments relating to how respondents scored from 1 - 8

1 Remove responses

Street trees should be kept to a height no higher than surrounding houses .They should be pollarded to confine growth to the main part of the tree trunk

I have previously lived in a terraced street that had cherry trees planted along it. Spring time you have the mess of the blossom then eventually the berries which make paths dangerous to walk on and look very messy.

Trees are allowed to grow too big and are not looked after.

When I see a tree in my area and a storm you need to check all streets trees and building them outside properties is not good because they could fall on my bungalow dangerous

When trees are diseased or dead, they should be removed but they're not they're not even inspected.

We agree as a whole street the tree's placed behind our flats are a pain not only do they block daylight for people especially ground floor flats, but in windy weather we have branches and twigs banging off our windows. Along with it making the path as well as gardens extremely hazardous especially in winter months.

2 Responses

Some trees are very old and are damaging pavements, property, and pedestrians. They need proper management and if to problematic replacing

Obviously, the trees planted in towns need maintaining. And it is the Council's duty to do this as they are responsible for the urban environments.

3 Responses

This area was overplanted many years ago. Often the wrong species was planted, and these have grown too large. Due to neglect, these trees are not healthy, have become overgrown with large overhanging branches and roots lifting up pathways. In some areas they cause blind spots for traffic. Cherry and Rowan trees in area are a major issue with blossom, fruit and leaves littering paths and leaving mess that can be hazardous.

Trees should be removed if they damage streets - trip hazard.

Trees blocking light & entrance to houses should be removed.

Trees should be removed/not planted along terrace streets - block parking when the council are already not managing the parking crisis. Trees should remain where there is adequate parking &/or across the street from houses. Trees should remain in gardens, but the council should support with regular & adequate maintenance, so they do not cause damage/hazard.

Trees should be planted in sensible places (behind houses, across the street, in green areas) to add to aesthetic beauty & absorb carbon dioxide. The council should adequately maintain all trees to prevent damage, becoming overgrown & impacting on residents' lives.

I think that trees should be removed if they are creating access problems, particularly if there is no other way to solve these problems. I also think they should be removed if diseased in a way that would spread to other trees and cause more issues, if they disrupt pipework that is difficult to reroute, or are causing property damage that was unforeseeable at the time the property was built/tree was planted. I don't think trees should be removed just because TV signal is affected, or it is in front of someone's window.

4 Responses

If not a safety issue and people who live there, they should stay

Street trees should be kept wherever possible because of their advantageous effects on the environment. However, there are instances where they are too dangerous and need to be removed. A lot of these decisions need to be considered when a problem arises. However, the lack of tree maintenance makes it far more likely that a tree, left to its own devices and at the mercy of vandals, could become a danger to others and to the structure of buildings as well as to the provision of public utility services.

5 responses

In some place's trees are not being managed due to the costs of care, e.g. The trees in some pub gardens have grown above a manageable height. If pollarding is done regularly, they could remain in situ, but frequently this cost is prohibitive if there is some sort of financial grant available for the management of these trees it should be possible for them to be managed rather than replaced, this would be of benefit to everyone.

6 responses

Street trees must be carefully managed to prevent the footpaths becoming hazardous, in particular to disabled people.

I appreciate the problems but favour keeping them if possible it will always be a compromise.

Trees in a town are wonderful for shade, and for simply making streets more attractive but clearly must be of a suitable size and habit for the environment. They should be kept where possible but removed if causing major problems or expense - and replaced with a more suitable species where possible.

We value the trees but they can cause problems for my husband's wheelchair where they have seriously raised pavements or cracked them with roots rising through tarmac or making paving slabs hazardous

More & more green space has been sold for warehouses so at least keep trees in streets

If they are causing a danger, then necessary to remove. Otherwise, the priority should be to manage the growth

7 responses

I would like to see the tree strategy contain a presumption that street trees will be retained unless there is overriding evidence of a serious health and safety concern. There is a wording in Peterborough's tree strategy which covers this point very well. The tree strategy needs to set out clearly the benefits of trees and explain to people circumstances in which trees will not be removed, e.g., because they are dropping leaves on cars or blocking out satellite TV reception.

We are not the only species on this planet. Consideration needs to be taken to accommodate wildlife/ biodiversity in all we do. Without it we will not survive.

The loss of biodiversity due to development in our area must be enormous but no-one will have measured it yet. Due to this loss we need to be more mindful of the effect of actions like tree removal than we have in the past.

I think they should not be removed unless absolutely necessary. Because they cost money to maintain should not be a reason to cut down trees

We are not the only species on this planet. Consideration needs to be taken to accommodate wildlife/ biodiversity in all we do. Without it we will not survive. The loss of biodiversity due to development in our area must be enormous but no-one will have measured it yet. Due to this loss we need to be more mindful of the effect of actions like tree removal than we have in the past.

Keep mature street trees as they provide character and wildlife preserves. They bring a sense of nature and humility to build up areas. Builders should not be allowed to ravage streets and take these away.

Trees are the lungs of our planet and to continue this role for future generations we need to protect existing ones as much as possible unless causing significant issues on pavements or they have to be removed for legal reasons

8 Keep responses

They look nice

Every effort should be made to keep street trees. Only if they are a danger to the public or dying should the Council consider removing them.

The street I live on has trees and they were a deciding factor in us choosing this street. So many of the older trees have been removed due to their roots causing damage to the pavements and the atmosphere of the street was lost. Recently more appropriate tree species have been planted and the street looks absolutely lovely again

Improve the environment

It seems trees are being cut down or felled due to wind damage and never replaced. I also thought an avenue should have tree's, at the rate they are disappearing there will be none left soon.

In public spaces, Trees should be kept in all environments unless in terminal decline and likely to harm through falling limbs.

In private areas, (peoples gardens) against trees self-seeded and poor tree choices by previous owner, greater discretion should be given. Some level of negotiation needed for felling perhaps for trees over a certain height within a neighbourhood as it has impact on surrounding houses.

We should always plant the right tree in the right place. Also, so many trees have been lost over the years and never replaced. There is a suitable tree for every street and action needs to be taken now. We can improve our local environment for the better by planting trees

Leading question again - focussing on negative aspects of trees! As per previous response, far too often our attitude is that the tree is the problem - therefore should be removed when we do something which doesn't work. A tree may have been there for decades but because someone puts a satellite dish in the wrong place, has built a wall when it was clear a tree would grow and affect it, or wants to build a house where trees already are, it is the trees which have to go, rather than us taking the time, using better design, or simply accepting that compromises have to be made due to the huge benefits trees bring to us all.

Keeping trees is essential. It is common sense. The more trees we have the more impact they will have.

We all know there is a slight risk of a tree falling over or a branch falling off but that is a small

risk. The chances of being involved in a traffic accident or being victim to crime will be higher than being hit by a falling tree!

Tree removal as an utter last resort

Trees are vital to our wellbeing and the eco system and we should be actively planting more. As more development takes away our green fields, we must work hard to rejuvenate our towns and villages.

Street trees absorb harmful pollutants

Keep all trees unless they are a risk of causing harm or injury

As we see a massive negative change in our climate, as a county we need to do all that we can to combat the effect of CO2 on our atmosphere. Keeping our trees and allowing nature to do its thing is the least that we can do to battle the terrifying changes that we're seeing in the world

Trees are far more important and should be retained

Trees should only be removed if they are irrevocably diseased, pose direct harm to the environment or to people living nearby.

Around here, Birchfield Rd, there are many gaps where street trees have been removed and not replaced.

Trees can be properly managed to prevent them from causing problems. Any removed should be replaced with new trees

In most cases with some care and by being looked after most trees should stay or be replaced.

Trees have huge benefits for people living in urban areas - and there is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing, the local economy and wildlife.

In development proposals, mature trees in situ should by default be considered for retention, then removal only when unavoidable. Alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides.

A tree should only be removed where there are proven risks to retaining it which cannot be overcome in any other way e.g., by maintenance or making changes to manmade structures or behaviour.

If WNC and the UK in general has any hope of meeting its carbon budget and net zero targets, we need to value trees as an important mechanism for removing carbon from the atmosphere, rather than seeing them as untidy or inconvenient.

Street trees in my opinion have lacked maintenance from councils. If the right sized tree was planted for the environment it was in it would only require minimal maintenance. The benefits of street trees out way any negatives

They provide shade and oxygen to the environment around them

They should be kept, replaced, increased

If suitable urban species were planted in the right places - and the trees that were planted were routinely maintained, given adequate tree pits, and watered in the first two years – there would be many fewer 'problems'. Problems come from poor management, lack of expertise (hence the need for a well-paid tree officer at council level) and wrong tree in the wrong place. Historic plantings have planted forest trees, which can get too big for the space in urban areas - however judicious pruning and maintenance could remedy these problems. We believe alternatives to felling are made a priority, with risk balanced against the benefits a tree provides. That planning policies are strengthened to help retain trees on development sites by building around them. We feel having a single point of contact for tree issues i.e., Tree Officer(s), would provide the nexus to encourage joined-up thinking about trees. This person/s would have the necessary expertise, and overview to coordinate between stakeholders. Lastly, if there was genuine engagement with communities on new tree planting projects - there would be less need for tree removal. We feel strongly that there should be more genuine community engagement in tree management decisions. Residents and community groups that are invested in their trees will be more likely to look after them and cherish them. There needs to be more education about the huge benefits trees bring to people and wildlife - not repetitive, and often mis-informed statements about them damaging paving and obscuring satellite dishes. Surely, we want streets of trees not satellite dishes. Engagement with a Tree Forum would also allow residents and community groups to have their voices heard and considered, allowing for greater cohesion, and understanding between residents' concerns and council decision making.

Street trees improve air quality next to roads, reduce the urban heat island effect and increase cooling in the areas with trees and make streets a nicer place. They also act as traffic calming due to making the road seem thinner.

The value of mature trees to the whole population of the town (shade, clean air, bio diversity) far outweighs the inconvenience to the few (roots and autumnal leaves)

The council should aim to maintain and promote the value of all mature trees in all areas of the town unless legally obliged otherwise. If trees are maintained properly there should not be a need for removal. Most people gave digital TVs so tv reception is a pathetic excuse to remove a tree.

Public need educating about why trees are there and the benefits. It's also about planting the right kind of new tree in the right place. Thinking of its impact over a long period of time.

I have noticed OLD very well-established trees being removed in Northampton. I am specifically referring to trees being removed near the Sol Centre on Barrack road to make way for buildings. It is heart-breaking. It has changed the look and feel of the road. Imagine how long it will take to get trees to grow back to the same size. Not to mention the effort and cost.

If they are diseased or damaged or cause a genuine problem such as blocking vital access.

Measures should be taken to keep street trees wherever possible, removing them should not be the default action, mitigation should be tried before this.

Trees take a long time to grow so more care should be taken before a decision is made to chop down even a single tree.

Many people don't have gardens their only but of green is the street trees

We really must move away from seeing trees as an inconvenience and place more education and awareness on their benefits. In our modern world we place so much emphasis on convenience, people can be too quick to ask for a tree to be removed or simply remove it themselves. Removal should always be a last resort and the council should stand strong and resist challenges to remove trees. More thought should go in to finding another solution to the problem that is presented. For example, if it's TV reception, maybe move the dish or ariel. Try to find creative solutions which mean that the end goal can be achieved whilst protecting nature. Trees are essential in our efforts to remove CO2 from the atmosphere, and we need to halve emissions globally by 2030 otherwise we will be presented with much bigger issues that whether or not a resident can get a TV reception! Be bold in your statements about the importance of trees and be proud to stand up for them and create an urban tree regeneration project that our county and future generations can be proud of! We have a very short window and moment in time to make a difference. Why wouldn't we?!

Trees can be managed. There are two huge horse chestnut trees in front gardens in my street. One is in competition with telephone lines and is periodically reduced.

I think the biodiversity crisis is such that we have to change our attitude to nature and no longer consider whether a tree is a useful commodity or not. Our attitude should be that if we are to improve the health of any environment for future generations then we have to behave as if we are part of nature and not continue to impose ourselves on it. Tree planting is more important (if done with nature in mind) than our need to watch TV or park our cars. Small trees can be planted in 1.5-metre-high planters as they are in Abington Street, so infrastructure is protected. It is a travesty to allow mature trees to be felled by planners or property developers. Mature oaks were felled as part of a care home development in Spinney Hill. This is criminal - 300-year-old trees. We need to think differently.

Unless the tree pose a danger to life or have died and need replanting.

All trees should be kept as long as possible. If they die, they should be replaced and their future welfare should be addressed - i.e., regular watering , pruning if necessary, etc. We need mature trees. They add so much to the local environment. There is always a slight risk that a tree may fall over, or a branch may come off in bad weather conditions. This should not cause us too much alarm. We cannot change nature.

There should be no need to remove street trees unless they are diseased or dead. It's not the tree's fault that it is outgrowing its environment. This is all about planting the right trees in the right place - if a street tree is raising pavements then it is because the wrong tree has been planted in that location. If they are growing too high or thick then again it is all about the wrong tree planted where it is not suitable.

If a targeted programme of street tree planting is implemented this must take into account, the right tree for that environment.

How should West Northamptonshire Council best use its planning powers to manage trees? For example, should it use its powers to make tree preservation orders more or less; should it change the way it protects trees on development sites?

As it is seems alright

Mature trees should be protected from felling on developments sites. Too many perfectly healthy trees are cut down to make way for developments. Developers should be forced to work round mature trees. Planting new trees elsewhere on their site is no compensation for trees which have been growing for hundreds of years. More preservation orders should be made AND ENFORCED!

In build-up areas stress should have a notice if they are a danger

Not only should TPO's be used but such developments should made fully aware there duty to ensure that no accidents should befall these protected trees.

Look after trees and make tree preservation orders in advance of any threat. When approving any new housing areas make tree preservation orders first so that site and road planning takes their position into account. Otherwise, developers may (usually will) take the easy option of getting rid of them before anybody can object.

Careful management of planning on building sites would help, plus accurate note kept of trees on these sites and no "Accidental" removal of mature trees un-necessarily should be prevented.

More TPO's would be helpful.

Ancient trees and forests in particular should be protected from development (not sure what whether there are many in West Northants) and other trees should be planted and protected on development sites to help slow down water runoff.

Stop using sub-contractors! Employ your own staff who can be monitored. Looking after trees is a full-time process.

Make tree planting compulsory if it isn't already, on new estates, business parks etc. Surely many old trees have TPOs already, but if not, why not?

Appoint someone who knows about trees with proper qualifications. Far greater care needs to be taken when planning new developments as developers are still allowed to plant trees in inappropriate places.

Depends on where you grow them if you grow trees any near people property and they fall on their buildings the council could be made to pay for damage on private property on council property people feel afraid when a storm damage could fall on council bungalow or house and they would have nowhere to go

TPOs should not be used by planning depts.

Planners need to speak to residents who live in areas. Trees are nice in parklands but only in residential areas if appropriate trees are planted and these are then maintained.

Surely, as council tax payers, this is local money the council are using and therefore we should be asked what we want in our community.

Trees should be protected when in sensible places. Trees should not be protected when not in sensible places. New development should by law have to include green spaces & trees.

New housing sites need to have more street trees and I feel older more historical trees need to be kept to preserve what was there. The horse chestnut on Billing Road being removed was an absolute travesty. The look and feel of Billing Road was hugely impacted by the removal of this tree

If needed yes

Re plant when cut down and protect large mature trees when land is cleared.

Protect all existing trees on development sights and make an obligation of the developers to plant new trees as part of the development. The landscaping of the eastern district in Northampton is superb due to the trees and avenues of tree and grass pathways through the district for wildlife and human mindfulness.

The Council should use TPOs to protect trees which have significant amenity value. But it is also important to put adequate funding into enforcement, as not enforcing TPOs can lead to public distrust in the system.

The Council should also aim for the tree strategy to support policies for protection and planting of trees which are in the Local Plan and to provide more detail on how these policies will be delivered in practice.

Listen to the community

Recognise that trees are a hugely important natural resource and make this a key part of a coherent strategy to maintain existing trees and increase canopy cover, particularly in urban areas. Properly fund this strategy, including at least one qualified, full time tree officer to oversee strategy. Prioritise tree protection and planting, so trees come first. There is no reason new development cannot be cleverly designed to preserve existing trees. Make tree planting in situ a key criterion of all developments. Increase TPOs, make protecting trees easier, and properly enforce existing and new TPOs. Proactively insist on a tree survey (at developers cost) on all development sites to identify trees worthy of protection (similar to archaeological or ecological surveys ahead of developments)

Change current planning laws to protect trees

There were a number of comments regarding TPOS being made on trees

Protection of trees is vital

More preservation and established trees should be kept on new housing estates rather than being ripped out and the land flattened

I think that we should be trying our best to transform unused spaces of land into ecosystems for endangered animals and insects- which would be done by planting trees, and also other native flora. As well as that I think that we should investigate new innovative ideas RE greenery to incorporate more trees into our towns and villages

The council should use its powers to prevent trees from being cut down and make planting sufficient new trees for new developments part of its planning policy.

Planting enough new trees to offset the development and sufficient green space should be criteria for all new developments. Planning permission should be rejected if not met.

Ensure that preservation is key .If trees are removed then a replacement program including management over long term period to ensure success

Any tree that is removed should be automatically replaced. All trees that have been removed in the past should be replaced.

I think there should be more protected trees, for example, where the trees have been a part of streets for many years, e.g., Kingsland Avenue, they should not be removed without notice or explanation. I think that there should be a limit on tree clearance in parks, for example in Abington park, quite a few trees have been removed recently, which is sad.

Each mature tree should have a TPO, and all new developments should work around the mature trees.

Developers should be charged with planting suitable new trees to provide corridors between trees, groups of trees and gardens.

Developers should be required to plant a selection of trees from a list of trees suitable to support bio diversity and grow suitably within an urban environment. Mono- cultures avoided.

Stop allowing hundreds of trees to be cut down for road improvements unless absolutely vital and replaced 10-fold with new ones. The destruction of trees on the road out to Corby near Overstone, and from Junction 15 to Roade has been nothing short of shocking, though I will concede it has improved the safety of the junctions on the latter. I hope these are replaced and monitored until they are fully established.

Construction should work around nature, rather than cut everything down and build over it. We've witnessed the shocking removal of a whole line of mature trees in Hardingstone recently as part of the Landimore development. This should be unacceptable. Developers can be ruthless and much tighter controls should be placed around what they can and can't do. Protect what we already have and plant more. The planning team should take a strong position and ensure that nature is preserved first and foremost. Ecology report should be accurately conducted, and the outcome respected. If there is a finding from the ecology report that is inconvenient to the planner, then it should still be respected. Nature is irreplaceable. Construction should be sympathetic and protective of our natural environment as we are dependant on the health of our natural world for our own human existence. All trees and hedging in the planning process should be protected. I saw a planning application recently which supported the removal of 7 mature apple trees as they were deemed 'insignificant'. No tree should be insignificant. TPOs are important but it should not take the presence of a TPO to deem that a tree should be saved.

A lot could be done through planning to preserve corridors of intact habitats and mature trees around and within development sites. I think this should be mandated in planning applications. This would benefit the developments themselves when finished and be a resource for the new residents also.

Making less tree preservation orders some trees are beyond saving and need chopping down before a serious accident happens, cut more than 2 meters off of trees that are over grown especially near flats and houses as the twigs bang on windows in windy weather. Chop trees down that are blocking daylight into flats for example the cost of electricity is going up, yet some flats even mid-summer have to have lights on due to trees stopping daylight into premises.

There could be an issue of disease e.g., in Chestnuts and Ash. - but not all. The ash certainly was an issue of sourcing from Europe - the disease was bought in.

No tree dies naturally - if the roots are left it will sprout vegetatively.

I think more trees especially the deciduous hardwoods like beech and oak should be preserved. These indigenous species should be planted as a priority and watered effectively. I not there are different varieties of oaks planted in Abington park . Developers should be providing proper naturalised landscaping, common land/allotments, and tree planting as part of planning specifications and clauses (Civic Living strip of houses in Houlston just outside Rugby has used the natural agricultural land and hedgerow as part of the green space and has left an orchard in tack. WNC should look at other councils approaches.

Yes, management is important for the health of the environment - no wanton felling - it needs to be guided with expertise from all perspectives and not for ease of the developers or conflict with infrastructure.

Enforce the tree preservation orders that exist for a start, which should require regular checks on those trees with a TPO to ensure they are still in place and healthy. If a TPO tree is not being cared for, then ideally there should be advice and support to help the tree owner look after the tree better and if they persist in neglect or cut it down then there should be stringent penalties enforced. I don't know enough about the way trees are protected on a development site.

7. How can the Council's new Tree Policy & Strategy achieve the best outcomes for West Northamptonshire, and how should it work with other policies and projects of the Council and other government bodies working in the area?

The enforcement of laws and regulations should be strictly adhered to - it seems to me that Councils are lax in this and developers and builders can flout these with impunity

Other than enforcing TPO's in a sensible manner, I don't know what laws apply

I am not sure of legislation but feel sure the number of trees in residential areas is monitored. I do however feel that even trees with TPO attached to them are not "looked after" and become dangerous to people etc.

New planting on new developments

There can be too much interference with councils from the government there's a lot of paperwork for Cllrs to read but bye laws sometimes are too old they do a lot of interfering with

doctors surgery's I'm on PLC not many doctors around only have one when his not there we get locum in there useless

The amount of HMOs allowed in areas - this is certainly not being adhered to in far cotton. Parking - ensuring there is adequate parking & any new developments/changing of building use include plans for adequate parking - assuming that people will use public transport is not good enough.

Improve roadside parking but still plant trees

The Green agenda, plant trees for the jubilee, carbon offsetting.

We covered this point in the Woodland Trust's submission to the councillors' task and finish group on the tree strategy. There are, for example, regulations in the Highways Act in relation to trees and there are potentially opportunities to encourage more tree planting through changes proposed under the Environment Act (2021): for example, the new requirement for biodiversity net gain in planning. Changes proposed to agricultural subsidies will put more emphasis on "public money for public good", which could encourage more woodland creation on farm land. The Forestry Commission is offering an increasing range of grants to support woodland creation and there are other sources of grant aid being made available by Government departments (e.g., DEFRA's Treescape Fund).

Planting more trees and creating green spaces.

Less building - more preservation

Plant more trees

I think the council should come up with its own set of regulations to help combat climate change and increase better thought out and sustainable landscapes rather than relying on central government.

Climate change and how trees can have a positive effect in making a change and helping to clear pollutants

Felling Licenses for any cutting / chopping of trees. TPO's. Conservation Areas - trees should be left alone and cared for.

We would suggest the following are of most relevance, but our partner The Woodland Trust has also responded to this question in more detail:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/england-trees-action-plan-2021-to-2024>
- The National Planning Policy Framework contains many references to trees in planning.
- <https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/research/common-sense-risk-management-of-trees/>
- <https://www.tdag.org.uk/> has several very good research documents about urban trees and planning.
- <https://treecouncil.org.uk/science-and-research/tree-strategies/>

- The Occupiers Liability Act and Health and Safety at Work Act for risk management of trees by the local authority.
- The Town and Country Planning Act has the statutory obligation to protect and plant trees by the local authority, also administering TPOs and assessing planning applications.

England Trees Action Plan

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/987432/england-trees-action-plan.pdf

It's not just laws and legislation, they should be looking at best-practice guidelines on ecology and climate change, and consulting relevant organisations e.g., Wildlife Trusts, Woodland Trust and RSPB

Property developers or land owners that 'sit' on land especially in the town.

How can West Northamptonshire Council work best with parish and town councils, voluntary groups and others to best manage trees in West Northamptonshire?

Keep them up to date

Keep in touch regarding any projects which affect those areas. All Parish Councils should be kept informed of all relevant projects, as well as groups such as Friends of West Hunsbury Parks (my group).

Get info to people

Many Parish Councils are looking to plant more trees some on land owned by WNC, there are larger grassed area's which would come under Highways where more trees could be planted. The organisation NACRE based in West Hunsbury.

By consulting as early as possible with all, including local Residents Associations and Conservation Groups.

Draw up plans of vegetative areas and ensure that every effort is made to preserve all that is good about each area concerned

Pretty much as above, all departments should keep the policy in mind when organising projects. They should talk to local representatives and engage with local landowners as well as businesses.

Seek the advice of Woodland Trust, BCN Wildlife Trust and other forestry and tree organisations - they will offer advice and assistance. Co-operation is always better than confrontation.

Voluntary groups are very good but are often not protected by H&S policies etc.

Consultation

Build more open spaces and trees can go there like Victoria Park in in Bow E3 and Foster Park in Kent take a look at other areas in other towns

As above but also it would be good for council members to attend groups in person to discuss this.

If voluntary groups were to attempt to manage trees in our area, we feel the council would possibly reprimand us. Again H&S issues and risk assessments needed.

Provide assistance with maintaining the trees such and create local tree management groups who look after and tend to the trees

Give local groups resources and guidance

Listen to their concerns, usually ignored.

Coordination of skills, sharing of equipment and signposting to government pots of money available for such projects. Encouraging and rewarding those councils which prioritise trees and green spaces.

Involvement of town and parish councils is particularly important, as they often have land which may be suitable for tree planting and they usually have strong links with their local communities. It is worth noting that the Woodland Trust offers free community tree packs to enable small scale woodland creation (e.g., up to 400 trees) and these are available to schools, community groups and parish and town councils.

To make getting permission much easier. By changing some of the rules. I'm trying to get trees planted along the A428 outside Little Houghton but have been told trees have to be 10 metres from the kerb. There are no pathways so why 10 metres. Having a 2-metre distance would be much better

Listen

Consult and listen. Utilise the people willing to give up time to help with tree planting and looking after trees. Support them with funding and equipment and resources (for example to help watering new trees). Provide positive information and guidance to town councils and groups about the benefits of trees. Send a clear message that the council is prioritising the environment and putting trees first. Encourage and praise those doing the right thing by trees, and make it clear those who abuse the protections, or remove trees unnecessarily are on the wrong side of this. Run a publicity campaign to boost resident attitude to trees.

Talk to them, get them. They have residents' interests at heart not people who don't live in the area but just work for WNC.

Publicity. Advertise your plans to all. Encourage partnership work. Have a tree department with council staff!

More open & public consultation

Speak to the parishes and locals. Ask what they want in their areas. All variety to what we are planting and most importantly, make sure its priorities our wildlife

By working together

Listen to people

By creating a really strong bond with volunteers and townspeople - making them feel included in the improvement of their towns. Educating on the importance of trees in their communities, as well as passing on information to our youth about the different native species to our area. If people feel involved, they're more likely to care about the work that's happening

Plant more via local groups

By listening to their views whilst being aware the loudest or most eloquent voices are not necessarily the wisest or most informed.

Work with local communities to identify sites for new planning and how the council can make current towns and villages more green. Identify local sites that should be set aside for mass tree planting.

Involve communities in the development of the strategy. I have stumbled on this survey purely by chance. The strategy should not be developed internally then presented to communities when it's too late to have a say

By supporting projects and not putting financial barriers in the way
Recently as a trustee of a charity of a local parkland (council owned) we were offered over 50 trees free of charge by the rotary club who were to charged £500 a tree by the council to maintain the tree. Utter madness. The Rotary club could not afford this so the project did not get off the ground.

A tree officer at WNC would be able to work this out.

Inclusion, information, integration

Parish councils have an important role to play, as they often have more expertise in an area's needs. Increased funding for Parish and Town Councils for tree-planting projects could be effective.

Voluntary groups should also be supported, for example being supplied by the Council with trees (or at least the Council significantly contributing towards the cost or matching public donations) so that the group can plant them.

Again, by keeping all relevant personnel informed.

I'd suggest an online session open to all relevant organisations to launch the new policy and strategy.

Roles and responsibilities for tree management should be clearly documented, with support available for those who have questions or need clarification. A known and published point of contact within WNC for queries and support with tree management. Sharing information about what others are doing and how would be helpful - currently parish councils operate largely on their own and any communication between PCs is ad hoc and up to each PC to initiate. Publishing tree management FAQs or an online discussion forum might be considered.

Steering / focus groups

All should work together to achieve the same goal

Make it easier for voluntary groups for example making sure IDeverde are responsive in tree planting projects or allowing others to get involved. It is so expensive and complex to do (I am the chairperson of a voluntary group that has planted town centre trees this year)

Keeping them informed and getting their input. A monthly Tree Forum with all parties, stakeholders, and organisations (such as The Woodland Trust, CAWN and Save Our Street Trees) involved.

There is a lack of information about trees out there - and it would be helpful to have a tree hub on the council website for all related FAQs. A good tree policy will allow all parties to sing from the same hymn sheet!

Make sure that each group is involved in the decision, and that each group has the resources to carry out any delegated tasks.

Share the location of the trees managed by the council and encourage town and parish councils to help look after them and plant new homes in the areas.

The Tree Officers team should be able to advise and encourage local groups. They should be willing to work occasionally with community groups at their meetings. There should be members who can lead school projects. There should be regular press announcements and social media profiles.

Create a data base to register these groups and have meetings with them to hear their voices,

Invite them to meetings. Make accessible to all. For example, county hall has appalling accessibility. Corridors to lifts blocked and impossible to have a wheelchair in the seated area. Use social media to raise awareness.

Communication.

Keep them informed about any potential changes before these are going to happen.

By having joint membership with these other organisations to further knowledge together.

Clear and continued consultation to seek good solutions

Be really clear on a plan, including educating people on the benefits for wellbeing, the environment and, essentially, future generations.

Make it really easy to contact/work with the Council. Create a simple plan for approval to plant and remove all unnecessary barriers to plant - make it effortless so that people can make quick progress. Offer funding, if there is any.

Provide clear, unambiguous guidance and support on-demand regarding managing trees which might otherwise be removed.

Publicity about trees and the councils strategy is required. A lot of it. Recruit tree wardens. Put trees first!

How should the Council's new Tree Policy and Strategy work with other policies and projects of the Council and with other government bodies working in West Northamptonshire? - Work with other policies/projects/other government bodies

Work with parish councils

The Council could look to DEFRA and the Forestry Commission

Just talk to each other and listen as well

Roads, highways, planning should all co-ordinate with reference to the policy.

Not sure- you don't listen to public anyway!

Consultation with all parties.

Government never keep their policies they change them all the time and who breaks the law only the council

Engage with other authorities

All agencies should liaise with each other. It appears developers rule at the minute.

I am not a councillor, so I am not up to date with the policies and projects. I would hope with the environment being at a precarious point as highlighted internationally this week that the priority of protecting the Green environment would take precedence.

A key linkage will be to the West Northamptonshire Local Plan, as mentioned earlier. I also recently attended the launch of your new Sustainable Communities Strategy; community involvement can be a key component both in drawing up your tree strategy but also in delivering it.

By making tree planting a priority. Tree planting planning should be the start of every project

Needs to be coherent and fully joined up - tree strategy should inform other areas of policy and projects, for example local plan, development criteria and planning, and budgeting.

Essential as part of net zero policy

Appoint somebody who really cares about trees and give them the funding necessary to monitor the programme and liaise with relevant bodies.

Yes, definitely

By working closely with all necessary bodies and keeping all personnel informed of progress instead of working as a separate unit.

Difficult to say as I don't know what other policies and projects the council has - in general terms all policies should be aligned, with review and sign off processes in place to make sure they don't contradict one another.

I'd suggest in relation to the point about other government bodies that these are identified and proactively engaged with as part of the process of developing the Tree Policy and Strategy.

Be compatible with other schemes

With openness, honesty, and transparency.

Collaboration but not be pushed over too easily in terms of other priorities

Encourage more forest schools. Let every child have access to nature. More volunteering opportunities with retired and non-working communities. More community projects.

The policy should work in conjunction with other organisations

The policy and strategy must be 'joined up' with planning, transport, and decisions regarding schools and other public spaces.

Partnership work is crucial. Cannot comment on the details.

Please outline any additional comments that you feel may be appropriate and relevant for the Council to consider about management of tree in West Northamptonshire?

- Any additional comments

Just don't wait for the trees in build-up areas to fall

The Council should keep in mind biodiversity in both the trees and hedging plants

There are many pubs which now have overgrown trees inappropriately placed. These need to be managed, e.g. The trees in the grounds of the Trumpet pub in Weston Favell Northampton. They have been pollarded before but are now so high that houses across the road have to keep their lights on in the daytime even in Summer.

There are many initiatives in place around the country. Learn from other's experiences and be flexible in dealing with organisations and businesses

Again- find appropriate staff / contractors. You always seem to contract out to companies that do very little for the fees paid. Get our local councillors to complete "walkabouts" with local residents and "LISTEN" to us.

No trees in street or near a property private or council that why we have a lot of pot holes and subsidence parks and open spaces

More detail is needed to allow residents to be made aware of plans in area. Why is tree maintenance sub contracted out ? Often companies that council select then contract out work to other companies (umbrella contracts). Work is minimal and often not inspected.

Replace tree stumps with fresh trees

Make sure you have environmental and tree specialists included as part of and debate and they have a voice within the debate.

A lot of people in Northamptonshire want to help plant trees. Use the public to volunteer and suggest sites to plant trees, use local knowledge. Give parish council access to plant trees along roads leading in and out of their parish council. Help create a network of tree wardens that will look after and maintain trees

Plant more as previously said, remove dead and diseased.

Hurry up and get things done.

Rather than looking to save money and make maintenance easy, think about what is right for the generations to come. Plant like our future depends on it rather than how will we afford it.

To summarise - trees are so important, if we keep chopping them down and neglecting our environment, we're going to suffer massively in the years to come. Let's act now and start building change so that our kids and youth have a future to look forward to. Planting and maintaining trees is such an easy thing we can do to make a real difference

Please take time to look at the current research re biodiversity losses. You may not be aware of e.g., 43 million less birds than 20 years ago. Over 80% insect loss in same time. This includes the UK. Our Earth will not be able to support life (including us) if this continues. Think of how successive generations will view us .

Please work with communities more

I am always really saddened when trees are removed or damaged and not replaced.

Make sure your policies and financial support / restrictions are not barriers to delivery

- We would like West Northants Council to commit to its climate change targets with ongoing provision, investment and reinstatement of trees.
- I would like to see investment and recruitment of more qualified staff and, ideally, a Tree Officer at council level, to implement tree targets and better maintenance of street trees.
- There should be a formal tree mapping exercise in West Northamptonshire, which measures current tree canopy cover to see where there are areas for retention and expansion. This should also include an audit of council land to see where opportunities exist for tree planting.
- We believe there should be better and more regular programme of tree maintenance. That more appropriate, compact species of urban trees are chosen for urban areas. This includes planting sites that are appropriately designed and maintained for the health and longevity of the trees. That young trees are regularly watered, which would mitigate death, disease, and other potential problems further down the line.
- Community groups, residents and schools should also be more actively involved, and invest in tree planting projects.

Creating more paving planting holes for small trees in town streets

With more than 80 per cent of UK residents living in the built environment, it is our belief that access to green spaces and/or green views has never been more important. There is strong evidence to suggest that the closer trees are to people's homes, the more benefits they bring to the health and wellbeing of residents, and the local economy and wildlife.

Create meadows please and don't keep verges cut. DO NOT use weedkillers and insecticides in parks etc.

It's not enough to just chop everything down and say we can plant some more. A small sapling cannot support the diversity of nature that a huge old tree can. We are doing those who came before us a disservice by destroying their planting and those who come after us will suffer as a result of our selfishness. Money cannot buy hundreds of year-old trees. We should have a "no chop" policy in the county.

Make sure we have expert advice in order to ensure that any trees that are planted are right for the space they're going in to and for our changing, warming climate, so that they have the best chance of survival. A leafy suburban environment is attractive for residents and people considering moving in to the area. As well as all of the wellbeing and environmental benefits, a strong urban tree policy and programme could be a game changer for West Northants. Just imagine how engaged and proud everyone could be to be part of a huge tree regeneration programme! It could be amazing!

The council has made a bold pledge about becoming net zero by 2050 and yet everywhere I look in South Northants there is wholesale destruction of mature trees and hedgerows. Planning must be changing with immediate effect to halt this devastation. Development can be done in a much more sustainable way. it doesn't have to be all or nothing.

Please just get on with it! Plant more, save more and make tree management a priority.

Location

Respondents were asked to state the location that they were responding from:

Daventry

West Hunsbury - Green Lane, joining Lady bridge Drive with Hunsbury Hill Road. Hunsbury Hill Country Park.
Lady bridge Park and Wootton Brook Park.

Road from Blisworth to Gayton where trees over hang the road. These should be made safe

Abington Park and that behind Pyket Way but I'm particularly thinking about the whole area and new developments where there may be the opportunity both to preserve established trees and to ensure that new trees are planted as an essential part of granting planning permission.

Weston Favell/Northampton and the surrounding area

Lings area x 2

Riverside area

NN4 x 2

Penrhyn Road, Northampton x 2

Northampton x 5

Little Houghton

All of West Northants area x 2

Wootton village x 2

Mostly area ten mile radius of Nether Heyford but also all of the uk.

Dallington Cemetery

The Avenue Spinney Hill

Phippsville/Abington

Brackley and Northampton town

St Giles Churchyard

Abington Park and streets throughout Northampton

Rushden and Higham Ferrers

Wootton/Hardingstone

South Northants, Towcester, and Roade

I do not live in West Northamptonshire but have been involved in work there through my role in policy advocacy at the Woodland Trust and our urban team have been very involved with a local community group that is promoting street tree planting in Northampton.

Respondents were asked what their connection with West Northants

All those that answered this question responded that they were a local resident except for one that stated they were a Parish Councillor/Town Councillor and four respondents advising they were a representative of voluntary or a community organisation. Two respondents were from Residents Councils, one a representative of Friends of Dallington cemetery, one was a student at the University of Northampton; one respondent was a street warden. A respondent represented CA-WN.

A number of respondents chose not to answer this question.

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WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

8th November 2022

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

Report Title	Rural England Prosperity Fund
Report Author	<p>Louis Devayya Senior Economic Growth Officer Louis.Devayya@WestNorthants.gov.uk</p> <p>Julia Raven Head of Economy, Culture & Tourism Julia.Raven@WestNorthants.gov.uk</p>

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

West MO (for West and joint papers)	Catherine Whitehead	31/10/2022
West S151 (for West and joint papers)	Martin Henry	24/10/2022
Other Director/SME	Louise Seymour – Assistant Director of Place Shaping	05/10/2022
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	19/10/2022

List of Appendices

Appendix A – [Rural England Prosperity Fund: Prospectus](#)

Appendix B – [Rural England Prosperity Fund: Interventions, Objectives, Outputs and Outcomes](#)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To inform Cabinet Members of West Northamptonshire Council's allocation of £1.3m from the Rural England Prosperity Fund and the approach to draw down this funding from April 2023.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF or the Rural Fund) succeeds EU funding from LEADER and the Growth Programme which were part of the Rural Development Programme for England.
- 2.2 The Rural Fund is integrated into the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. The Rural Fund is a top-up to UKSPF allocations and supports activities that specifically address particular challenges rural areas face.
- 2.3 REPF can only fund capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure which will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.
- 2.4 West Northamptonshire Council must submit an addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan including additional information outlining how the REPF will be used, including justification by 30 November 2022.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:
- a) Note UK Government has advised WNC as the Lead Authority for REPF (£1,367,953.00 for a two-year provisional maximum allocation and the requirement to develop a REPF addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan
 - b) Endorse the approach to develop the REPF Investment Plan by sourcing evidence and liaising with internal and external stakeholders, as well as Councillors
 - c) Note WNC must submit the Rural Fund addendum by 30 November 2022

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 Reasons for recommendations:
- a) To ensure West Northamptonshire benefits from this grant funding to enhance the community, boost the economy and support local residents and businesses.
 - b) To deliver local economic growth, particularly with the impending loss of EU funding and the need to utilise UKSPF & REPF to deliver positive economic development within the community.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The Rural Fund supports the aims of the government's Levelling Up White Paper and Future Farming Programme. It funds capital projects for small businesses and community infrastructure. This will help to improve productivity and strengthen the rural economy and rural communities.
- 5.2 The Rural Fund is integrated into the UKSPF which supports productivity and prosperity in places that need it most. For eligible local authorities, the Rural Fund is a rural top-up to UKSPF

allocations. It supports activities that specifically address the particular challenges rural areas face. It is complementary to funding used to support rural areas under the UKSPF.

- 5.3 The Rural Fund sits alongside existing Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) schemes, including:
 - The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme
 - The Farming Investment Fund
 - The Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Grant Fund
- 5.4 The Rural Fund cannot support projects that have received funding from other Defra schemes.
- 5.5 Eligible local authorities qualify for an allocation based on factors developed in line with the scheme objectives. This includes the size of their rural populations. Not all authorities with rural areas are eligible.
- 5.6 The Rural Fund objectives sit within the UKSPF investment priorities for:
 - Supporting local business
 - Community and place
- 5.7 The Rural Fund provides capital funding to:
 - Support new and existing rural businesses to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy. This includes farm businesses looking to diversify income streams
 - Support new and improved community infrastructure, providing essential community services and assets for local people and businesses to benefit the local economy
- 5.8 This funding should not replace funding plans for rural areas under the UKSPF. It is a top-up to help address the extra needs and challenges facing rural areas.
- 5.9 Grants must be for business or community purposes. You cannot use grants to fund domestic property improvements or to buy private vehicles. You cannot spend grants on revenue costs such as running costs or promotional activities.
- 5.10 Projects must be in a rural area. For Rural Fund purposes, rural areas are:
 - Towns, villages and hamlets with populations below 10,000 and the wider countryside
 - Market or 'hub towns' with populations of up to 30,000 that serve their surrounding rural areas as centres of employment and in providing services
- 5.11 Example projects with could be funded include grants for:
 - Food processing equipment to scale up from domestic to commercial kitchens (non-farming businesses only)
 - Converting farm buildings to other business uses
 - Rural tourism such as investments in visitor accommodation and farm diversification for event venues

5.12 To access the Rural Fund, WNC must complete a short template. This is an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan, including additional information outlining how WNC shall use the funding and justification of plans.

5.13 In line with the UKSPF Investment Plan, the Rural Fund addendum must include the following;

5.13.1 **Local context** - local evidence of challenges, market failures and opportunities. WNC should link these to the Rural Fund priorities. Challenges may include:

- Low productivity in the rural economy
- Farms diversifying their business models during the agricultural transition
- Deprivation in rural communities

5.13.2 **Selection of interventions and outcomes** – identification of the interventions and outcomes WNC want to fund from the list provided by DEFRA, including justification for each selection. An explanation of how the interventions selected will address local challenges, market failures and opportunities must be included, as well as demonstration of how each intervention will deliver additionality. There is also a requirement to outline why the interventions could not be funded using private finance instead of government funding.

5.13.3 **Delivery** – this includes the following:

5.13.3.1 **Expenditure** which must cover:

- The indicative spend profile for the 2 years of the fund
- How WNC will ensure value for money, including additionality and future private investment that could be unlocked
- Explanation of why the selected interventions cannot be delivered using private finance

5.13.3.2 **Approach to engagement with rural partners** – This includes a description of consultations with rural partners and plans for future engagement. Local MP's must also be engaged with to inform the Rural Fund.

5.14 Once consultation has been completed and interventions and outcomes have been selected with the necessary justification, the Rural Fund addendum must be submitted via an online portal. The deadline to submit the Rural Fund addendum is 30 November.

5.15 Once the Rural Fund addendum has been approved, the first payment is expected to be made in April 2023.

5.16 The UK Government will make an annual payment to eligible local authorities. This will be at the beginning of each financial year using powers in the UK Internal Markets Act 2020. Any underspends must be returned at the end of each financial year.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 To note the requirement to develop and submit an Investment Plan addendum for the Rural England Prosperity Fund to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to **Page 174**

pride in place and deliver specific interventions within West Northamptonshire, identified based on detailed analysis and engagement with stakeholders within the community.

- 6.2 To not develop and submit an Investment Plan for the Rural England Prosperity Fund would result in a loss of major potential investment into the area, which would be used to support the community and place and provide business support.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- The REPF is 100 per cent grant funding, meaning there is no financial risk to West Northamptonshire Council's budgets.
- The REPF annual allocations will be monitored in line with the Expenditure Profile submitted with the REPF addendum.
- All REPF funding is for capital projects only and will be delivered as grants for business or community purposes.
- There is a risk that any unspent funds will be returned to DEFRA on an annual basis, however this will be monitored regularly with DEFRA's support to ensure the funds are spent in line with the expected outputs for each intervention receiving funding.
- Government expect local authorities to use the eligible 4% of the UKSPF for management of the REPF as well as the UKSPF, which will be used for a Funding Manager to oversee the management and delivery of the fund, mitigating any risks and ensuring the REPF and UKSPF achieve the outputs/outcomes of WNC's allocation.

7.2 Legal

- To access REPF funding, the Council as a Lead Authority for the Funding is required to complete an Investment Plan addendum. The Plan must be agreed by both the Council and by the Government to unlock the allocation.
- The Council will receive the allocation to manage, including assessing and approving applications, processing payments and day-to-day monitoring and will have overall accountability for the funding and how the Fund operates.
- The Fund can be used to support interventions which will be delivered through capital projects within rural areas.
- The Council has the necessary legal powers under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to deliver the Fund's levelling up objectives. The Council will be required to ensure that the proposed projects are delivered in a legally compliant way in accordance with all relevant legislation in relation to the activities undertaken.
- All spend associated with the Fund must be assessed by the Council in advance to ensure that proposed investment is compliant with the Council's Constitution, including the Public Contracts grant rules, (mechanisms to recover funding where beneficiaries do not comply with fund parameters, legal or any other requirements) processes and procedures as and where relevant.
- Interventions will be required to be delivered within the subsidy control regime. Government has indicated that further guidance on subsidy control and UKSPF will be issued to assist lead local authorities in carrying out their delegated delivery role.

- The Council is required to meet its statutory public sector equality duty in carrying out their duties related to the UKSPF and REPF.
- In submitting the Investment Plan, Government required assurance that legal obligations and all minimum standards set by the government will be adhered to.

7.3 Risks

- There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.
- West Northamptonshire Council would risk reputational damage and the opportunity to further support economic recovery/growth if it did not submit the Investment Plan addendum to secure this funding.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 In order to successfully assess impact, deliverability and strategic fit when analysing the interventions to address using the Rural England Prosperity Fund, WNC has procured a consultant to support the development of the Investment Plan addendum. Consultation with stakeholders will include partners and internal/external services, as well as WNC Councillors.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 N/A

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 Where proposals for projects which align with the interventions set out in the UKSPF Investment Plan have a climate impact, the council will ensure the provider will undertake the relevant Environmental Impact Assessments.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 This proposal will result in a positive impact on the whole West Northamptonshire community, including the quality of the place, resulting in economic growth and delivery of priorities set out within WNC's vision.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 Communications will be developed to inform and engage stakeholders to raise wider awareness of the opportunities the REPF funds create for partners, employers and residents once the Investment Plans have been approved by Government.

8. Background Papers

8.1 N/A



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

8 November 2022

Cllr Fiona Baker, Portfolio Holder for Children Families, Education and Skills.

Report Title	SEND Strategy Development
Report Author	Ben Pearson, Assistant Director for Education ben.pearson@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	18/10/2022
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	18/10/2022
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	18/10/2022

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide an update about services for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and an overview of proposals to develop a strategic approach to improve outcomes.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report includes an overview of the current pressures in providing services for children with SEND. The report also includes proposals for a new governance structure, new dedicated posts,

and a new approach to co-producing a joint strategy to improve outcomes for children with SEND.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Support the development of a three year SEND Delivery Plan as outlined in this report in paragraph 6.3.
- b) Support the new governance structure highlighted in this report in paragraph 5.8.
- c) Agree to receive timely updates about progress in relation to the development of a new SEND Delivery Plan and Co-production Charter as outlined in the report

4. Reason for Recommendations

- The recommendations in this report will ensure that the Council is meeting its statutory duties in relation to SEND provision, and will provide a strategic framework to ensure all available resources are used appropriately

5. Report Background

5.1. The Council is responsible for securing and delivering services to children and young people with SEND from the age of 0 -25 years.

5.2. The statutory requirements for the Council and all partners are outlined in the Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA). The SEND Code of Practice outlines the legal requirements that all partners must adhere to in line with the CFA.

5.3. The Council is the lead partner for the local area and holds the responsibility for coordinating the local area response to ensure that all partners deliver the requirements within the CFA. The local area partnership will be inspected by OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission to assess the effectiveness of the local area.

5.4. In March 2022, the Department for Education (DfE) launched the [SEND Green Paper consultation](#) 'SEND review; right support, right place, right time' which is designed to understand how the reforms captured in the CFA have been implemented. This consultation is now closed. As a response to the consultation, the DfE will published a new SEND delivery plan in Autumn 2022.

5.5. In June 2022, OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission launched a [consultation](#) to change the way local area are inspected. The main proposed changes focus on the impact that a local area partnership's SEND arrangements has on the experiences and outcomes of children and young people.

5.6. The proposed new inspection framework is designed to strengthen accountability through an ongoing cycle of inspections, and will include introducing 3 inspection outcomes, which provide clearer information about how an area is performing, including an expectation that all areas

produce and publish a strategic plan for SEND. The expectation is that the local strategic plan includes evidence directly from children and young people and their families, ensuring that their views and experiences are central to decision making. The proposed framework will also include a focus on Alternative Provision.

- 5.7. This consultation is now closed. It is expected that OFSTED and CQC will finalise the new inspection framework in 2022 and start new inspections early in 2023.
- 5.8. The current governance structure for SEND is through a joint SEND Accountability Board – incorporating all partners from WNC and NNC. At its most recent meeting on 14 September, it was agreed that proposals to split the board to create two new Council aligned boards would be developed and tabled at the next meeting (19 October). As the new OFSTED/CQC inspection framework will inspect WNC and NNC separately, the DfE SEND advisor has recommended splitting the local accountability board to create appropriate governance structures for the future.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1. There are a number of areas of performance of SEND services in WNC that are poor. At present, there is a significant shortfall of specialist school places which means many children are not in school or have poor outcomes in inappropriate school places; the % of EHCP's issued on time and the % of Educational Psychologist assessments completed on time are significantly below regional and national averages.
- 6.2. Due to the changes from DfE and OFSTED outlined above, the likely changes to the local governance structure, and the need to make improvements for children with SEND, a change in the way SEND is led in WNC is needed – doing nothing is not an option.
- 6.3. To meet the requirements of the new DfE and OFSTED/CQC approaches, the local area partnership: led by the Council but comprising health services, social care, education providers, community and voluntary organisations and children and families will be required to review the new national SEND delivery plan when it is announced, and the new inspection framework to produce a self-assessment to determine an overview of the local area's delivery new local SEND delivery plan. It is recommended that a three-year improvement plan is developed that captures all work needed across Education, Health and Care services for children with SEND.
- 6.4. A detailed needs assessment is required to inform the local SEND delivery plan – this will need to include the demand for access to specialist education, health and care provision and should be created to reflect the local needs within the different localities within West Northants.
- 6.5. The Council has a statutory requirement to co-produce strategic, operational and individual plans with partners, parents and children/young people. It is recommended that a new Co-production Charter will be developed through co-production events that will be coordinated across all areas in WNC, and online. These events are planned for November and December 2022 and will involve children and young people, parents, school-based staff, health and care professionals and other interested organisations. This approach is currently being developed

with the Northamptonshire Parent Forum Group (the group that represents parents' voices in WNC).

- 6.6. It is also recommended that the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee is provided regular updates about progress against the SEND Delivery Plan.
- 6.7. The approach outlined in this report links to the WNC 'Live your best life' Vision, including specific outcomes listed below;
- Thriving Childhood
 - Access to the best available education and learning
 - Opportunity to be fit, well and independent
 - Connected to their families and friends
 - The chance for a fresh start, when things go wrong
 - Access to health and social care when they need it
 - To be accepted and valued simply for who they are

7. Implications (including financial implications)

Resources and Financial

- 7.1. To provide leadership and ownership of the new SEND Delivery plan, it is proposed a new SEND Improvement Manager is appointed, along with a SEND Project Officer. These two members of staff will lead the creation and monitoring of the SEND self-assessment and SEND delivery plan. These posts can be funded entirely from the Dedicated Schools Grant.
- 7.2. This will need consideration (but not formal approval) by the Schools' Forum but the work of the postholders would meet the requirements of the DSG as it will improve access to education and outcomes for children with SEND.
- 7.3. Senior officers from NCT and Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board are supportive of this system-wide SEND improvement approach. If the approach is supported within WNC and by Schools Forum, negotiations will also take place with NCT and health colleagues about financial support to create a multi-agency approach to the system-wide roles to deliver the SEND reforms.
- 7.4. The costs outlined below include funding the two new posts and creating an improvement budget; this will largely be used to provide short term secondment opportunities for expert SEND specialists within schools to share their practice with other schools.

	22/23	23/24	24/25	Total
Manager Salary including on costs (Band M)*	£14,750	£59,000	£44,250	£118,000
Officer Salary including on costs (Band I)*	£8,750	£35,000	£26,250	£70,000
Improvement budget (secondments, conferences, training, new materials)	£12,500	£50,000	£37,500	£100,000

Total	£36,000	£144,000	£108,000	£288,000
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*posts forecast at the bottom of the scale

7.5. Whilst not specifically an invest to save approach, this proposal will lead to a reduction in costs through

- improved sufficiency of places – reduced placement costs, transport costs
- Cost avoidance through reducing tribunals
- Reduction in legal costs, which is currently over-spending

7.6. Legal

The statutory requirements are set out in the body of the report and in particular in paragraph 5.2 and 6.5. The proposals highlighted will better enable the Council to meet the statutory requirements.

7.7. Risk

Without a change of governance and improved capacity to focus on SEND improvements, the Council faces a number of risks;

- Failing to meet its statutory duties by failing to assess children’s needs, providing Education, Health and Care Plans within statutory timescales
- Failing to meet the needs of children captured in the EHCP
- Increased reputational damage for failing to meet children’s needs
- Increased costs from tribunals, court-directed provision and the need to use out of county specialist provision

7.8. Consultation

No formal consultation has been undertaken. However, senior officers from Northamptonshire Children’s Trust, Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board and Northamptonshire Parent Forum Group are supportive of the approach outlined in the report.

7.9. Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

Detailed reports will be taken to the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in line with the new governance proposed in this report. The first update will be presented in November 2022.

7.10. Climate Impact

By developing a new WNC SEND Delivery Plan, more children will be able to remain in their local area to access education, health and care provision. This will reduce the need for long distance transport.

7.11. Community Impact

The proposed WNC SEND Delivery Plan and needs-assessment will include an assessment of each of the locality areas across WNC. Local plans will be developed through co-production events in all locality areas.

7.12. **Communications**

As part of the WNC SEND Delivery Plan, a communication plan will be developed that will ensure improved communication to all partners. This will be used to co-produce the new WNC SEND Delivery Plan and to monitor and evaluate progress.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

8th November 2022

Clr Malcolm Longley – Cabinet Member for Finance

Report Title	Abington Park facilities
Report Author	Gary Underhill Gary.underhill@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

MO	Catherine Whitehead	18/10/2022
S151	Martin Henry	11/10/2022
Other Director	Stuart Timmiss – Executive Director Place, Environment & Economy Simon Bowers – Assistant Director Assets & Environment	13 October 2022 30 September 2022
Communications	Becky Hutson – Head of Communications	18/10/22

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for capital budget of £1.2m in 2023/24, to be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), to replace the existing welfare facilities located in Abington Park East in a more suitable location, in consultation with key stakeholders.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Abington Park is split West and East by Park Avenue South (A5095). On each part of the park, welfare facilities (public toilets and changing rooms) are provided. The facility on Abington Park West is located near to the Abington Park Museum. The facility on Abington Park East is located at the bottom of a bank within a wooded area between the equipped children's play area and the lake. Given the size of Abington Park, the nature of the facilities, and the division by the road, two sets of toilets are required.
- 2.2 The location of the welfare facilities in Abington Park East means that they are partially concealed and prone to vandalism and misuse. Over many years the level and repeated nature of vandalism have led to the facility being unsafe for public use. This reached a position in 2021 whereby the cost, regularity of repairs required and impacts of public safety led to its closure. Since this date the facility has been closed to the public and boarded up. The building is still subject to ongoing vandalism, but this has mainly been restricted to the exterior of the building.
- 2.3 This report seeks a capital budget of £1.2m in 2023/24, funded from CIL, to demolish the existing building and bring the area back into public use and re-provide a new facility at a suitable location on Abington Park East. The location of the new facility will be subject to consultation with key stakeholders such as the Friends of Abington Park and the Police Crime Prevention Design Officer.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - 3.1.1 Approve a capital budget of £1.2m in 2023/24, funded from CIL, to remove the existing and provide replacement public welfare facilities at Abington Park East, and recommend to Council that the budget be amended accordingly.
 - 3.1.2 Authorise the procurement of services and works, award and completion of contracts to facilitate the works.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 To provide an important public amenity.
- 4.2 To support and encourage the use and enjoyment of Abington Park.
- 4.3 To reduce the safety risk associated with people, especially children, crossing Park Avenue South to access the remaining open public toilets.
- 4.4 To reduce potential for anti-social behaviour by removing the existing building and enabling a new facility to be located and designed to minimise this risk.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 In both Abington Park East and West is a welfare facility for public use. The building on Abington Park East provides for public toilets and changing facilities for park users, whereas the building on the West is for public convenience only.
- 5.2 The building on Abington Park West is located near to the Abington Park Museum. The building on Abington Park East is located down the bottom of a bank within a wooded area between the equipped children's play area and the lake. The West building has not had the history of vandalism and damage that the East one has endured. This is due to the proximity of the building on the West to other activities such as the museum and park café, compared to location of the building on the East. Outside of typical use hours, the building on the East is not visible by passing vehicles and is out of direct view line of nearby residential properties and park users at several locations.
- 5.3 The Abington Park East building, over many years, has received repeated vandalism and damage which at times has led to the facility being unsafe for public use. Regrettably, the cost of vandalism and damage plus the potential risk to public level reached a point whereby it was more cost effective and safer to close the building. Since this date the facility has remained closed and boarded up. The building is still subject to ongoing vandalism, but this has mainly been restricted to the exterior of the building
- 5.4 As well as providing public toilets for all, the welfare facility was provided for those paying to use the park's football pitches as well. Since the building has been closed those using the football pitches some users have had to change either in public spaces or in their cars neighbouring the pitches. The lack of welfare provision has had a direct impact on income from paying park users. Teams are now looking at alternative venues to play rather than Abington Park. The resident Angling Club has nowhere close by to use, which is causing complaints.
- 5.5 The Council has received a number of enquiries and complaints regarding the building's closure and the inconvenience to the public of having to using the alternative facilities on Abington Park West. Consideration has been given to undertaking the necessary repairs to the building to make it safe for public use, and a number of measures have been implemented. However, these have not been successful and trying to implement further measures would be unlikely to resolve the continual vandalism, damage, or concerns about public safety.
- 5.6 Preliminary consultation has taken place with the Friends of Abington Park as to their views of providing welfare facilities. The outcome of this initial consultation has led to the conclusion that a reprovision of the facility in Abington Park East would be the best socio-economic solution and the initial view is that they should not be too far from the existing location in order to meet the needs of users.

5.7 Initial design and cost planning indicates that to demolish, make good the existing building area, and re-provide a new facility would cost around £1.2m.

6. Issues and Choices

6.1 The choices available to the Council are as follows.

- A. Do nothing and leave the building closed in its current condition: This would not enable the Council to mitigate against future vandalism and damage or prevent those determined to access the flat roof from doing so, thus retaining a safety risk. It is highly likely that the building would become so damaged that it would be unsafe to remain in situ. The current condition of the building creates a negative visual image of the park, and consequently the Council, leading to reputational damage. The option does not support the Council's objects for safer communities and improving health and wellbeing.
 - B. Demolish the existing facility and retain the provision on Abington Park West: This option would enable the Council to mitigate against continued vandalism and removes an unsightly building from the park. However, it would reduce public welfare facilities. The Council would not be providing the required changing facilities for paying user of the park's facilities or meet the need of users of the play area and lakes. The option would not support the Council's objectives for improving health and wellbeing.
 - C. Refurbish the current facility and bring this back into public use: Works to the building would still require circa £120k to ensure the building was initially safe for use. This would include altering sanitaryware, improvements to seating/benching, vanity units and cubicles, doors etc. although these works would make an aesthetic improvement to the building and improve its resilience to damage to a degree. However, it would still be prone to vandalism and critical failure. Nor is the existing building, even if it was not vandalised, an attractive addition to the park.
 - D. Approve £1.2m capital funding in 2023/24 to demolish the existing facility, bring the area back into public use, and provide a relocated facility: This would remove the current safety risks and reputational harm, and enable the Council to mitigate against future vandalism and damage. It would support the Council's objectives for safer communities and improving health and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Option D above is the only option that enables the Council to effectively support its objectives and provide the facilities to enable income for use of the parks football pitches. Option D also provides an opportunity to design and construct a new facility with high levels of energy efficiency and sustainability, thus contributing to achieving the target of Net Zero by 2030, and other visual and environmental improvements.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

Resources and Financial

- 7.1 Option D would require a budget of £1.2m. It is proposed this is appropriately taken from CIL as Abington Park is Northampton's premier park and is likely to be increasingly used as development of the town proceeds. of CIL funding for 2023/24. There are CIL balances which could be used for this purpose.
- 7.2 It is expected that by providing a new welfare facility that current paying football teams would remain. [Insert quantification of the income impact.]

Legal

- 7.3 Section 87 of the Public Health Act 1936 provides that a Council may provide sanitary conveniences in proper and convenient situations. The Council can also provide them under the general power of competence provided by Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. However, the Council is not under any statutory duty to provide such conveniences, it is at the discretion of the Council whether or not to do so.

Risks

- 7.4 The project carries a number of inherent risks, notably:
 - 7.4.1 Works could be delayed due to material and labour supply issues. This could be mitigated by the early ordering of materials by the contractor and agreed programme between the parties.
 - 7.4.2 The location of the new facility may not reduce the levels of vandalism and damage. This would be mitigated by consulting with the relevant bodies including the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor on location and design.
- 7.5 The project would also greatly reduce the risks of the current situation, where the Council has a continuing liability in relation to authorised and unauthorised access to the building, and reputational risks around the lack of provision for Abington Park East.

Consultation

- 7.6 Initial consultation has taken place with the Friends of Abington Park. This would continue alongside that of consulting with the relevant WNC services, the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor, and other key stakeholders to ensure that both the location and design are suitable.

Climate Impact

- 7.7 The design and construction approach of a new facility would seek to reduce the carbon footprint. The approach would be to install energy efficiency measures which may include renewable energy options.

Community Impact

- 7.8 The new facility would provide a valuable sustainable asset to the community. The location of the building should promote community interest and self-monitoring.

Communications

It will be important to keep existing users of the park and local community interest groups informed and engaged about the proposals and any subsequent works carried out as well as communicating the future benefits to local residents.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1 None.



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

8th November 2022

Cllr Matt Golby

Report Title	Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020-22
Report Author	Sally Burns, Director of Public Health

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Other Director/SME	Stuart Lackenby	18/10/2022
S151 Officer	Martin Henry	20/10/2022
Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	31/10/2022

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Director of Public Health Annual Report 2020-2022

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To note the content of the annual Director of Public Health (DPH) statutory report for Northamptonshire.
- 1.2. To endorse the key recommendations made in the DPH annual report.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The contents of the DPH Annual Report explore the Northamptonshire response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how the 'organised efforts of society' helped to deliver an effective response in what is the biggest Public Health crisis in our generation. Partnership working is at the heart of the report, particularly highlighting how these partnerships and associations were developed as a result of the pandemic but it also demonstrates some of the exceptional work that was already being done through partnership working, which has evolved and developed in line with

the situation. The report explains how the combined efforts of services such as Health Protection, Environmental Health, Business Intelligence and Communications, amongst others, came together to provide advice, support and reassurance at a particularly unsettling, confusing and sometimes traumatic time in a lot of our citizens' lives. This annual report covers the period from 2020 to 2022 as this is main timespan of the pandemic.

3. Recommendations

3.1

- a. For Cabinet to note the contents of the report and recommendations made.
- b. For Cabinet to also note the progress made with regard to the recommendations in the previous annual report.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is a statutory obligation for the DPH to write and circulate an Annual Report and to include recommendations for council and partner agencies to follow.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The core purpose of the Director of Public Health (DPH) is to be an independent advocate for the health of the population and system leader for its improvement and protection. DPH's across the country are required to produce an annual report and distribute this to key partners and the wider public. The DPH annual report provides an opportunity to:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the wellbeing of the county
- Identify key issues and challenges relating to the wellbeing of the local population
- Provide added value over and above intelligence and information routinely available
- Reflect on work already undertaken and the continued impact
- Identify recommendations for future courses of action to improve health and wellbeing locally.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Each year the DPH must decide on a topic that the annual report will cover in that period. At the time of making this decision the pandemic had already begun and was clear it was going to be a dictating factor in the Public Health world for some time. Great examples of collaborative working were already apparent and this seemed to be a natural, but important focal point in the fight against Covid. Working with our partners, both internal, external and in the community, is something that Northamptonshire is proud of and is keen to advocate and develop for the benefit of all, now and in the future. Learning from the experiences that were had over the last two years to ensure the effective relationships and working arrangements continue, seemed to be a perfect focus for the DPH Annual Report. It is therefore hoped that sharing this learning with partners and the community will help people to understand how partnership working can be effective, how it can be developed and also give an understanding of the incredible work that

went on behind the scenes in Northamptonshire to keep people informed and supported in this particularly difficult time in our history.

- 6.2 As much of the work done over the last two years has been focussed on COVID-19 it felt sensible to have the report span the majority of the pandemic which is why the report is a two year report.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 The production of an Annual Report is a statutory function that should be executed by the Director of Public Health. A budget is therefore put aside for this annually and comes from the Public Health Grant. There are no additional financial implications or Council resources required as a result of this paper.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

7.3 Risk

- 7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4 Consultation

- 7.4.1 Not applicable

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

- 7.5.1 Not applicable

7.6 Climate Impact

- 7.6.1 Not applicable

7.7 Community Impact

- 7.7.1 Not applicable

7.8 Communications

- 7.8.1 Report to be made available in an accessible format on the Council's website. Limited hard copies of the report are also available and will be distributed to key public council premises such as libraries.

8. Background Papers

8.1 DPH Annual Report 2019-20

Northamptonshire Director of Public Health

Annual Report 2020/21 - 2021/22



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Introduction

Public Health is defined as “the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting physical and mental health and well-being.” (Winslow CEA, 1920 *The Untilled Fields of Public Health*)

The previous annual report focused on identifying the underlying causes of poor health and providing ideas for action that could be adopted locally to address health inequalities that exist across Northamptonshire.

Since that time, we have been living through the biggest public health emergency in generations. We’ve seen a pandemic further highlighting the issue of health inequalities with a spotlight on public health itself. Never has there been more interest in and engagement with the work of public health by everyone.

Broadening the understanding of public health and its place within public services is something we continue to strive for. We often refer to wider determinants of health and by this we could mean transport, housing, environment or employment. These are all things that can impact on the conditions for healthy lives and given the breadth of issues that can affect the quality of lives and not just the longevity, we can appreciate this is an all-encompassing topic, wider than just public health teams and really does need the organised efforts of all of us if it is to have an impact.

With that in mind, this annual report will explore the work done over the last two years in our response to the pandemic from the perspective of the above definition and in particular the ‘organised efforts of society’.

The World Health Organization declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 and measures to control the spread of COVID-19 followed. Directors of Public Health and their teams, up and down the country, have worked with partners across local government, the NHS (National Health Service), the voluntary and community sectors to stop the spread and impact of the virus and it truly has been a dynamic and bonding (as well as intense, unprecedented, and challenging) experience.

Social distancing, testing and vaccination programmes have all impacted our lives but give hope of a return to normality, despite new variants posing an ongoing risk. What we learned in this time is to value relationships and connecting with people and communities.

This report provides an overview of the work done by my public health team, other council teams, health partners and other public services over the last two years. Each chapter highlights a different area of expertise that came together, creating a collaborative public health response for the populations of North and West Northamptonshire.

Lucy Wightman
Joint Director of Public Health for North and West Northamptonshire Councils



Demographics

The following diagram gives a snapshot of health and wellbeing outcomes across a person's life in North Northamptonshire.

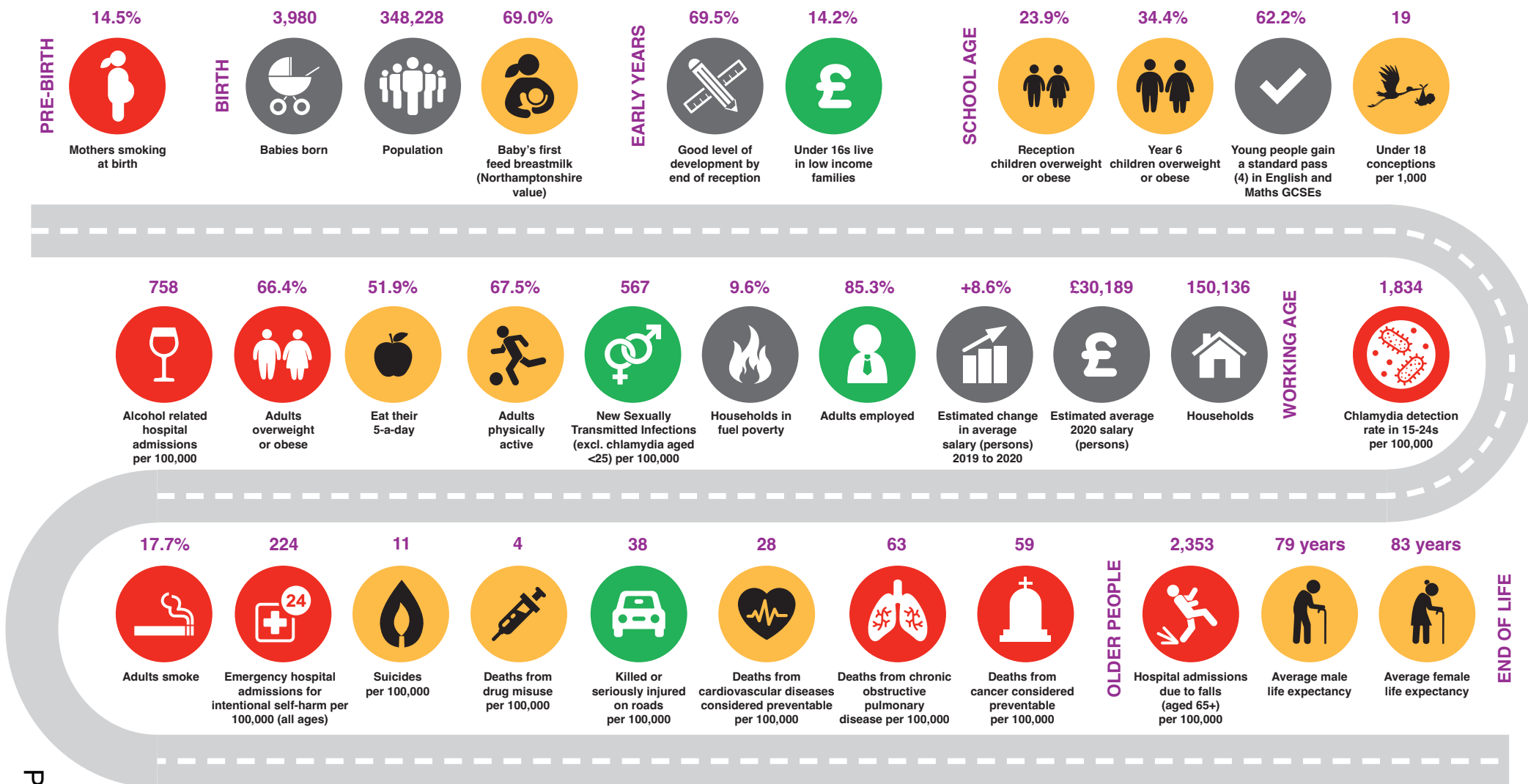


Figure 1. Health and Wellbeing in North Northamptonshire, February 2021

Source: Northamptonshire County Council; Fingertips; ONS. Based on infographic produced by Lincolnshire County Council. Please note data displayed has been calculated based on the latest data publicly available in February 2021 and has been rounded to nearest whole number where applicable.

Compared to England average:

BETTER SIMILAR WORSE NOT COMPARED

Demographics

The following diagram gives a snapshot of health and wellbeing outcomes across a person's life in West Northamptonshire.

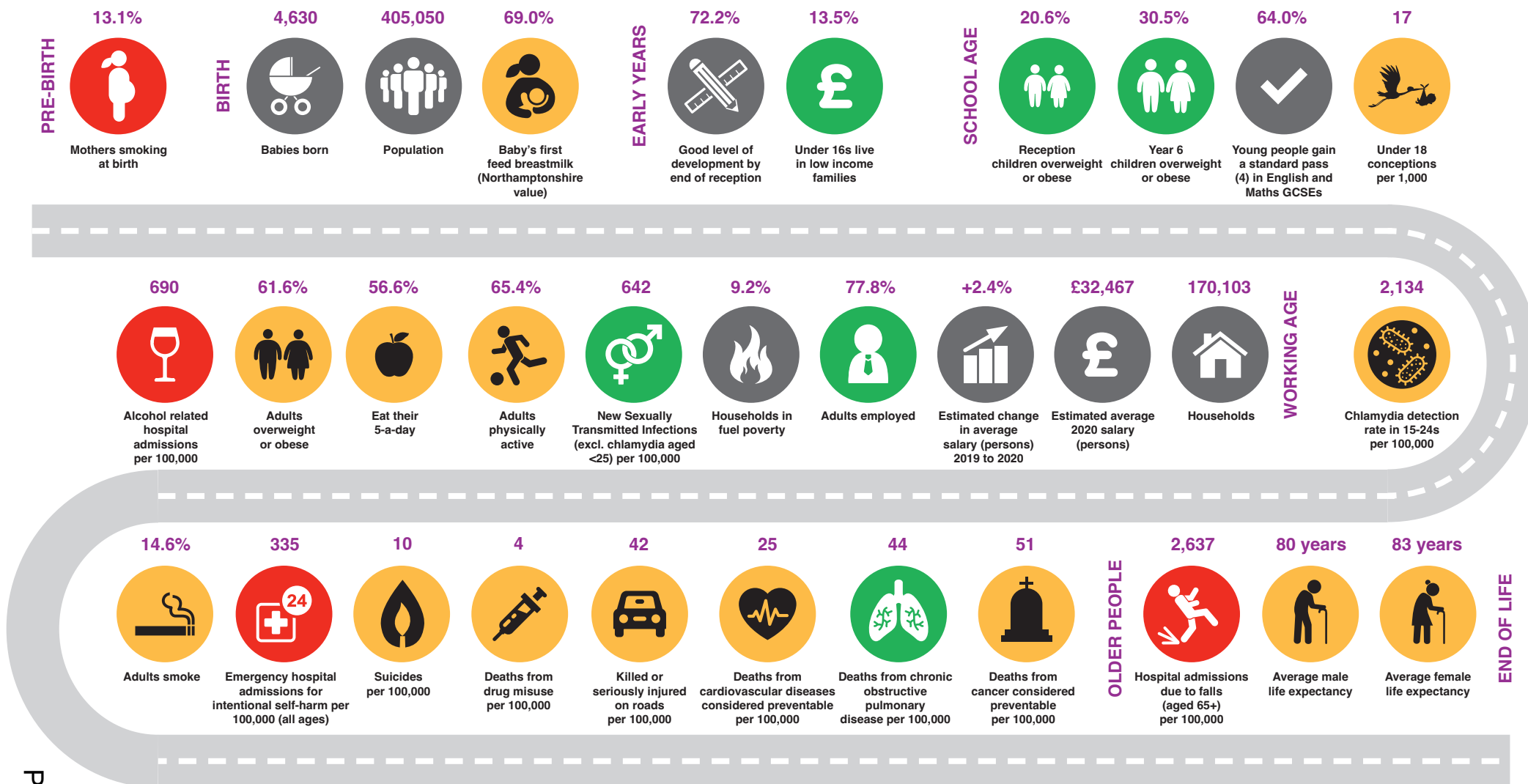


Figure 2. Health and Wellbeing in West Northamptonshire, February 2021

Source: Northamptonshire County Council; Fingertips; ONS. Based on infographic produced by Lincolnshire County Council. Please note data displayed has been calculated based on the latest data publicly available in February 2021 and has been rounded to nearest whole number where applicable.

Compared to England average:

BETTER SIMILAR WORSE NOT COMPARED

Overview of COVID-19 Data

Very sadly some families and communities in Northamptonshire have lost loved ones to COVID-19 and some people are still suffering with the ongoing effects of long Covid. Many residents have experienced incredibly challenging times because of unemployment, fear, anxiety and the isolation as a result of lock downs.

Our response locally to the pandemic has been and still is being managed at a significant scale. I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved, particularly my team, colleagues, our partners, the voluntary and community sector, local community leaders and businesses and workplaces across the county. Finally, I would particularly like to thank the residents of Northamptonshire. It has certainly been an 'organised effort of society'.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still very much with us, and we must not be complacent and must continue to build on our knowledge and learning. In this report I have focused on the major themes and elements involved in our response so far to highlight and share this journey, and to continue to build on our learning and to make recommendations for the future.

PCR testing and positivity

PCR means polymerase chain reaction, this test is designed to look for genetic material associated with a virus. A sample is collected and tested for the presence or remnants of SARS-CoV-2. This was a turning point in controlling the spread of COVID-19 and uptake of testing had a very significant impact on curbing the spread.

This graph shows the number of people who received a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test in the previous 7 days, and the percentage of those who had at least one positive COVID-19 PCR test result in the same 7 days. Data is shown by specimen date (the date the sample was collected from the person). People tested more than once in the period are only counted once in the denominator. People with more than one positive test result in the period are only included once in the numerator.

During the period of 1st April 2020 to 8th February 2022, the highest weekly number of PCR tests undertaken was 45,647 in early January 2022, equal to 6,521 per day and the test positivity was 30%.

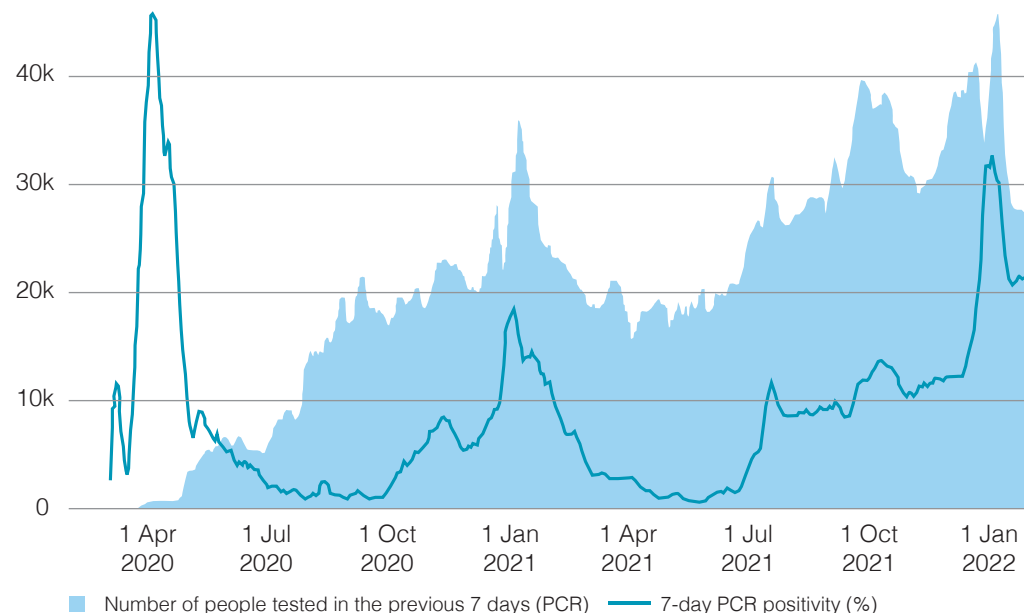


Figure 3.
Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk

Identified cases

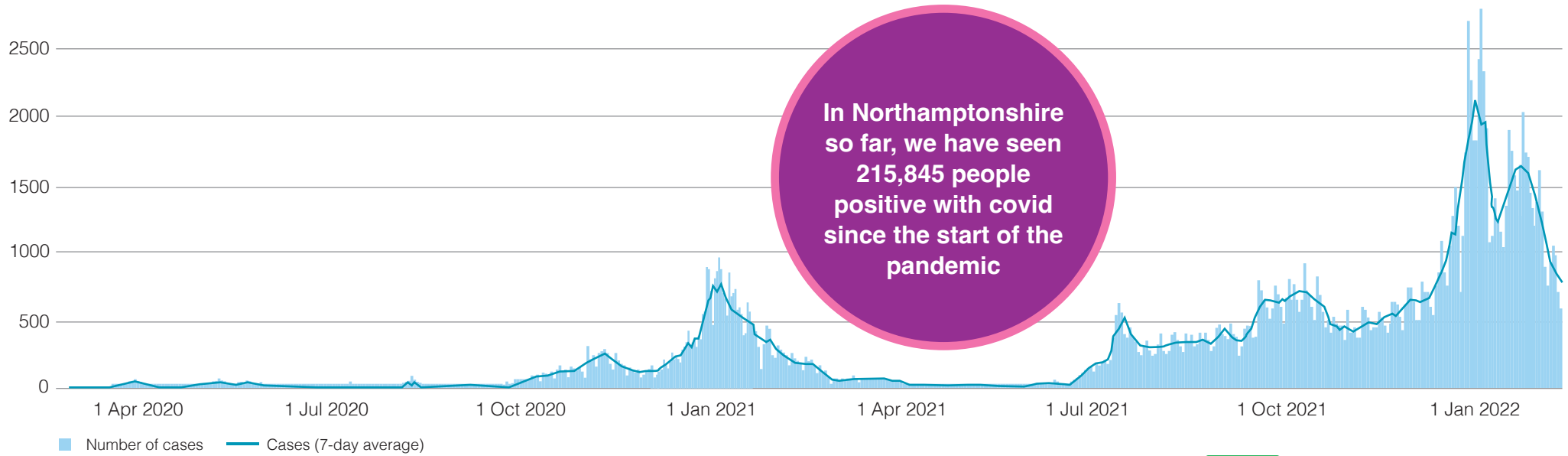


Figure 4a.
Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk

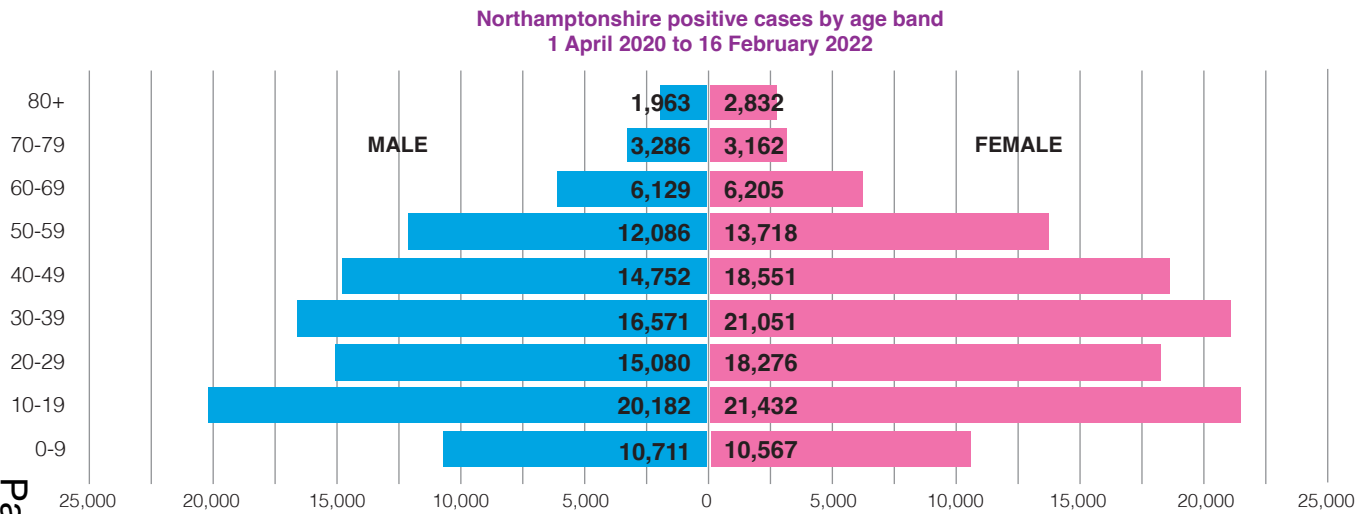


Figure 4b.
Source: PHE COVID-19 Situational Awareness Explorer, 2021 – cases by population



Hospital admissions

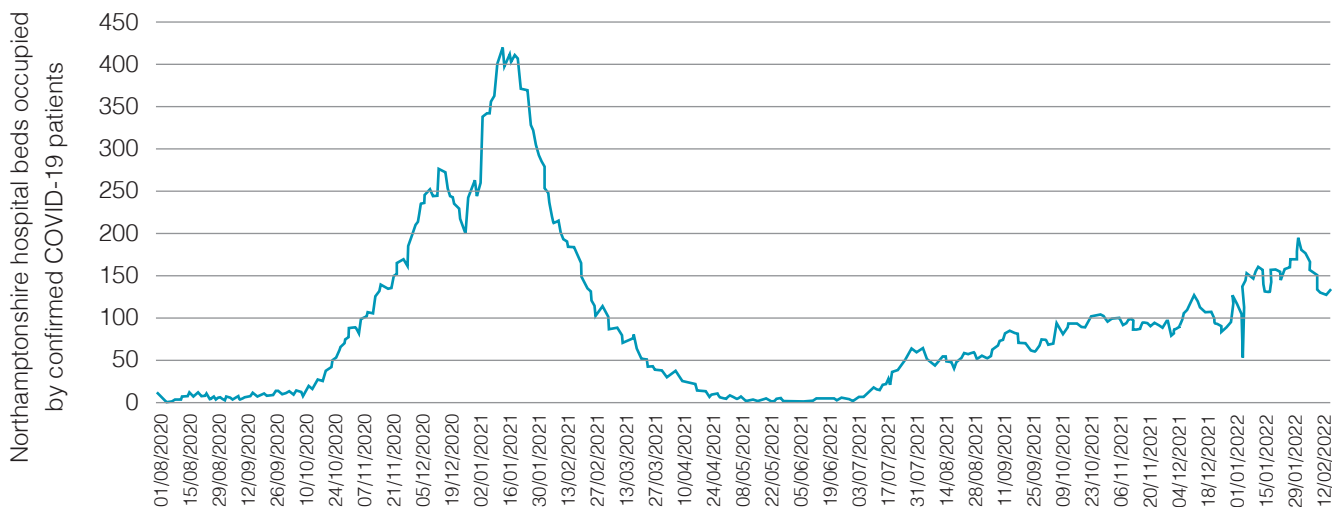


Figure 5.
Source: Weekly COVID surveillance report, Nov 2021

Hospital admissions due to COVID-19 increased sharply in late October 2020 and reached the peak in mid-January 2021, they then remained at the low level over the spring 2021. Admissions steadily increased from the beginning of July 2021 and peaked in late January 2022. Numbers seen are lower than during the winter of 2020/21.

Death

As at 9th March 2022, there were sadly 1,782 deaths within 28 days of a positive test from COVID-19 in Northamptonshire. The highest number of deaths in Northamptonshire occurred in mid-April 2020 and again mid-January 2021.

This information serves to remind us that while we can learn to live with this virus we should not take for granted the severity and ongoing impact of this or other diseases and we all have a part to play in ensuring we keep each other safe and well.

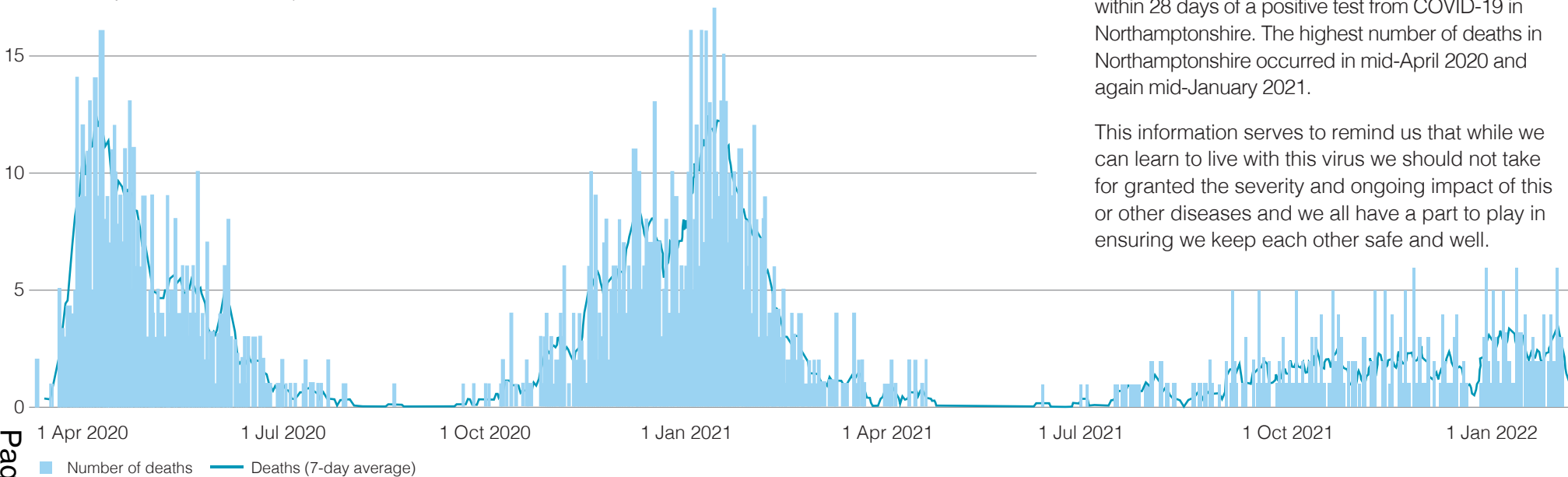


Figure 6.
Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk

Communications



Order your
free regular
COVID-19
home testing
kits today

Communications

Our Communications team ensures that key messages about health and healthy lifestyles reach the right people across Northamptonshire (and often beyond). These messages can have several aims, from simply increasing knowledge about an identified health concern to inspiring behaviour change or promoting a new service and use a range of channels to reach the target audience right down to a very local level.

Prior to COVID-19 the team's work was split between seasonal campaigns targeting topics including the flu or Winter Wellness, more strategic activity focused on specific issues which have been identified (for example safer sleeping for parents and babies), and general health issues such as losing weight, alcohol awareness and staying physically active.

A great deal of the work is about delivering the message in the right way, so this team needs an in-depth understanding of the audience, the potential channels available (particularly social media) and to have strong relationships with similar organisations who can help each campaign's reach and impact. As a result, we are often working closely with the media, arranging awareness days (for mental health for example) and exploring new ways to reach people effectively in addition to traditional communications channels.

Heading Out Out?

Heading Out Checklist:

Item
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Negative Lateral Flow device test
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No symptoms of COVID-19
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hand sanitiser
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Face coverings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contactless payment methods
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dress to impress

Order your free home test kits today.
Search home test kit.

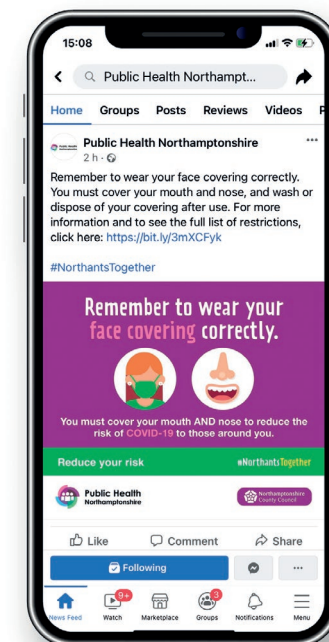
Communications

Information overload

By the time COVID-19 first started making the news and Northamptonshire started seeing its own cases, the communications team was already at its limit dealing with new information on the disease and working with the media to arrange interviews with myself as the Director of Public Health, and other spokespeople. Team members were asked to directly support NHS teams who were already working in collaboration with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT) in order to deal with the sheer volume of COVID-19 news and information.

This 'initial' period lasted for a year as the local area navigated the increase in cases, then deaths, and then with a big spike in infection rate. During this time, our teams could only focus on absorbing new information, and delivering it to spokespeople, the media and the general public in the most effective ways possible.

The first chance the communications team had to take stock came with the lockdown, when there was finally an opportunity to work proactively and more creatively rather than simply reactively. At this stage the team had moved on from relaying information as it came in from Public Health England, central government and the NHS and could spend some time producing resources that could help manage the disease, a prime example being the messaging the team produced about wearing face masks.



Communications

Prioritising through procedure

During the first year of the pandemic, the team introduced a very procedure-driven way of working, to ensure that it wouldn't become overwhelmed by the need to react to everything as it came in.

The focus of this was a series of meetings and briefings to keep everybody up to date with the latest advice and information this included briefings for the public, twice-weekly media briefings, watching the daily government briefing and ensuring all colleagues were aware of what was said, and regular briefings for the network of comms colleagues, including the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

This structured approach helped the communications team get ahead of the flood of enquiries, particularly from the media as it meant they would schedule their questions and requests for the agreed time, rather than send them on an ad hoc basis. This gave us the space needed to tackle the issues more proactively.

The communications team used this extra time to focus on outbreak management, adopting an evidence-based approach to identify exactly what kind of communication was needed to address a particular situation. For example, an outbreak was triggered by a group of workers travelling down to London in two cars. Of the eight people travelling, seven contracted COVID-19. This led the team to produce a poster for workplaces (translated into several languages) about car sharing, advising strongly against it, but also providing some clear do's and don'ts if it was absolutely necessary.

Northamptonshire was one of the first counties to identify car sharing as high risk, and the work received widespread support, particularly from Environment Health Officers (EHOs) who were on the ground at these workplaces and used the posters to reinforce their own advice, and through a range of business seminars which were used to promote safer working practices.

The impact of our press conferences

During the summer of 2020, the communications team started to share a Surveillance Pack, which collected all the key messages in one place. This was promoted on social media, shared on our website and used as the springboard to begin a weekly press conference which re-iterated those key messages.

This live streamed press conference proved invaluable when it came to the Greencore outbreak which saw a total of 294 cases of COVID-19 recorded in a food manufacturing warehouse in Northampton. At this stage it was the largest outbreak in the country so it attracted a great deal of national as well as local media coverage. Our regular briefings with the communications network meant we had developed very supportive relationships with the police, the NHS and Environmental Health colleagues among others, so the team could quickly gather lots of information about ways the outbreak could have been triggered, including car sharing, families working different shifts, and a staff barbecue.



Avoid car sharing

You **MUST** wear face coverings if you share cars with anyone outside of your household or bubble and have the windows down, clean the door handles inside and out

Communications

Reaching specific audiences

Outside of press conferences and regular radio interviews, the communications team used 'Out Of Home' media to deliver key localised messages in places including Northampton, Corby, Wellingborough and Kettering. These were supplemented by i-Vans, essentially a flat-bed truck with a large digital screen for displaying messages. These were used to deliver even more locally-focused messages, and could reach people in supermarket car parks or country parks (for example) as necessary, showing different messages depending on the need of the location.

In the run up to Christmas 2020, when it initially seemed that there was going to be a five-day window when families could mix, the team produced a leaflet that was delivered to every household in Northamptonshire, full of ways to stay safe over Christmas. This was driven by the concern that the county's over 60s were going to be particularly vulnerable at this time, with grandparents mixing with younger members of their family they hadn't seen for months. The back of the leaflet featured a feedback form, and many people who responded indicated that they would be changing their behaviour in line with what the leaflet advised.

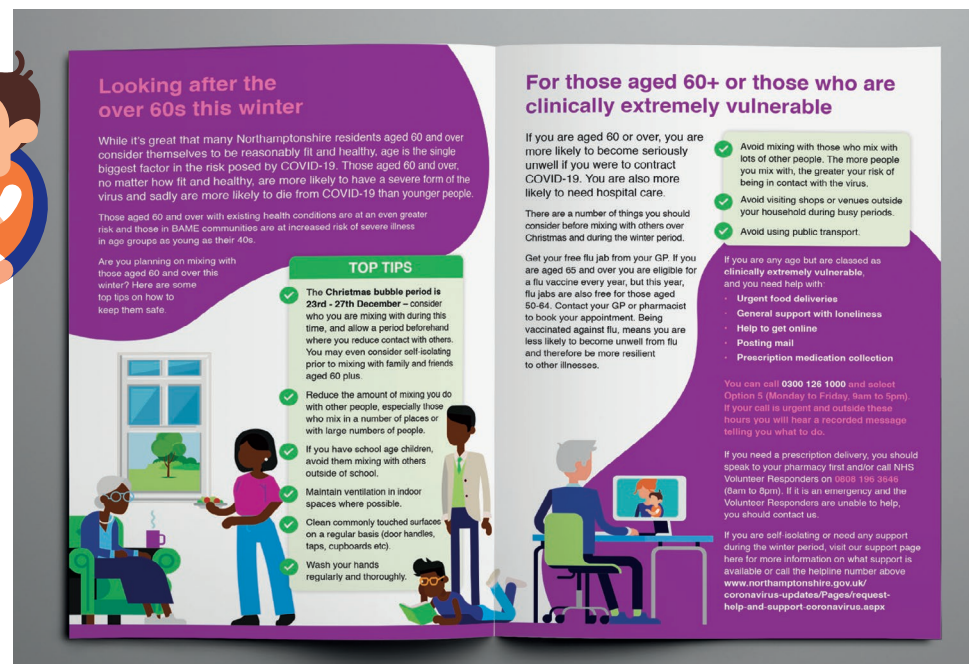
This was followed up with a Corby-specific leaflet designed to address the working patterns of many people in the town, which were resulting in child bubbles being mixed to meet childcare needs and consequently in higher transmission. This received a big response from the people of Corby on social media and notably the Corby Chats Back Facebook Group. Understandably the feedback was a mix of support and frustration, but as case rates came down, I was asked to feature in a video to the people of Corby, thanking them for helping us.



Partnerships

Our press conferences continued on a weekly basis following Greencore, chaired by our Cabinet Portfolio member, with the focus of each being determined by what was going on in the county at the time. The main topic also determined who spoke at the press conference too, and along with myself, we had NHS colleagues, hospital chief executives, the Lead GP Chair and a range of representatives from the CCG, adult social care, schools & universities and the Environment Health department. The press conferences often generated up to 140 different pieces in the media over a week.

This strong partnership with a range of organisations and experts was just one example of how people in the county worked together at the height of the pandemic. Everybody was willing to share their information and to reinforce each other's messages for greater impact and to create a big picture of what was going on county and nationwide.



Communications

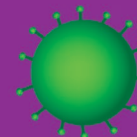
Communications with more breadth

For people working in our communications department, the pandemic has demonstrated what health inequalities mean on the frontline, particularly relating to 'hard to reach' groups. Often the target audience for the key messages weren't English speaking, so the team needed to work closely with translators, engagement teams and a range of community leaders to find the most effective way to reach the audience. For example local mosque leaders recommended that video messages shared via WhatsApp were the best way to reach their community.

This has resulted in valuable knowledge about the ways different communities communicate, and even the different ways they view things. This is a lesson in inclusivity, and it's something we intend to explore much more deeply.



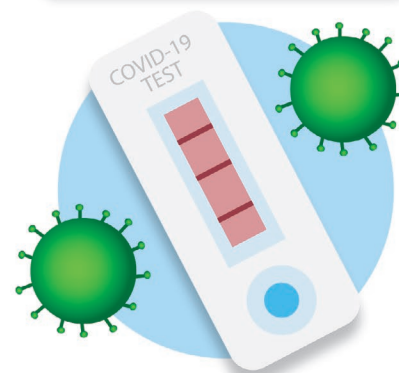
Šoninio srauto priemonių tyrimai



Ką turite žinoti apie šoninio srauto priemonių (angl. lateral flow device (LFD/LFT)) tyrimą

Kas bus po to, kai būsiu iširtas?

- 1 Yra dvi tyrimų rūšys, kuriomis nustatomas COVID-19 virusas: polimerazės grandininės reakcijos (angl. Polymerase Chain Reaction) (PGR) ir šoninio srauto priemonių (angl. Lateral flow device) (taip pat žinomi kaip LFD arba LFT) tyrimai.
- 2 Jei jūs atlikote LFD tyrimą, greičiausiai neturėjote COVID-19 viruso požymių. Šių tyrimų tikslas – nustatyti žmones, kurie neturėdami simptomų serga kovidu, galėtų izoliuotis ir sustabdytų viruso plitimą.
- 3 LFD tyrimų privalumas yra tas, kad juos paprasta ir greitai naudoti.
- 1 Išsityrus savo rezultatus galite sulaukti žinute ir (arba) elektroniniu paštu per 30–60 min.
- 2 Jei jūsų tyrimas teigiamas, prašome nedelsiant izoliuotis.
- 3 Jei jūsų tyrimas neigiamas, prisiminkite, kad nėra garantijos, jog nesate užsikrėtęs arba galimai sergantis – prašome toliau laikytis visų rekomendacijų ir nepamirškite plautis rankų, viduje dėvėti veido apdangalų ir laikytis 2 metrų atstumo nuo kitų žmonių. Tai yra todėl, kad LFD tyrimai nėra tokie tikslūs nustatant žmones, kurie neserga COVID-19.
- 4 Jei negaunate rezultatų arba jums pranešama, kad jūsų rezultatas „negaliojantis“, prašome kuo skubiau pakartotinai rezervuoti laiką besimptomiam tyrimui.



Public Health
Northamptonshire



#NorthantsTogether



Northamptonshire
County Council

Community Resilience



Community Resilience

Building on community resilience is one of the many responsibilities that sits under the broader heading of Emergency Planning. It's a service that can be hard to quantify as its focus is on ensuring that groups within the community are prepared to respond to, and lend their support in, emergency situations. It's driven by the adage that the first people on the scene of any incident are witnesses and bystanders, not the emergency services.

A great deal of the Community Resilience work is therefore focused on building a network of voluntary organisations who can be called on to help in any particular situation, from internationally-recognised names like the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, to more locally-focused groups like Northamptonshire Search and Rescue. Time and effort is dedicated to getting to know these groups, their capabilities and availability; arranging training and exercises; and ensuring that they're engaged and ready to respond if and when we need their expertise. Additionally, the team also spends time getting to know the communities it's responsible for, earning trust, building confidence and understanding their issues and concerns so that we can address them.

From planning to action

Because our Community Resilience team had been so focused on developing relationships with voluntary groups, it already had an exhaustive network of people, organisations and skills that it could call on to help support the population as COVID-19 began to impact our lives.

Although this team wasn't prepared specifically for COVID-19, it had been preparing for situations like this. As a result, the pandemic caused a shift in focus, rather than an upheaval. It changed from planning and being prepared, to tackling an actual incident and triggering the steps to manage it as effectively as possible.

Responding effectively

The pandemic had a significant impact on the usual work of the department, with the focus being put on COVID-19 related responses as much as possible. Of course, the team still needed to respond to Business As Usual incidents, but with lockdown and shielding, the majority of the Community Resilience network was suddenly off limits, making it much harder to respond effectively. As a result, the team needed to continually assess incoming reports to prioritise whether they needed to be addressed immediately, or could be dealt with later.

As part of this need to prioritise, a call centre was established as part of the central Customer Service Centre. The staff helped to direct requests for help (ranging from requests for food deliveries and help to get online, to loneliness and prescription collection) by triaging each call to establish needs, before passing the details on to the right responder, whether that was a local Facebook group, a voluntary organisation or a statutory partner. The call centre was majority staffed by librarians, whose usual work had stopped and were looking to donate their skills to help the county's COVID response. At its peak in May 2020, the call centre received more than 2,500 calls.

Shifting priority to managing the pandemic also meant that the usual proactive and planning work needed to be more in the background and proactive projects just couldn't be continued.



Stay at home check list and support

Self-isolation means that you cannot leave your house for 10 days. It is important that you stick to these rules to help protect those around you.

Here's a handy checklist of items to think about when staying at home

My isolation check list

Item	Options if you need any help with these:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food deliveries	The Council's Community Resilience Hub can help you to get support.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Help to get online	Call 0300 126 3000 and select Option 1, 3, 1 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If your call is urgent and outside these hours you will hear a recorded message telling you what to do.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prescription medication	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Help with utilities (e.g. topping up energy meters)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Posting mail	www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/coronavirus-updates/Pages/request-help-and-support-coronavirus.aspx
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Care of pets (e.g. someone to walk my dog)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Financial support (e.g. self-isolation support payment)	If you're struggling with your mental health, you can get support 24/7 directly by calling 0800 448 0828 .
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I have arrangements in place to support my wellbeing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Friends, families or co-workers I can connect with	Children and young people struggling with their health and wellbeing can get advice and support by texting the school nurse service on 07507 329600 .
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Know where to access support if I feel lonely, anxious or overwhelmed or need specific help	



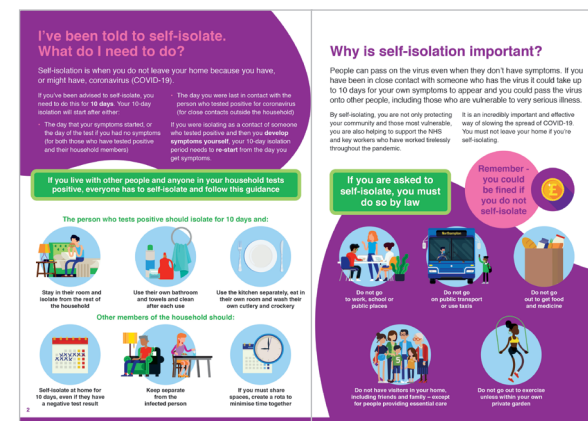
Reaching everyone

Usually, Community Resilience work would be carried out face to face, primarily with the voluntary network, but also often with the general public too. This would be supplemented with other communication channels, including print and social media.

During the pandemic, the face-to-face work was impossible, but the team found alternative ways to make a positive impact. Perhaps the clearest example is in the case of the call centre. As a new initiative, the population needed to know about it and the more people who called this dedicated central centre, rather than call a local hub, the better our response could be.

To spread this message, a leaflet about the support available and how to access it, was put through 325,000 letterboxes in the county. This led to more calls being made direct to the call centre, but equally important was the number of people who simply felt reassured to receive this leaflet; to know that there was a place they could turn to if they ever needed help.

This relationship-building and reassurance work was supported by more measurable activities, designed to pinpoint and help specific groups or individuals. For example, the team introduced free school-meal vouchers that ran during the holidays (during the summer holidays 2021, 19,844 vouchers were given out across Northamptonshire, with each child receiving £90), and a hardship fund which helped people financially if they were struggling with bills or with putting food on the table.



Community Resilience

Proactive calls

As well as encouraging inbound traffic to the call centre, the team proactively introduced an outgoing system once it had obtained the shielding list, which listed every single person in the county who was shielding. Using this list, the team called every one of the 23,000 people on it simply to check they were doing okay, had everything they needed and had people to check on them.

Spontaneous volunteers

An unforeseen issue that the team needed to react to, was the rise of spontaneous volunteers across the county. The majority of these took the form of local Facebook Groups which made themselves available for things such as food shopping and prescription pick-ups.

To try and harness this valuable new resource effectively and safely, we mapped these groups across the county and created a register to ensure that there weren't multiple groups doing the same thing in the same area. When the team identified areas with a lack of groups, it tried to stimulate the formation of one.

New partnerships

Community Resilience is a service built on partnerships, from hobby groups who want to help others through their passion, through to voluntary organisations and statutory partners. Even so, during the pandemic the team found itself forging new relationships with organisations whose usual work streams had been stopped or significantly altered by the pandemic. Community spirit was at an all-time high.

Examples include the librarians who worked in the call centre; the staff of Northamptonshire Sport who couldn't carry on with their normal activities, so volunteered their services for tasks like delivering leaflets or moving stock from place to place; and the military which provided expert planning and logistics skills, and played the role of a 'critical friend' in order to stress-test solutions our team was going to implement.

Our team was particularly proud to have worked with Housing Managers and the Single Homelessness Team on the Everyone In programme. Simply, its aim was to put as many of Northamptonshire's rough sleepers as possible into temporary accommodation, whilst also delivering a wraparound package of care to help them avoid a return to the streets. Working with the Hope Centre charity and other local services, this was a joint effort which saw 135 of the vulnerable people who were initially housed in temporary accommodation (including local hotels and student accommodation) later moved into suitable settled housing.



Community Resilience

The power of being prepared

The pandemic has made it very clear that the time and effort put into building relationships is an investment that more than pays off when it is needed. It's always been a very difficult area to make a business case for, as it's almost impossible to prove prevention, but the team's response to COVID-19 has shown the power of the network the team has built.

It has also shown the importance of planning and looking ahead. As we saw from the flu pandemic plan, this doesn't just mean the content of the plans themselves, but the confidence and expertise that comes from the process of planning. This meant that when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the team understood how to plan for it, and was fully aware of all the things it should consider and include.

Lessons learned

Moving forwards, we've seen how effectively the community can come together in a crisis, but also how we as responders do the same. At the start of the pandemic, we were still structured as a County Council and seven districts and boroughs. These separate groups came together and committed to tackling COVID-19 as one, something which highlighted the way the two unitary authorities could and should work following the restructuring.



Health Protection

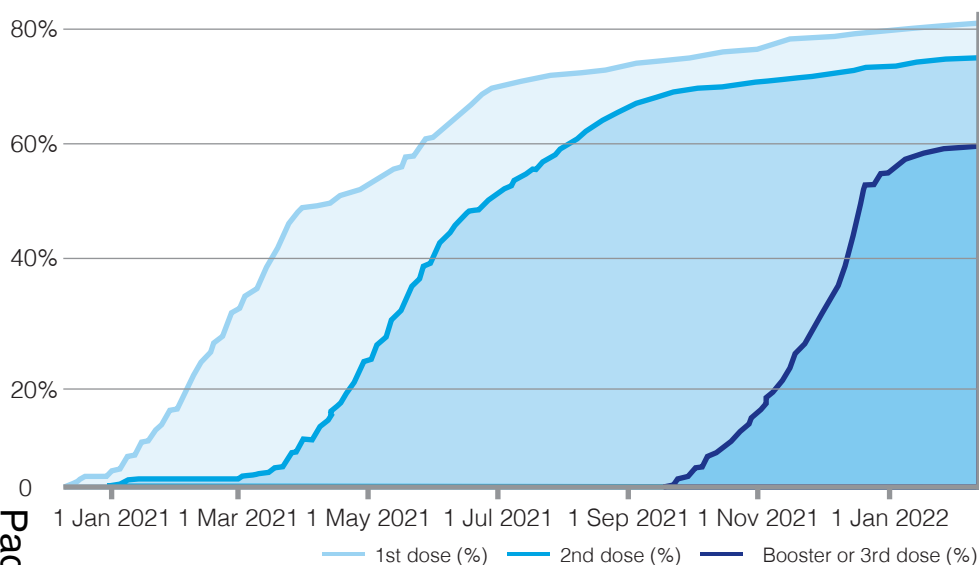


Health Protection

Health Protection covers an incredibly broad range of activities designed to keep everyone in the county as healthy as possible, and to take steps to safeguard that health. Although it has traditionally worked under the radar, it plays a major role in everybody's life, from conception to old age. It helps to facilitate everything from vaccinations, NHS screening services, and the detection & management of chronic diseases (such as tuberculosis, blood-borne viruses and HIV) and communicable infections (including meningitis, mumps and the flu), to suicide prevention, ensuring the homeless have access to good health and running clinics for disadvantaged residents.

COVID-19 vaccination in our population

The vaccination programme began in late December 2020. By the 14th of February 2022, 80.9% of Northamptonshire population have had their 1st dose of COVID vaccine, 75.8% have had the 2nd dose, and 59.7% have had the 3rd dose or a booster (figure 7 Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk). Of the population eligible for a vaccination as outlined by JVC1 this presented a significant number of people coming forward to protect themselves and those around them.



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Figure 7. Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk



Figure 8. Source: coronavirus.data.gov.uk

- 1st dose (80.9%)
- 2nd dose (75.8%)
- Booster or 3rd dose (59.8%)

Health Protection

Best laid plans

To succeed, this team needs specialist knowledge across multiple disciplines and to be dynamic and responsive to whatever is happening in the county at the time.

Of course that dynamism has never been challenged more than during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of a network of Health Protection Teams (HPT) across the country and overseen by the government, we had established plans to deal with epidemics at national, regional and local levels. These plans primarily used influenza as their foundation, but as COVID-19 began to get a foothold in the first quarter of 2020, it soon became apparent that these plans were not able to cope with the sheer scale of this 'health disaster'.

Our small HPT found itself stretched to the limit, needing additional resources, funding and information in order to manage the high rate of infection. At one point, this team was addressing 100 outbreaks (defined as 2 or more test-confirmed cases in a non-residential setting) in a single week. By the end of February 2020, an Incident Command Cell had been established as the centre of Northamptonshire's response, and resources were pulled in from other services so the team could begin addressing the immediate needs. By early March, we were able to deliver a COVID-19 focused service.

This meant of course that the normal work of the team was severely disrupted. Essential priorities continued to be delivered, but with all available resources redirected towards the COVID-19 response.

Reacting to a pandemic

With such a new disease having an all-encompassing impact on the health of all, the HPT was initially focused on reacting to the disease and the way it behaved, working with the communications team to disseminate new information and continually-evolving guidance from the government.

This was a learning situation for everybody: information from the government was in constant development and at times slow to reach the teams on the ground, who were having to adapt to the situations in front of them. This meant that everyone in the team needed a very flexible and fluid approach to the way they worked, knowing that the way a situation was dealt with one day, could completely change by the next week, or even the next day.

The scale of the pandemic meant that this 100% reactive approach continued for at least the first year of the service, before a more proactive approach began to become more feasible. The bulk of this proactive work was focused on training for service providers in high-risk settings such as care homes. Where in the previous reactive phase the team was being called to an outbreak, then providing training to the staff there, now there was some time dedicated to identifying those high-risk settings and minimising the chance that an outbreak would occur there.

As time progresses and we enter the 'recovery' phase of the pandemic, our team is embedding COVID-19 into our future way of working and moving away from a reactive position to a more proactive one.

Health Protection

A deeper understanding of Health Protection

One unforeseen impact of the pandemic is that it has seen the work of Health Protection become better understood by other service providers (including care homes, learning disability units and mental health units) and the public. For example, at the height of the pandemic, when one of the main messages was to stay safe by staying socially distant, our HPT team often had to work hard to convince care home teams that the team could advise and assist safely. Understandably care home teams were reluctant to open their doors to new people.

As time moved on and the team continued its work, the level of trust in our Health Protection team and what it could achieve increased steadily, with other services becoming more transparent and willing to not only accept, but seek help from the HPT. They now know that the team isn't there to criticise, but to lend its expertise in whatever ways it can.



Stronger partnerships

In order to face the challenge of this new disease, the response saw diverse groups pooling their resources to understand, manage and counter COVID-19. Organisations working together under a single umbrella meant that everyone shared the same agenda and could focus on the same goal. As a result, the Health Protection team forged powerful bonds with groups including the police and fire services, NHS Trusts, the ambulance service, independent healthcare providers, social care providers, local authorities, Environmental Health Officers (EHOs), education groups, community leaders, faith leaders and politicians.

Each group gained a deeper understanding of the others and their expertise. These are strong relationships that continue to this day, not just organisation to organisation, but person to person.

One particularly noteworthy collaboration was triggered by an early major outbreak at a large supermarket distribution centre. The Health Protection Team worked alongside the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which is the regulatory body for health and safety in businesses, and was able to share a tremendous amount of valuable information. Through this collaborative working, the HSE was also able to lend support which was critical in surveilling and managing the outbreak. With this lesson learned, the HPT set out to work with more regulatory bodies including the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the HSE, more EHOs and commissioners, all of whom could contribute to delivering a more connected COVID-19 service as one team.

Stronger links with education services are another unforeseen benefit. There's now a greater understanding of how the HPT's work needs to adapt to meet the particular needs of schools. For example, previously the team would produce an Infection Protection Control (IPC) pathway from a clinician's point of view. Realising that a different approach was needed to get head teachers on board and up to speed, the team worked with education colleagues to create something that used language, images and instructions which would support schools more effectively, enabling the schools to understand the HPT's clinical requests to them on a much deeper level.

Health Protection

Impact on the team

The nature of COVID-19 and its transmission saw the way people work change significantly. It challenged our close-knit team to work, meet and interact remotely, but much of the team's work necessitated going to outbreak sites, or potential outbreak sites, and working safely face-to-face with people.

This not only meant using PPE equipment, sterilising environments and following new guidance as it emerged, but it also gave the team the opportunity to appreciate our county's beauty and get to know it, as members travelled from place to place on relatively clear roads. With resources in short supply, the HPT also found itself providing support beyond Northamptonshire's borders in places including Leicester, Oxford and Buckinghamshire, mostly new locations to the team.

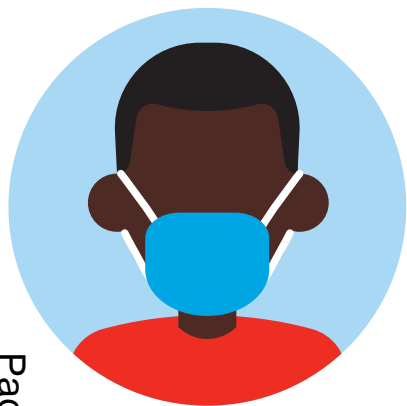
An important lesson during this highly pressured and stressful period, when long hours, seven-days-a-week working and no annual leave were a necessity, was how crucial it was to take time to look after one's self. With resources stretched beyond the limit, even one member of the team away due to sickness would have a significant impact on the services and therefore on the population.

A new way of thinking

COVID-19 has helped demonstrate to the team that these are not solely clinical problems. Hygiene, cleanliness and simply travelling with less clutter are all things that can have a positive impact on controlling infections moving forwards. By keeping many of the habits we now have, the population will be able to better protect itself from other infections including norovirus, influenza and measles.

The experience has also given the team added confidence to deal with the future. New ways of working, the ability to adapt quickly, to think on our feet, to deal with pressure and a large support network of specialists have all proven to be invaluable over the period of the pandemic, and we'll ensure this is the norm in the future, no matter what it holds.

Perhaps the most powerful lesson is collaboration. The HPT has seen that its clinical point of view, when combined with other approaches (for example the more scientific approach from Environmental Health Officers) is the most effective way to reach the best solution, and is committed to continue working in this way in the future.



Infection Prevention and Control



Infection Prevention and Control

Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) underpins everything in healthcare settings as it focuses on creating and implementing policies, procedures and practices that can reduce the risk of contamination and cross infection. Its primary goal is to ensure that service providers in a healthcare setting adopt IPC behaviours as part of their day-to-day activity to keep themselves and the people they're caring for as safe as possible.

An IPC team's work can vary from running training courses covering topics including hand hygiene, to running in-depth assessments of a nursing home (for example) following an outbreak and putting together an action plan to avoid something similar happening in the future.

Forming the IPC team

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Northamptonshire didn't have a single clearly defined IPC team. Instead Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (NHFT) had a team which supported community hospitals, whilst both Northampton and Kettering General Hospitals had their own teams working across the acute and mental health settings.

Care homes, learning disability units and nursing homes however organised their own IPC training from a range of providers. This meant that there was no universal IPC offer – each setting would have different ways of approaching it, and often this meant very different standards from organisation to organisation.

As COVID-19 began to impact the people of Northamptonshire, this proved to be a key issue. In the early stages of the pandemic, we had a single nurse taking Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) out to care homes and teaching staff how to use it effectively. Very quickly it became clear that care homes in particular would need a great deal of support moving forward, and highlighted to the Health Protection Team (HPT) that IPC would need a focused and connected approach.

As a result, a specific IPC team was formed, pulling in people from HPT, but also nurses from many of the private hospitals in the county which, due to the pandemic, were not running. With this new team in place, we were in a position to lead on IPC care in care homes across the county with a seven days per week service.



Infection Prevention and Control

Reacting to the greatest need

The team's work was driven by where the need was greatest. So the largest outbreaks or cases where there had been a death were prioritised. As the situation was continually escalating, this could mean that members of the team were travelling to one outbreak, but were diverted to an even more pressing situation en route.

This meant that the teams sometimes arrived with very little information about the care home or the outbreak. This though was often an advantage as the teams could enter with an open mind and carry out their inspections with no preconceptions.

A typical visit would include an in-depth room-to-room walkaround of the care home, an analysis of the staff and residents (capacity, numbers of people with symptoms versus those without, sudden deaths or people recently hospitalised) and the movement of people and equipment throughout the home to identify potential transmission dangers. This looked at where staff worked (did they only cover one floor or all floors of the building? And did they work at more than one care home?), and how or where they entered and exited the building. It also analysed the cleaning procedures at the home and the hygiene in the kitchen.

By doing all of this and keeping an extensive tracking document of every visit to every home, IPC could not only help to identify the most likely transmission routes in the homes, it could also see clear patterns which helped to show the kind of training that was needed most urgently, and high-risk locations to focus on.

This kind of reactive work continued throughout the first year of the pandemic, but as the pressure began to ease, the team's leaders could begin to take a more structured approach, focused on raising the level of IPC training care home staff had received.

Training, educating and staying safe

With COVID-19 taking hold, NHS England gave a directive that every care home and care setting should have IPC training. Over the next three weeks, our team offered training to over 450 care settings, and delivered this through a combination of face-to-face and Zoom sessions.

Working in some of the hardest-hit care homes across Northamptonshire (and often over its borders), the IPC team could see that existing IPC training standards varied wildly, with some care home providers running their own IPC training, bringing in outside trainers, or simply doing online courses.

Our training looked to raise standards up to the same bar. With poor IPC practices often leading to outbreaks, it was clear that there needed to be a universal standard for IPC. Care home staff were often surprised at how specialised IPC training is, at even its most basic level. For example, working safely with PPE. There are clearly defined methods for putting on and taking off PPE properly. Removing PPE in the correct way is particularly important as this is the time the wearer is most at risk of transferring COVID-19 to themselves, a colleague or a service user. Hand hygiene was another basic area in which knowledge was lacking. For example the importance of being bare below the elbow (no watches, rings, bracelets etc) to minimise the chances of transmission.



Infection Prevention and Control

A coordinated response

As knowledge of the disease evolved, our IPC response to it evolved too. The first stage was getting Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) more heavily involved. IPC is a part of their day-to-day responsibilities as they review workplaces, but where our nurses see situations through a clinical lens, EHOs have a scientific approach. The combination of the two viewpoints and the sharing of expertise meant we could see a clearer picture of COVID-19 transmission in care homes and deliver a more thorough review on each visit.

The IPC team also began working closely with Adult Social Care, Quality and Safeguarding teams, as well as the Care department at the CCG. Through meetings and briefings, the flow of useful information between all of these groups helped to keep IPC as informed and prepared as it could be – and with IPC's knowledge our partners could also benefit from insights on the ground.

The Weekly Outbreak meetings held, saw the expanded team, along with Public Health England (PHE) working together to see if there was anything we could have done differently at new outbreak sites. If there was a large outbreak (one example saw 20 staff and inmates at a prison contract the disease) IPC would hold an Outbreak Control Meeting involving PHE, EHOs and stakeholders from the outbreak site. This group would work together to review the timeline of the outbreak and determine the best way to tackle similar situations in the future.

Another key partner was the military, which not only supplied medics (Kettering General Hospital had access to 14 at one point), but often helped with the logistics of moving vast amounts of PPE around. Its ability to streamline processes and focus on meeting needs in the most effective way proved invaluable, particularly in cases like the Greencore outbreak. This was the largest outbreak in England up to this point, and was initially handled by PHE, public health consultants, HSE and EHOs. IPC then carried out a clinical review and focused on educating staff in using PPE correctly. The military helped to ensure that all resources were exactly where they needed to be, when they were needed.



Infection Prevention and Control

Understanding IPC

The more of these outbreaks our team tackled, and the more education and training they delivered on the frontline, the more care homes began to understand and value the work of IPC. This resulted in stronger relationships with service providers across care settings.

Care homes which were initially reluctant to engage with our team, now often request support to keep them operating safely. And this transparency wasn't limited just to care homes: Northampton General Hospital was having regular outbreaks and asked our community IPC team to come and do a 'critical friend' review to ensure there wasn't anything they had missed in their own IPC practices.

Piloting a universal standard of IPC training

The pandemic has highlighted that the standards of care in Northamptonshire's care homes is generally high, but that IPC training needs to be standardised. With private hospital nurses now returned to their careers, the first part of that standardisation was to present the business case for a dedicated community IPC team to deliver it and continue responding to COVID-19, not just in care homes but also in schools and other educational settings.

With that team funded from December 2020 onwards, we now have the capacity to start defining a national IPC standard in care settings, and are currently piloting these standards in some care homes in the county.

Staying prepared

Although the team's work has understandably focused on COVID-19, it's clear that the renewed focus on hand hygiene has had a positive impact on other communicable diseases. As people perceive the threat of COVID-19 to have lessened, they are not washing their hands so often. As a result, the team is beginning to see cases of diarrhoea & vomiting and Legionella once more on the rise and will continue to stress the importance of hand hygiene.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 saw the team working under unprecedented time pressure. Working at pace and having to deprioritise Business As Usual work highlighted the need for a 'whole system' approach. Rather than small silos of specialist knowledge, our aim is to integrate every team so that working together becomes the norm rather than something that's implemented under duress. Our multi-agency, multidisciplinary approach was essential during the pandemic and will be going forward.



Engagement and Enforcement



Remember
to wear your
face covering

Engagement and Enforcement

The goal of Engagement is to work with business owners and members of the public to ensure they are not only aware of legislation and guidelines, but to provide all the support and advice they need to understand them and therefore engage with them.

If legislation is consistently ignored, then Enforcement deals with the actions agencies can take to resolve the situation, and may include Trading Standards, food licensing, building control and of course the police. Enforcement is always a last resort. It's more desirable to build relationships with people and help them see that the rules are there to protect people, rather than to penalise them and damage any prospect of a positive relationship in the future.

Normally if there is an issue, it involves more than one agency, so this is an area in which working together to solve a problem is the norm rather than an exception. For example dealing with a badly run pub could involve the nuisance it causes to the neighbourhood, selling alcohol to underage drinkers, violent conduct and other crimes which could escalate as a result. The team therefore has good relationships with– and strong knowledge of – lots of other departments and agencies in the council.

Reacting to new legislation

As has been mentioned previously, the then County Council had prepared a flu pandemic plan as an exercise to stress-test the system and to highlight areas of concern. When COVID-19 reached the county, this plan proved invaluable as a great deal of its predictions and recommendations were accurate and could act as the foundation for our work.

However, one element that was not contained in the plan was a potential lockdown. The plan had considered enforceable isolation, but this total 'suppression strategy' was completely unexpected, and required the team to interpret and implement a new enforcement regime almost overnight.

This need to react and adapt became a regular occurrence in the early days of the pandemic. On average, new legislation would be announced every three days and the team was usually seeing it for the first time just as the public was.

The first priority was to understand the rules and then provide a thorough briefing to leadership the next morning, detailing the impact of the regulations. Then it needed to plan ways to help the people of Northamptonshire live by them, whilst thinking through every variation of each rule to define if and when enforceable action would need to be applied.



Engagement and Enforcement

An engagement-first approach

There were likely to be many inadvertent breaches so an Education, Engagement and (as a last resort) Enforcement approach was agreed. The key to getting the general public to stick to the rules was to ensure they understood them and could see the value in them - not in penalising people at every turn and losing their trust as a result.

Even in cases where the legislation was not being followed, there was another layer of complication to understand. Were people not complying because they didn't understand the rules? Because they didn't want to follow the rules? Or because they couldn't follow the rules? All of this needed to be considered for every new piece of legislation.

Multi-agency coordination

It became clear immediately that an effective coordination and planning structure would need to be established in order to move smoothly from receiving and interpreting rules, to identifying potential issues and putting plans into action throughout the county. This resulted in four regular meetings, which continued throughout the pandemic.

The first was the weekly Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) which considered the issues from a top-down perspective and mapped out broadly how to deal with problems. This involved representatives from all agencies so strategies could leverage the strengths of all agencies.

The Partnership Tasking Group (PTG) looked at what was currently happening and what was in the immediate future. This could involve changes to legislation, but also might focus on predicting public behaviour – for example if the weather forecast was good for the weekend, there would be more people in the country parks. The focus of the PTG was to predict where and when engagement and/or enforcement teams would be needed and to ensure they were there.

The daily Joint Enforcement Team (JET) was a problem-solving forum. It was responsible for looking at areas with particular issues or breaches, identifying any patterns or learnings, and planning enforcement activity to tackle them. This could range from a geographic area of the county right down to specific individuals. For example, JET addressed a period of problems along the Wellingborough Road in Northampton by coming up with a series of coordinated multi-agency activities which involved all the licensees and shops in the area. By tackling each individual issue as a group over several weeks, the area became much better at operating within the COVID-19 regulations.

The final group didn't meet to a set routine, but convened every time there was a regulatory change. Informally known as the FAQs Group, it was made up of experts in a range of subjects relevant to the change, who would review the new rules and prepare answers to questions which were likely to be asked, the most basic of which were always 'What does this mean practically?' and 'Are there any exploitable loopholes?'

Boots on the ground

With the unplanned lockdown, much of the team's early work was focused on reacting to new legislation as it was introduced. However, even during this period, Engagement and Enforcement found ways to solve problems proactively.

The team saw that producing comms for people to read had very clear limits. With legislation changing regularly, even if people read guidance at the start of the week, it may have changed by the weekend. Leadership determined that we needed boots on the ground, people who were out and about and could spread information directly, and where needed, remind people of the rules.

To fill these important roles, we contracted an events management company, and used their teams (who would usually be working as marshals and security at festivals and shows) as our own frontline team. This group was chosen as the events staff were used to dealing with the public and had some training in conflict resolution. We supplemented that with regular briefings on the most recent rule changes, and then used them in teams across the county.

Engagement and Enforcement

Gathering intelligence

Over time it became clear that these 'Blue Bib' Marshals could be a key source of intelligence, as they had experience of what was happening at ground level, including how legislation was being interpreted and followed. To harness this potential, the Marshals received more specific training, so they could report back with the kind of intelligence that would help Environmental Health identify and tackle breaches that fell under its responsibilities, particularly when it came to selling food.

The key to maximising the Marshals' reach was to use them appropriately: they had no enforcement powers, so were primarily an engagement and information gathering resource. It was essential that if they were ever in enforcement situations, they were working in tandem with the right enforcement agency.

Setting an example

Our Marshals could be found wherever the public was likely to be. In country parks they approached groups who were not two-metres apart and provided a gentle reminder. By riding buses with their masks on, they ensured that other passengers kept their masks on too. At Black Lives Matter demonstrations, they worked alongside the police to help people stay safe. They checked that people isolating were where they were supposed to be. And as the vaccination programme began to roll out, they worked with the public at the vaccination centres themselves. With around 40 Marshals on patrol at the peak of the pandemic, they carried out more than 30,000 spot checks up to July 2021.

But perhaps the most tangible impact they had was as lockdown restrictions on retail began to lift. The Engagement and Enforcement leadership set itself a target: to visit every retail environment and shop in the county in the first week of reopening to ensure the people working in them understood the rules and were operating within them. Around 90% of premises were found to be compliant. Those that weren't received additional support and checks to help them become compliant. In the rare cases where shops simply refused, then action was escalated and formalised to include environmental Health, again operating using the intelligence gathered by the Marshals.

Later, when the night-time economy began to open once more, the Marshals were a common sight. Because the team had set out to use specific teams of Blue Bibs consistently in specific areas, they had already built up familiar relationships with people in those areas. This meant that instead of being seen as some kind of threat, they were seen as supportive friends, who could be asked for advice by door staff or pub goers.

When COVID-19 Marshals were announced nationally, our Blue Bibs were used as a case study for how best to deploy this new resource.



Engagement and Enforcement

Working with the public

Partnerships were a key part of the department's success, as evidenced by the range of multi-agency meetings, strategies and activities during the pandemic. But perhaps the most important 'partnership' was the one with the general public.

It's long been known that it's impossible to 'enforce your way to compliance', so the emphasis must be on education and engagement. This was something the team and its Marshals embraced, with a lot of its work focusing on 'soft' skills – simply interacting with people and helping them to understand and engage with the rules at all stages of the lockdown and shortly afterwards.

The future

This period in our history has demonstrated how important it is to state rules simply, clearly and consistently. With the multitude of rule changes and amendments (particularly in the first few months of the lockdown), engagement was not only more important, it was much harder as there was often a lack of clarity internally.

We've stressed often that while the external pressure of COVID-19 pushed the seven districts to come together and work as a united force, it's now important that we find the energy, motivation and channels to keep that togetherness going in the future. It's clear that our Engagement and Enforcement team and its multi-agency approach can act as the catalyst that drives it.



Environmental Health

Order a table meal if you wish to purchase alcohol



Environmental Health

Environmental Health covers factors in our business and personal lives that can have an effect on our health. Commonly this sees the team working with local businesses to ensure they're aware of and comply with Health & Safety and hygiene legislation, working with the public following noise or bonfire complaints, investigating accidents at work, and administering licences (including alcohol and taxi).

Because it covers such a range of activities, it calls for a very practical approach to problem solving, often with the ability to apply common sense and life experience proving as crucial as a scientific background. This unique set of skills proved absolutely essential when it came to working with other departments and the public across the county during the pandemic.



Environmental Health

Focusing on COVID-19

As with other service areas in the Council, the majority of Business As Usual tasks for the team were halted. Firstly the majority of businesses that were the focus of the team's work were not operational, and secondly, the team quickly saw the need to dedicate all of its efforts and resources towards tackling the pandemic. All Health Protection staff (including Environmental Health Officers) were involved from the start, but these were very quickly joined by staff from wider Environmental Health areas and other teams (including warden control, community safety and CCTV) who could help with the Covid effort.

The businesses that were still open had new COVID-19 legislation that needed to be abided by. Understandably however, legislation was often rushed out which created grey areas, loopholes and often a lack of knowledge as to what a business could or could not do. For example, supermarkets remained open for food and household goods, but was it illegal for them to sell greetings cards? Our Environmental Health team has a lot of experience in interpreting legislation and applying it to real life situations, so often took the lead advisory role when it came to applying it across the county.

The changing face of business

Many businesses also changed the nature of their work so they could remain open, including pubs which became takeaway-food suppliers in many cases. This was compounded by businesses which looked to exploit loopholes to continue operating. A notorious example of this is the policy that stated that pubs could only open if their patrons could order a 'substantial' meal with their alcoholic beverage. In one case this led to a menu change which saw 'substantial chips' served with every drink.

Due to this new stream of work, our Environmental Health team utilised Neighbourhood Wardens (later Covid Marshals) to act as an extension of its eyes and ears throughout Northamptonshire. By gathering intelligence, this group helped the Environmental Health Officers build an accurate picture of what was actually happening on the ground. This continual flow of information proved to be an essential pillar when it came to understanding the impact the pandemic was having on the businesses in the county.



Environmental Health

Information and trends

During the initial stages of the pandemic, most of the work was reactive and focused on guidance and support for businesses in the county. Thanks to the way our Environmental Health team has always worked, it had strong relationships with businesses throughout Northamptonshire and as a result, they were open to help from EHOs and requested advice right from the start – a dialogue that continued throughout the pandemic, with a great deal of the team’s time dedicated to ensuring businesses had the most up-to-date information and knew where to turn to for additional support.

Daily briefings were initiated which allowed teams across the council to share the information they’d gathered and to plan & action a response. The Environmental Health team was a key contributor, bringing the intelligence its ‘boots on the ground’ had gathered, and helping to bring some of the raw data on the disease to life. This insight, situation reports and calls/reports directly into the team (triaged by its expanded staff) helped the team to identify trends and prioritise the work, with internal weekly meetings used to plan the response.

Examples varied wildly, from regularly needing to engage with the public to stress the importance of self-isolation, hand hygiene and masks, to tackling the risk of outbreaks among big employers on industrial estates. With the team’s experience of assessing hazard and risk and its ability to step back from a problem that business owners may be too close to, it identified that this workforce relied on car sharing and bus travel to get to work. Our Environmental Health team then focused not just on targeted messages (translated into multiple languages) to encourage safer travel but worked with colleagues in Transport to convince Bus Operating Companies to provide extra buses during peak times so that fewer passengers needed to be on each service.

Test & Trace became a particular priority as it provided such valuable information on the spread of the disease, as did addressing high infection rates in care homes. This brought the Environmental Health team into more regular contact with our PC staff further building on their working relationships.

Becoming more proactive

The team championed partnership working as fundamentally essential. This approach helped to usher in a more system-focused approach, with working groups formed with other agencies across the council facilitating much better information sharing. This ultimately led to quicker, more informed decisions, whether relating to COVID-19 communications, the creation of procedures and plans for business checks, or helping care providers to continue to operate safely. The support of the system and the build-up of knowledge was a key factor in being able to move to more proactive work.

When proactive work was feasible, the team spent more time working on the best way to disseminate pertinent information to businesses in the county. Spearheading this were newsletters which went out to thousands of businesses, providing useful information, explaining legislation and signposting avenues for additional support; and a questionnaire for care homes, devised with Public Health colleagues, to help educate on, and check compliance with, COVID-19 safety.

The person who tests positive should isolate for 10 days and:



Stay in their room and isolate from the rest of the household

Environmental Health

Countywide and councilwide impact

For an indication of the impact the team had across the county, we can look at an Environmental Health record that was set up just before the first lockdown. All of the COVID-19 work undertaken was noted and to give a taste of the level of work undertaken, in the East Northants area alone, there were 2076 entries, which resulted in around 2750 interactions.

These interactions covered the whole spectrum, from helping to trigger behaviour change through education (i.e. to make mask-wearing widely accepted), to keeping manufacturing facilities working safely by reorganising the factory floor, redefining the flow of people or simply introducing a new rota system to limit the number of people in the building.

As a key influencing service in the decision-making process, this record doesn't show the reach the work of the team had on a fundamental level. Its knowledge of local businesses and population demographics, and from seeing how our communications and national legislation were received and interpreted, helped to shape the county's response as a whole – from top-level decisions to the messaging on a leaflet. So from a granular level to a bird's-eye-view, Environmental Health expertise was a critical factor in the way we tackled the disease.

While this team continued to develop its relationships with businesses and the general public, it also enhanced its reputation internally thanks to its range of complementary skills and ability to work effectively with other agencies. With its more practical approach and expertise, prior to the pandemic, Environmental Health was not always seen as central to Public Health. Its work over the last 18 months has seen a widespread, deeper understanding of its strengths develop internally and moving forwards it will be an integral part of Public Health work.

Working together

As has been made clear, Environment Health is all about working with other people, whether that's supporting local businesses, or partnering with other internal agencies. Environmental Health has supported the more clinical side of the pandemic co-ordinated by the NHS, Public Health England and our Public Health department with its scientific, practical and intelligence-gathering expertise.

This has seen it working with some unusual partners such as Transport, strengthening working relationships with other services such as IPC, Community Engagement and Communications, and building new relationships with pub-watch groups, charities and a range of support groups who all played a part in our COVID-19 response.

Perhaps the closest working relationship was with the police. As legislation around COVID-19 continued to develop, there was a need to define not just what the legislation meant practically, but also how it could be enforced, particularly as the reopening of pubs approached. Rather than leave grey areas, the two worked together to clarify which agency would take the lead in specific situations. As these conversations progressed, it became clear that the two would need to work very closely together to cover all eventualities.

In order to facilitate this approach on the streets, a Joint Operations Team was formed which allowed joint patrols of the police and Local Authority Officers. This meant that EHOs could lead in commercial properties, whilst the police would lead in domestic settings. Having joint patrols would ensure that together they were equipped and legally able to deal with whatever enforcement situation arose.

It is worth stressing at this point however that enforcement was rare, and used as a last resort. The focus remained on education and support, and enforcement was only used for persistent offenders or those openly flouting the law.

Environmental Health

The future

As with many aspects of Public Health, the pandemic has reinforced the validity of an intelligence-led approach. The combination of intelligence from the Covid Marshals, data gathered from other agencies and the ability of our Environmental Health team to bring insight to every situation helped businesses from care homes to pubs operate within the legislation and safely.

Many of the other departments within this report have stated that their work was enhanced by the support of Environmental Health Officers, which speaks to a wider appreciation of everything this department can bring to Public Health. It also reiterates the fact that a multi-agency approach is an essential part of an effective and informed response to any disaster. Although we were still organised as a local council and seven districts as the pandemic struck, everybody came together to tackle the disease as one. This is an approach which must continue as we adapt to being two unitary authorities. The relationships and information sharing of the last 18 months must continue.

Things to do in 2022



Wash and sanitise hands regularly



Wear a face covering regularly



Keep indoor spaces ventilated



Take LFD tests regularly



Make space

Don't pay the price. Protect yourself and others from **COVID-19.**

Visit gov.uk/coronavirus for more information



Intelligence



Intelligence

The Intelligence department can be described as the eyes of Public Health. It helps the council to better plan and commission services by analysing data to show the potential impact of decisions, and to monitor and track the performance of any element within Public Health.

Its evidence-based approach helps to predict trends and future needs and identify areas that we could perform better in; as such, it's a department that can help every other department across Public Health do its best work. From monitoring the success of the local recovery service to producing school profiles for school nurses, and from producing deep-dive reports on a single issue like substance misuse, to modelling a multitude of future outcomes to identify the best course of action, Intelligence is behind all of the decisions we make.

Responding to COVID

The team was very used to working on a 'planned' basis, with regular reports produced on a monthly or quarterly basis, and requests for specific work coming in with lead times that gave the team time to think, do all the necessary research, speak to colleagues and produce the work within the established work plan. COVID-19 put an end to that.

When the UK began to experience its first cases, our Intelligence team was already looking for ways that it could reliably predict the way the county would be affected. This was a new disease however, with no precedent the team could use as the basis of its modelling. The team had previously produced a prediction model exploring likely outcomes for a flu epidemic, but with the lack of data on COVID-19, it was unknown how accurate it would be as the basis for the pandemic.

Imperial College London was part of the Government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and had been tasked with producing a prediction model with all the knowledge available at the time. Once this was published, it became the basis for our team's Northamptonshire prediction model, taking national information and applying it on a local level.

This was an incredibly important and intense task as our response to COVID-19 would be based on this model. Mission-critical parts of the system would use it to make key decisions, such as how many hospital beds and ventilators the county would need, and in a worst case scenario, would mortuaries have enough capacity?

The model was therefore the highest priority within the team in the pandemic's early stages. The pressure to complete the work was balanced with the need to do it accurately. The Imperial model needed to be understood and deconstructed in order to produce our own model using the same methodologies and in all, this process took around two weeks.

A new way of working

From this point on, there was no capacity within the team to work on Business As Usual tasks – all energy was put into Covid-related work. And as the focus of the work changed, the nature of the work changed too. The team had to forget its planned approach, and adapt to a new, fast-turnaround, urgent way of working.

Requests for data needed to be dealt with immediately, whether from myself, the media or other parts of the system such as the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG). For example if there was a rapid increase in rates in a local area, the team needed to do a rapid analysis of all the factors that could have influenced that rise so that we could plan a response. A prime example of this is the Greencore outbreak.

Working under this pressure became the norm. As new data on the pandemic was coming to light on a daily basis, new requests were coming into the Intelligence team rapidly, often requiring answers within just a few hours. To cope with this new workload the team implemented an evening and weekends rota, so whenever analysis was needed, it was available and used to help save lives.

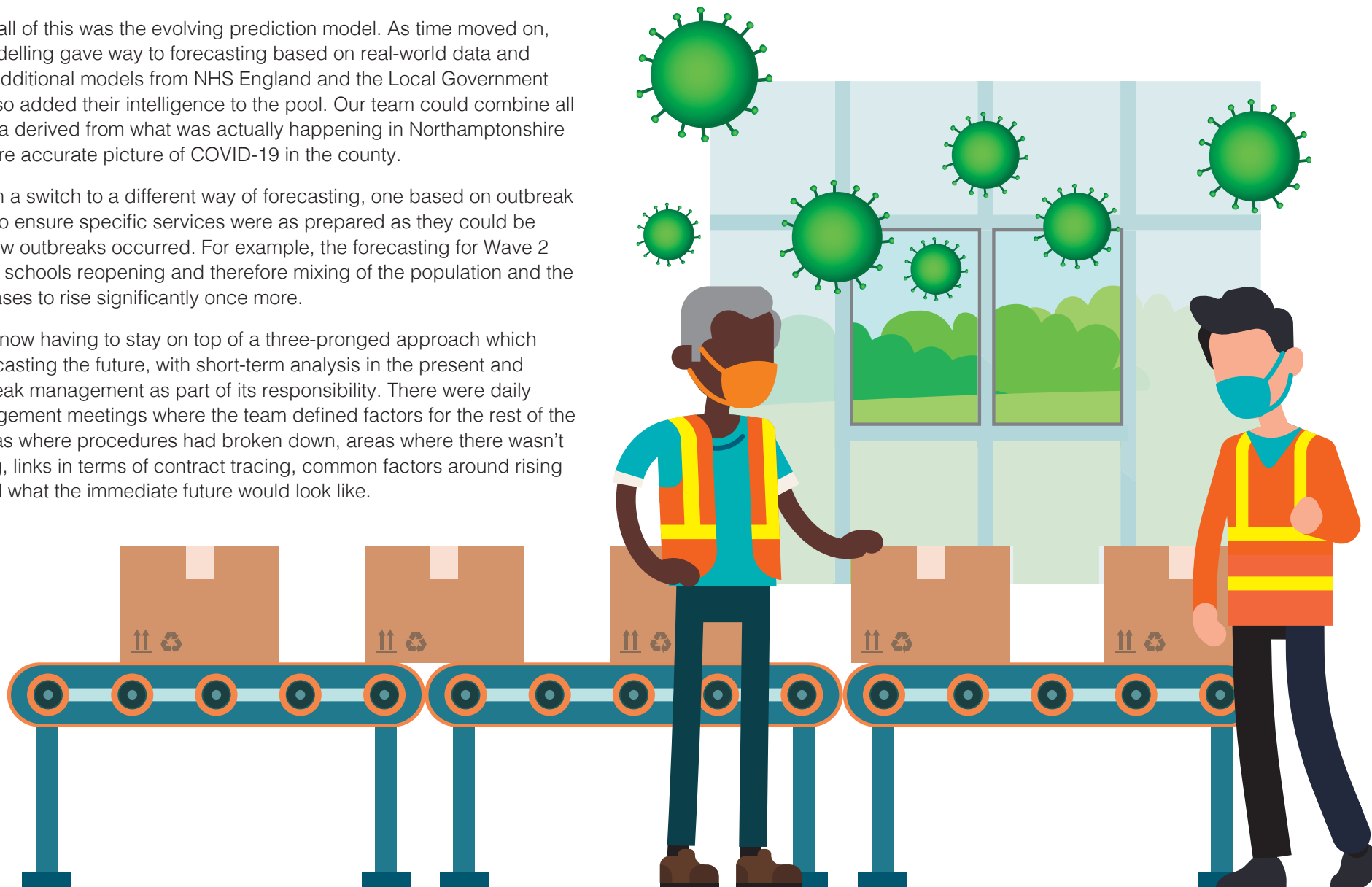
Intelligence

Outbreak management

Underpinning all of this was the evolving prediction model. As time moved on, theoretical modelling gave way to forecasting based on real-world data and surveillance. Additional models from NHS England and the Local Government Association also added their intelligence to the pool. Our team could combine all of this with data derived from what was actually happening in Northamptonshire for a much more accurate picture of COVID-19 in the county.

This resulted in a switch to a different way of forecasting, one based on outbreak management to ensure specific services were as prepared as they could be if and when new outbreaks occurred. For example, the forecasting for Wave 2 coincided with schools reopening and therefore mixing of the population and the potential for cases to rise significantly once more.

The team was now having to stay on top of a three-pronged approach which balanced forecasting the future, with short-term analysis in the present and reactive outbreak management as part of its responsibility. There were daily incident management meetings where the team defined factors for the rest of the system, such as where procedures had broken down, areas where there wasn't enough testing, links in terms of contact tracing, common factors around rising case rates and what the immediate future would look like.



Intelligence

Intelligence in the spotlight

Throughout this pandemic people have seen Chief Medical Officers and Chief Scientific Officers on television regularly talking about the data and how they are making decisions based on it. People are now familiar with terms like case rates and understand the state of the epidemic curve, and even if they're not familiar with terms like epidemiology, they're speaking in data terms.

This wasn't the only route the team's work took to reach the public. Throughout the pandemic, we published a weekly Surveillance Pack that was available to the media and the general public. This kind of pack would usually only be for internal groups, who would use it to make planning decisions, but we believed it was important for everybody to have full knowledge of the situation, week by week as the pandemic progressed.

This transparency has seen a huge number of people connect with data and understand its power. As a result, internally more and more departments are asking Intelligence to guide projects, and there's more interest in the work the team does from the general public than ever before.

Partnerships

From the very early days of the pandemic, it was clear that sharing data between departments and organisations was the most effective way of working and is something we're continuing to do. As a result, our Intelligence team and the CCG's own Business Intelligence team began working together as one, immediately helping to increase the resources the stretched team had at its disposal.

Another internal department Intelligence worked closely with was Emergency Planning. This relationship became so critical to the Emergency Planning team, that it proactively secured funding for two additional posts within Intelligence to boost the team's reach, clearly recognising the impact that data was having on its own efficacy.

Again the Greencore outbreak is a key point in the county's COVID-19 story. Whilst PHE was overseeing activity across the whole of England, it relied on local teams like our own to support it by analysing outbreaks in their own areas. With Greencore in the national spotlight, our Intelligence team prepared data into factors such as who was testing positive, whether there was an ethnicity link, travel-to-work arrangements and a multitude of factors which could help to understand how the outbreak had happened, how to break the chain and how to apply these learnings in future similar outbreaks. This resulted in a longer-term partnership with PHE which facilitated more in-depth epidemiology work.

Other partnerships helped the team engage with communities like never before. Environmental Health Officers and their 'lived' experience helped to add context to the Intelligence team's data. Together the two groups could join the dots and turn data into real life situations, helping not just to identify trends, but to pinpoint the detail behind them.



Intelligence

Strong links were established with Coronial teams, which needed accurate data on deaths due to COVID-19, other contributory factors, which socio-economic or ethnic group they'd been a part of etc. This also extended to mortuary teams, who needed accurate forecasts as to potential death rates to ensure they would have enough capacity as the pandemic reached a peak. As a result, Northamptonshire was prepared for the worst when it happened, and had established a temporary mortuary to handle the increased number of deaths.

New strands of data were created in collaboration with departments such as the IPC team. Intelligence created a care-home dashboard, an extensive tool that collated data on positive cases, residents, staff, and local-area factors on a care-home by care-home basis, helping to prepare teams on the ground.

Moving forwards

As we've seen, the work of our Intelligence team has had a direct impact on the work of many other departments and the lives of the general public during the pandemic. Its appetite for working closely with others, not just to share data but to share energy, ideas and workloads is something that we intend to nurture and encourage moving forwards – something made easier by the fact that so many other departments want Intelligence and evidence-based decisions to be driving their services.

The pride the team has taken in its work is reflected in the stronger network it has established across the system. When difficult questions need to be answered, Intelligence now has the connections it needs to get the data and deliver those answers.

This more resilient network is matched by the resilience of the team itself, which, like many other teams, needed to adapt rapidly to brand new ways of working, and also a new pace of working. This proven ability to succeed beyond the confines of the office environment and the routine of only planned work, is something which will be the foundation of Intelligence's higher profile within the system in the future.



Summary

At the time of writing in February 2022, rates of COVID-19 infection and deaths are continuing to decline. The Government is developing plans for living with COVID-19 and has implemented changes to legislation. Life for many is starting to feel more normal, and business as usual operations are starting to return to many organisations. However, the pandemic has not gone away. Many people are still being affected by illness, with continued impact on education, employment and social activities. The scale of longer term physical and mental ill health created by the pandemic has become evident. Disadvantaged communities continue to be hardest hit by the pandemic.

One thing we have learnt during the pandemic is that it is difficult to predict what will happen next, however it is almost certain that we will have further waves of infections and new variants. It is also likely that there will continue to be improvements in vaccination and development of effective treatment. Our understanding of what interventions work to support behaviour change aimed at reducing risk of infection in individuals and high-risk settings will continue to grow.

This report has described the remarkable journey we have been on over the last couple of years in Northamptonshire. We have developed expertise in many areas to respond to the pandemic. As a result, our expertise in a range of functions including communication, infection prevention and control, intelligence, community resilience and working with communities puts us in a strong position to continue to respond to the pandemic. Retaining this expertise and the collaborative work will be vital in the medium term. Addressing the indirect impacts of the pandemic, including recovering from the disruption to services and reducing the inequalities made worse by the pandemic, will take time and require strong partnership working to ensure an effective response.



Recommendations and Progress



Recommendations

1. The exploration and delivery of health-related messaging with a sense of inclusivity.
2. The continuation of collaborative working alongside other public and voluntary services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the population in North and West Northamptonshire.
3. The Health and Social Care system across North and West Northamptonshire should further utilise data and intelligence about the impact of COVID-19 and other health related matters to inform services or initiatives and meet the needs of local communities.
4. Priority should be placed on addressing the health inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic within and across the two Unitary areas by ensuring access to services for all, particularly those who are rurally or socially isolated.
5. Investment in services which improve physical and mental health and wellbeing of the local populations which are key to supporting the recovery from the pandemic and the future health of the population.



Progress since the previous report for 2019/20

Recommendation	Update
<p>Local leaders and organisations to explore opportunities to adopt and implement a Health in all Policies approach.</p>	<p>Public Health Northamptonshire have led on raising awareness of and embedding Health in all Policies across the Local Authorities and the local Integrated Care System. This has included working with other council services and systematically considering the health impacts in all decision making and working with planning, transport, housing and climate change teams to develop health promoting strategies and policies.</p>
<p>As Local Government Reform continues to progress, priority should be placed on addressing the health inequalities within and across the two Unitary areas.</p>	<p>There is a requirement for all partners across the ICS (which covers both unitary areas) to understand and address health inequalities in Northamptonshire leading to improved access to services, better outcomes and improved experiences for all. To support that an ICS Health Inequalities Plan is being developed and this will set out the joint actions that need to be taken across the system to address health inequalities, including preventing ill health and addressing the wider determinants of health. The local authorities are a key partner in developing and implementing these plans at a Place level. Furthermore, a health inequalities toolkit is being developed which provides partners with data, training and toolkits including how to do an impact assessment and health equity audit, to be used as part of a quality improvement process, as well as tools for engaging with communities. The tools will also help partners to take a health and equity in all policies approach and the use of these tools should be embedded across the system.</p>
<p>All partners to actively work with and engage communities, to identify the skills and resources required or already in place to improve health and reduce inequalities.</p>	<p>Key to addressing health inequalities is taking a community-based approach and working in partnership with our local communities. This will provide a better understanding of what these populations needs and enable commissioners and services to co-produce interventions and services that better meet their needs. To aid this community development workers have been recruited to enable community based programmes of work to be developed with our most vulnerable groups and areas, targeting the most deprived parts of the county.</p>
<p>Public Health to work with decision makers and communities to identify the needs in terms of green spaces as a means to address health and wellbeing issues.</p>	<p>The previous Director of Public Health Annual Report started this journey by mapping how far people live from green spaces to assess the need. Developments have included an Active Parks programme, bringing a range of new activity to our local country parks to encourage physical activity. Another example is the local development of multiple 'Beat the Street' programmes, connecting green spaces to local community assets through physical activity in a game format.</p>

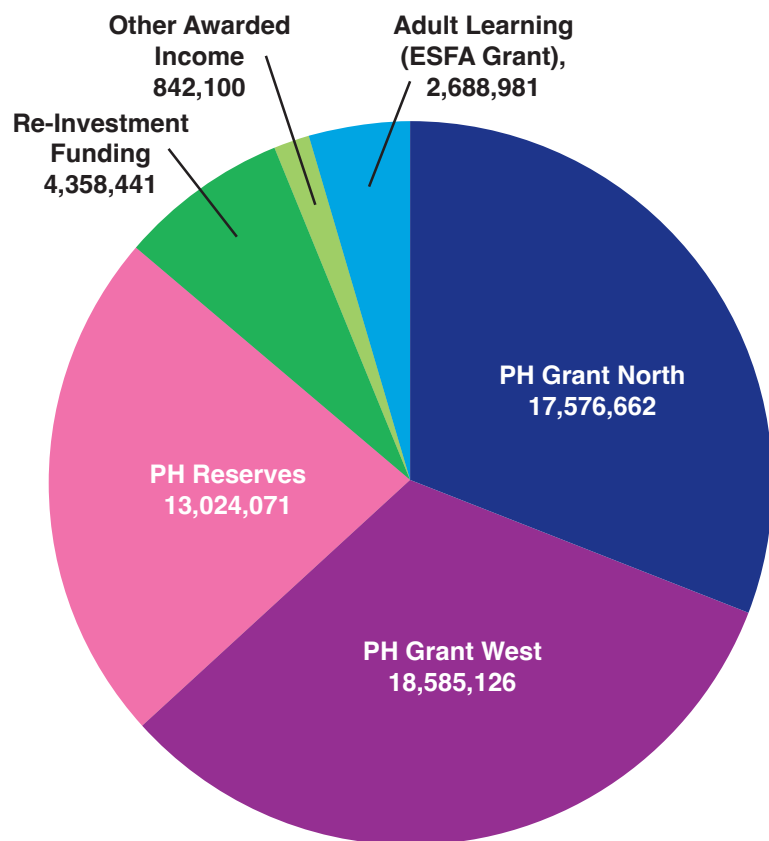
Progress since the previous report for 2019/20

Recommendation	Update
<p>Work with Children First and local schools to help reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).</p>	<p>Following Local Government Reform activity in the county, Children's Services are now delivered as follows; Education and SEND are delivered by WNC and NNC independently, Children's Social Care and Early Help across Northamptonshire are delivered by Northamptonshire Children's Trust commissioned by NNC and WNC under Government direction</p> <p>Public Health have commissioned the following 3 projects with Children First and NCT to address the needs of those who are considered NEET:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initiative focused on care leavers and is a mentoring project that provides emotion coaching for the staff and young people, alongside mentoring, and ring-fenced apprenticeship roles, to provide working and learning opportunities for this cohort of young people. • Wellbeing for Education Recovery (WER) in schools • Healthy Schools Service, which supports teaching staff and young people to manage their wellbeing. This in turn supports their learning and development to achieve the desired grades for future employment opportunities • Broadening the scope of our work with Children's services, initial health assessments for children coming into care is an area that requires focus and improvement, this is work that Public Health will support.
<p>Create closer links with key agencies to work together to build partnerships and develop an integrated response to reduce the impact of homelessness and poor housing.</p>	<p>During COVID-19, partners have rapidly worked towards short term solutions to reduce homelessness by providing accommodation in hotels. Partners are reviewing the learning from COVID-19 to identify longer term solutions, focusing on the causes of homelessness. Additionally, this population have been supported by a targeted screening and immunisation programme.</p>
<p>Continue to develop Northamptonshire as a place of 'good work' by supporting businesses to complete evidence based Healthy Workplace Standards and to make decisions that consider the health and wellbeing of their employees.</p>	<p>We have supported businesses to develop initiatives and interventions that are appropriate to both their size and the needs of their staff. Additionally we have identified the needs of underserved parts of the workforce, such as night shift workers and HGV drivers who use local truck stops and work with partner agencies across the county to help businesses to support the improvement of their health and wellbeing and address health inequalities.</p>
<p>Work with partners to shape services within the unitary authorities by ensuring economic development and inclusive growth are embedded throughout.</p>	<p>Both North and West Northamptonshire Councils have helped bring Public Health and Economic Development departments closer working together on joint priorities. As strategies are developed across the new authorities, Public Health are working across departments to embed principles set out in the recent Public Health England publication - Inclusive and Sustainable Economies: leaving no-one behind.</p>
<p>Work with planning departments to ensure fast food outlets are not over concentrated in new or existing developments</p>	<p>Public Health have been working with all planning departments to identify opportunities to reduce over concentration through planning policy. We have developed a policy restricting fast food takeaways within close proximity to schools in Northampton, which is in the latter stages before adoption. If adopted, we will look at developing similar policies in the other planning areas.</p>

Public Health Finances 2020/21

As Local Government Reform continues, changes to the Public Health grant allocation for 2021/22 will take effect. The grant remains ring fenced for exclusive use on public health functions and allocations were £17,576,662 and £18,585,126 to North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council respectively. The combined total sees an increase of £424,341 from the previous year's allocation to Northamptonshire County Council. Allocations for 2022/23 are expected to be £18,070,429 for North Northamptonshire Council and £19,107,223 for West Northamptonshire Council. This further increase addresses the cost of challenges arising directly or indirectly from COVID-19.

A summary of the public health finances for 2020/21 can be seen in the chart below.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to those who have contributed to the production of this report:

Ruth Austen, Nina Billington, Sally Burns, Kathryn Hall, Mary Hall, Susan Hamilton, Rhosyn Harris, Paul Holder, Matt Hoy, Nisha Patel, Inge Pye, Annapurna Sen, Chenyu Shang, Iain Smith, Annette Walker, Sarah Ward and Nikita Wiseman

And a very special thank you to our wider Public Health Team who have responded to the pandemic with endless compassion and hard work alongside all our partner organisations who continue to work with us to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

8th November 2022

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

Report Title	Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report 2021-22
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report 2021-22

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To present the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) Annual Report 2021-22, which outlines the partnerships achievements during the reporting period.

2. Executive Summary

- 1.2. It is a statutory requirement of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 to produce an annual report that provides an overview of the partnership's achievements against the NSCP Business Plan.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Council receive the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report 2021-22 (Appendix A) and note the findings.

4. Reason for Recommendations (NOTE: this section is mandatory and must be completed)

- 4.1 Under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the three key strategic lead agencies are accountable for safeguarding children and young people, including the Local Authority, who in turn are required to publish an annual report.

This report provides assurance to the Council of the activities undertaken by the partnership and its agencies to safeguard children and young people across the county during the reporting period.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The report has been developed with contributions from statutory partners and has been reviewed and approved by NSCP Strategic Leads.
- 5.2 This is the first annual report to be received by West Northamptonshire Council and informs future developments to safeguard children and young people in the West Northants area.
- 5.3 The report includes quantitative and qualitative data, key messages and impact of activities that relate to the three priorities set out in the NSCP Business Plan:
- 1) Taking positive action early enough to protect children.
 - 2) To support children, young people, and families at risk of exploitation; and
 - 3) To work effectively as a partnership and support our staff.

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 As above.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 There are no financial implications at the time of presenting this report, with partner financial contributions agreed for 2022-23.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 As set out in paragraph 2.1.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report
The report sets out the achievements of Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership through 2021-22 and is a statutory requirement in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

7.4 Consultation

7.4.1 There has been no public consultation in the writing of the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021-22.

Statutory partners have provided their input in the writing of this report, which was approved by Strategic Leads on 5 October 2022.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

7.5.1 N/A

7.6 Climate Impact

7.6.1 There is no climate impact arising from the NSCP Annual Report 2021-22 – it is shared on the NSCP website and not printed.

7.7 Community Impact

7.7.1 There is no known community impact arising from this report.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 The report will be published on the NSCP website – www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk

8. Background Papers

8.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 - www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

8.2 Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021-22

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Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)



Annual Report April 2021 – March 2022



**North
Northamptonshire
Council**



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**



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1. Introduction

Demographics

Northamptonshire is located to the south of the East Midlands region, and is a county of mixed urban and rural areas, with populations focused around its larger towns, Northampton and Kettering.

As of 1 April 2021, Northamptonshire became two Unitary Authorities, known as North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire.

The population of Northamptonshire is in the region of 748,000 (approximately 44% in North Northamptonshire, 56% West Northamptonshire). Approximately 25% are Children and Young People.

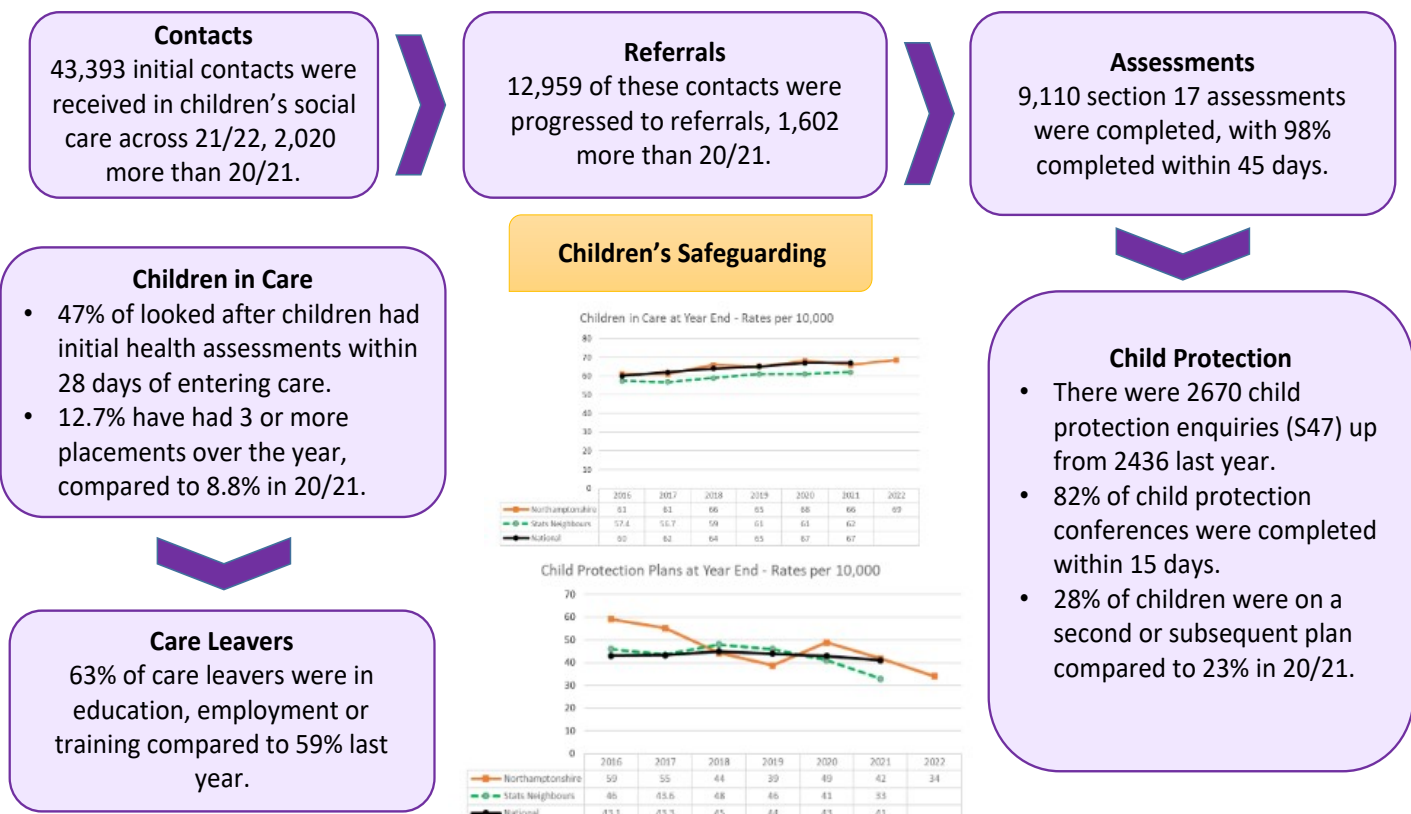
Since the previous Census in 2001 there had been an increase in non-white ethnic groups of 3.5%. It is also relevant to note a more rapid change in the number and proportion of those who describe themselves as 'White Other' becomes evident between 2001 and 2011. 'White Other' means not White British, Irish or Gypsy or Irish Traveller and therefore captures change within the predominantly 'White' EU population.



2. Progress through 2021-2022

During the year, as a consequence of the continued challenge posed by the pandemic and significant global events, there has been a continued need for the partnership's response to safeguarding children to be flexible and responsive to meet the demand, and support children and families effectively.

The below diagram sets out the numbers of contacts and referrals through Northamptonshire Children's Trust compared to the previous year:



Data shows a pattern of fluctuating demand experienced during covid lockdowns and school closures and as the pandemic restrictions have lifted, Northamptonshire Children's Trust has seen an increase in the number of safeguarding referrals.

43,393 initial contacts were received by children's social care through 2021-22, an increase of 2,020 on the previous year 2020-21. An increase was anticipated as the remaining pandemic restrictions were lifted. The referrals sent into the MASH present more complex issues experienced by families and children because of the impact of lockdown, combined with a reduction in support network and services available, has increased the pressure on the families and as such they have experienced greater levels of need.

In addition to that, as a direct result of Covid-19, Northamptonshire has seen the impact of poverty, anxiety, non-school attendance, poor child and adult mental health, loss and bereavement that have contributed to an increase in the number of families requiring support due to complexity of needs. The impact of the rising cost of living is also exacerbating the needs of families.

As part of an ongoing programme of review and improvement, a revised operating model was adopted to enable a better management of the contacts and referrals in the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and achieve more consistency in decision making together with better application of thresholds. An initial evaluation by our Partners in Practice (Lincolnshire), along with feedback from professionals are positive.

An increase in child protection enquiries (S47) was highlighted in 2021-22 which reflects the national trend; however, a robust partnership response is ensuring that the vast majority of the initial child protection conferences take place within 15 days with good attendance from all professionals which ensures children, young people and their families receive the multi-agency support they need at the earliest opportunity.

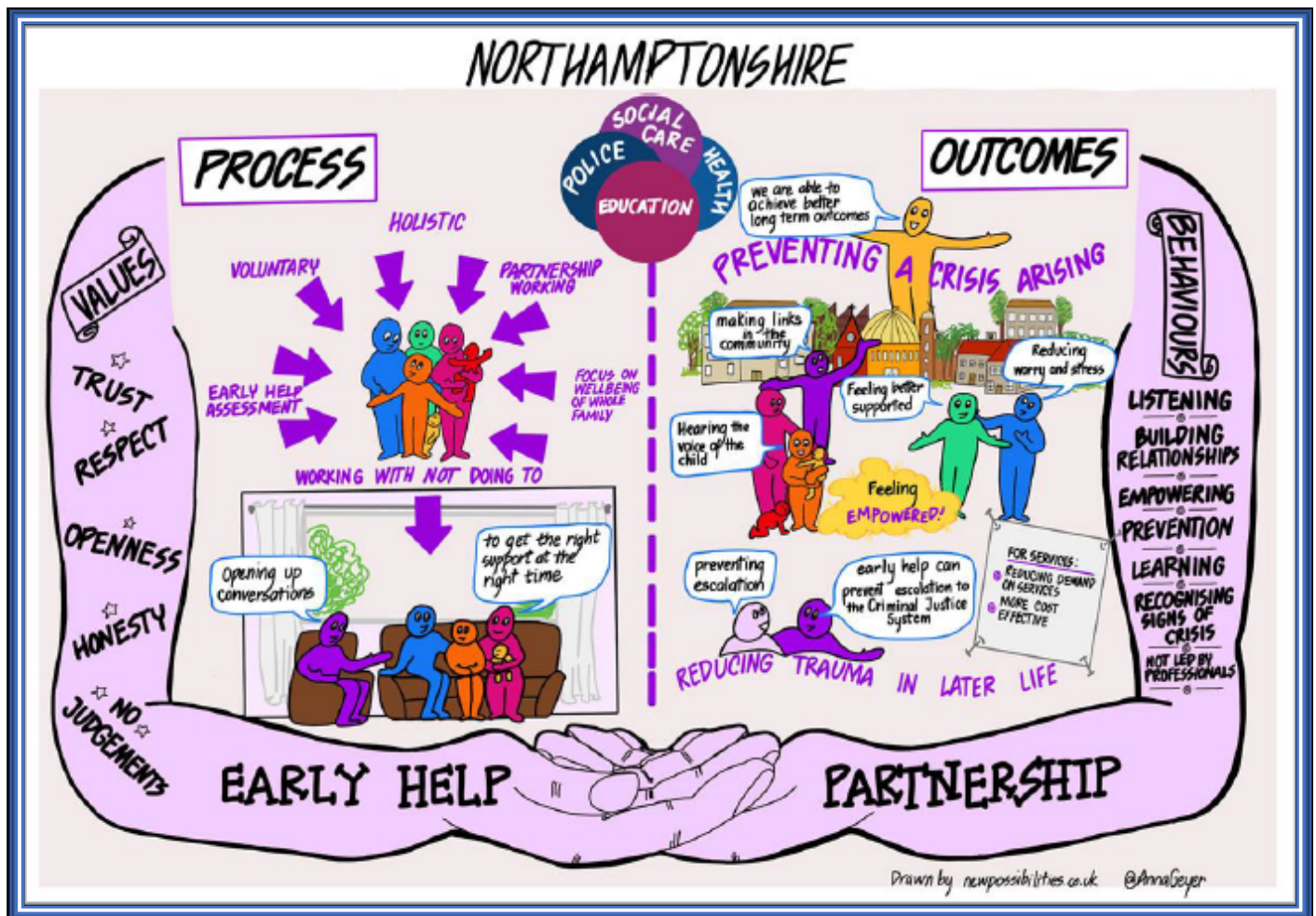


Progress through 2021-22 is set out against the partnership's three priorities:

- 1. Taking positive action early enough to protect children.**
- 2. To support children, young people, and families at risk of exploitation; and**
- 3. To work effectively as a partnership and support our staff.**

Priority 1. Taking positive action early enough to protect children

Early help is a collaboration not a service and in its simplest terms *everyone* is involved in the delivery of early help. This includes families, communities, voluntary groups, “universal” provision, schools, health and targeted support and this has been a priority area for the NSCP this year.



There has previously been an under-developed early help offer in Northamptonshire and the impact of this meant that children and families did not necessarily receive the right support at the right time and in some instances, this continues to have an impact on children’s outcomes. It also meant agencies were more likely to refer to children’s social care although a child may not be at risk of significant harm because they did not feel there was sufficient early help available. This contributed to a poor reputation for Northamptonshire which can influence our partnership working, community engagement, and attraction of social workers and other professionals.

Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) Early Help has been redesigned as Children and Family Support Services (CFSS) with a focus on developing and supporting the partnership to provide more effective early support to families. A multi-agency Early Help Partnership Board has been developed, that will be multi-agency and managed by the Trust. The Early Help Partnership Board will report to both the NSCP and Children and Young People’s Transformation Delivery Group as part of the Integrated Care System (ICS). Terms of Reference and governance arrangements are drafted ready for this board to go live early in 2023, with strategic membership in place to strengthen focus on early help provision ensuring children, young people and their families will receive earlier intervention and support.

West and North Northamptonshire Early Help Partnership networks have now been successfully established including a revised simpler early help assessment and Team around the Family Support plan.

There is strong commitment from the partnership to enable the right and timely support for families and improvements are starting to be noted. Rates of referral to Early Help have increased from 12% in November 2020 to 21% in October 2021.

Neglect

The impact of neglect in the lives of Northamptonshire children is not underestimated and neglect continues to be the main Abuse Category in Child Protection Plans and also the highest category for children who come into care.

Following the successful rollout of the Graded Care Profile 1 toolkit, and in order to support practitioners in identifying and addressing neglect, a partnership decision was made to invest in NSPCC's Graded Care Profile 2 toolkit and a suite of training will be undertaken during 2022-23 to support practitioners to use the tool appropriately and effectively.

The new Early Help Partnership board will build on the strong transformation work in Early Help. Early Help is the responsibility of all partners, and the partnership has continued to support staff to develop their knowledge, competence, and confidence by facilitating relevant training and reflective learning including:

- E-Learning introduction to neglect
- Child Development that includes impact of neglect
- Neglect training provided as part of regional events offered in early 2022
- Tea Break Guide for neglect of medical needs

In addition to the above, Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) developed shared resources that support practitioners' practice in cases where neglect is a theme:

- Using NICE guideline on child neglect and abuse
- Learning from national and local reviews
- All NCT practitioners have access to Making Research Count and Research in Practice training.

Supporting professionals to identify neglect quicker is improving responses to ensure children and young people receive more timely support. Neglect was a theme from a Child Safeguarding Practice Review published during this reporting period and implementation of the learning has focused on the Graded Care Profile 2 and strengthening professionals' knowledge and understanding of neglect for earlier intervention.

Safer Sleeping

Public Health have undertaken a broad public facing safer sleeping campaign through social media. Hits to the site around the articles published have been in their tens of thousands, showing that the message is reaching far and wide. To complement this, the NSCP continues to ensure advice and guidance on safer sleeping is available to all practitioners and is accessible on the NSCP website.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust has introduced an expectation through local guidance and recording processes that all families of all babies under 12 months, open to children's services, receive safer sleeping messages as part of normal practice, echoing and reinforcing the practices of health colleagues during pregnancy and early months of a child's life.

During this reporting period, one child death has been attributed to unsafe sleeping. A further campaign is scheduled for the Autumn of 2022, with robust multi-agency input to ensure the right, consistent messages continue to be promoted.



Priority 2. To support children, young people, and families at risk of exploitation

Safeguarding partners have been working in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire, Research in Practice, and the Children's Society to support and further develop a local partnership strategy to tackle child exploitation. Positive progress includes finalising the child exploitation strategy with a county wide partnership approach to prevention and early intervention and includes the local authorities Community Safety Partnership Boards. In addition, a countywide definition for child exploitation has been adopted. This has been driven forward by the partnership's Child Exploitation Sub Group.

Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day

On 18th March 2022 to coincide with national Child Sexual Exploitation Awareness Day, the NSCP held a Virtual Child Exploitation Conference, where practitioners could join throughout the day to hear speakers from a variety of professionals on different areas of Child Exploitation. Over 120 professionals logged on at its peak during the day. The sessions taking place on the day included:

- RISE and Sarah's Story
- Online Safety
- Vulnerable Adolescent Panels
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse and Exploitation
- Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

Positive interaction and feedback have been received from practitioners about this event.

Vulnerable Adolescent Panel

VAP is a multi-agency information sharing and consultative process. The panel aims to ensure that as a multi-agency partnership we effectively share information to support young people who are at risk of being exploited and address extra familial harm with a view to utilising a contextual safeguarding approach to make our communities safer.

VAP was introduced in December 2020.

The positive implementation of the Vulnerable Adolescents Panel (VAP) which considers all young people who are referred with concerns about extra-familial harm, regardless of social care threshold, is echoed by the young people's feedback:

*"I am in a good place and feel I can make safe decisions and have people I can go to if I am worried about anything"
young person aged 17*

Police Community Initiative Reducing Violence (CIRV)

Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Prevention work in partnership with the CIRV to reduce violent crime and tackle the emerging concerns in relation to gang related offending. A recent Child Safeguarding Practice Review has included the work of CIRV, and the partnership has seen evidence of the excellent work this service undertakes through the victim's reflections of their work with the service.

This work also directly links with the North and West Community Safety Partnership Boards who implemented the partnership's Critical Incident Response following a child safeguarding incident in the community, whereby key agencies and community groups come together to ensure the neighbourhood and its residents remain safe. Such a response was undertaken during the summer, following a knife crime in a neighbourhood in the county, and the reflection by the community on the response was very positive.

Children and Young People Missing

It is recognised that there is a clear link between child exploitation and children and young people who go missing. Northamptonshire partners work closely on understanding missing episodes. Northamptonshire Police has provided additional resources into its Children and Young People's Missing Team reflecting this concerning priority.

A partnership Missing Forum has been created and considers at risk children who are going missing, and the Young People's Service offers preventative support. NCT independent return interviews have been reviewed and made more robust to ensure all risks and support needs faced by children, young people and their families are considered.

and that effective support plans are in place.

Priority 3. To work effectively as a partnership and support our staff

E-Learning Training

In 2020-21, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in large parts of the partnership working from home which in turn significantly increased the use of the e-learning training. During this period there was a total of 13734 course completions. The period 2021-22 has seen an expected reduction on the volume of e learning used in the previous year with **6,839** course completions.

The range of courses being completed by practitioners remains consistent with previous years with many practitioners using the system to gain initial knowledge of safeguarding children and then moving on to explore some of the other subject specific courses available within the catalogue.

A significant piece of work undertaken by the Training & Development Sub Group during the reporting period was to review all the e-learning content to ensure it was fit for purpose and aligned with the NSCP policies and procedures. This has ensured practitioners receive the most current training content in line with national learning.

Analysis and evidence of the impact these courses have had on practice is included below: -

- 88% of delegates stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the training.
- 97% stated that they would recommend this course to other people.
- 78% stated that Participation in this e-learning course has supported me to make measurable improvements to my work practice.
- 72% of learners who completed an impact evaluation agreed or strongly agreed the course they had taken had a positive impact on practice.
- When rating improvements in knowledge, skills and confidence, all aspects recorded that 85% of learners felt there had been an increase, these scores remain broadly consistent increasing slightly (3%) with results seen in previous years.

Evaluation is consistent with previous years data and continues to show the positive impact the e-learning package is having on practice and the value learners place on its availability through the partnership.

Face to Face Multi-Agency Training

The NSCP has not offered a training programme since 2018 due to resource constraints and pandemic restrictions. However, Strategic Leads during the reporting period agreed to a more blended approach which has enabled a mix of training pool delivery and commissioned training to be delivered and extend the positive impact of multi-agency training.

This will enable a mix of training pool delivery and commissioned training to be delivered and extend the positive impact of multi-agency training. During 2021 the NSCP offered the following Face to Face Training:

- Threshold and Pathways Training – 38 sessions were undertaken with a 76% attendance, which was considered positive as several professionals cancelled their places due to sickness within their teams
- Trauma Informed Training – Due to the success and inspiring session delivered to 100 professionals, a further six sessions have been scheduled between April-September 2022
- Child Exploitation Conference

- Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews – this training has been reviewed and updated to reflect learning from a thematic perspective rather than per review undertaken. This new format was well received by colleagues within the Social Work Academy and will be further updated before broadening to a multi-agency audience.

Learning Summaries from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs)

The purpose of CSPRs, is to identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Learning is relevant locally, but it has a wider importance for all practitioners working with children and families and for the government and policymakers. Understanding whether there are systemic issues, and whether and how policy and practice need to change, is critical to the system being dynamic and self-improving.

Three CSPRs have been published in the reporting period and for each review a Learning Summary is developed as a quick guide for professionals individually or within a team setting to be informed of the local learning.

The format of these reviews has been refreshed and updated to include more context and understanding of learning, including links to local and national research. This is positively supporting professionals in identifying learning and themes to reference in their day-to-day work and ensuring earlier support is put in place for children and families.

Learning Summaries are also produced where a Rapid Review is undertaken, but not progressed to a Child Safeguarding Practice Review – this supports and broadens professionals learning. A Rapid Review is undertaken when a case meets the criteria for notification to Ofsted and The Child Safeguarding Practice Review National Panel.

The aim of a rapid review is to enable safeguarding partners to:

- gather the facts about the case, as far as they can be readily established at the time
- discuss whether there is any immediate action needed to ensure children’s safety and share any learning appropriately
- consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- decide what steps they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a child safeguarding practice review

Note: further information regarding CSPRs, and Rapid Reviews can be found in the government guidance document: [*Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018*](#)



3. Other safeguarding updates through 2021-2022

Safeguarding Children with Disabilities

Children with disabilities receive services from a dedicated team within Children's Social Care. This is a specialist long term service, supporting children with most severe and complex needs; although majority of the children are supported under a Child In Need plan, social workers in the team also carry out all other statutory children social work tasks and interventions under Child Protection, Public Law Outline, Care Proceedings and Looked After Children's procedures thus ensuring that the children who required the specialised support of the team continue to receive them from professionals they know and trust.

Planning for transitions commences when children reach age 14 and children's transition to Adult Social Care is managed via a panel and a referral to Adult Social Care when they are 16 years old. The team have relationships with colleagues in children's continuing health care, CAMHs, Community Team for People with Learning Disability (CTPLD) and partners with the local Parent Forum Group NPFG and Northamptonshire Carers. Northamptonshire carers are commissioned to complete carers assessments under the Care Act 2004 and, they provide support to siblings of children with disabilities and young carers.



Ofsted focussed visits have highlighted many positive areas of practice in the Disabled Children's Team, particularly how well social workers know the young people they work with, multi-agency working, and the support provided to families in terms of the multi-disciplinary approach and short breaks support which greatly benefits children and their families.

Children and Families Fleeing Conflict

Safeguarding partners have had to respond to an increase in children, young people, and families fleeing conflict. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children from Afghanistan as well as families fleeing conflict from Ukraine who have located in Northamptonshire have been supported with increased partnership collaboration to ensure they feel safe and settled.

In July 2022, the government announced the intention to introduce a scheme to support unaccompanied children from Ukraine to live in the UK with someone known to their family, with parental consent. Early indications suggest arrangements would be considered as private fostering arrangements, and that local authorities would need to approve the sponsorship arrangements. The impact on the universal targeted and specialist services is as yet unknown and agencies are developing processes to ensure these children and young people are safe and supported.

Education

Northamptonshire education staff and settings have continued to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families remain protected during the periods of Covid-19 restrictions, with an emphasis on a robust multi-agency joined up approach to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people.

The beginning of 2022 saw schools under immense pressure, working tirelessly to keep schools open despite surging numbers of Covid-19 cases amongst both students and staff.



Elective Home Education

This data has been broken down between West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council:

NorthNorthants Council

The electively home educated population saw an increase at the beginning of this reporting period by 26 to 874 children in April 2021, the highest number thus far. This was the third month to show consecutive record volumes. April registered the sixth successive increase, while the last three months have each posted consecutive records. By the end of April, there were 87 more electively home educated children than there were one year ago, and the current cohort comprises 147 more children than at the end of the previous academic year.

WestNorthants Council

The electively home education population saw a sharp decrease at the beginning of this reporting period from approximately 700 to 600, this number has steadily increased back to the region of 700 throughout the rest of the reporting period.

Children and Young People Missing from Education

This data has been broken down between West Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council:

NorthNorthants Council

The number of children missing from education during the reporting period decreased by 21 to 253 children at the end of April, marking the lowest volume in the current academic year. The latest cohort comprises 150 children fewer than the peak of 403 children in October and 11 children fewer than this time last year. An average of 263 children were missing between February and June 2021. By comparison, an average of 283 children were missing in the last three months.

WestNorthants Council

The number of children missing from education stated at approximately 150 at the beginning of this reporting period, peaking at just over 200 in October 2021 before steadily decreasing to 123 at the end of this reporting period.

Education Health and Care Plans (EHC)

NorthNorthants Council has seen a steady monthly average increase in the number of EHC assessment, averaging 74 per month at the beginning of the reporting report increasing to an average of 80 per month towards the end of the reporting report.

WestNorthants Council requests for EHC assessment generally range between 60 to 80 during term time, peaks, and troughs during the lead up to school holidays have caused fluctuation.

Long term, work continues to take place to develop a robust graduated approach, based on early help across the four localities, with the expectation of support and provision for children in receipt of top up through a send support plan.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse now sits within the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) portfolio and under that banner remains a matter of priority for the partnership and in particular, Northamptonshire Police.

It is recognised that it is always a difficult decision for victims or survivors to come forward and therefore through a partnership approach, Northamptonshire Police continue to ensure they are fully supported by strengthening existing processes such as crisis Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) which have been embedded in the Force Control room and with patrol officers at times of peak demand to improve the service offered to victims.

During this reporting period, recorded domestic abuse has dropped by 7.2% within the County and there are 6% fewer victims of domestic abuse crimes. This is not in line the national trend which has seen increases in the amount of recorded domestic abuse and it is believed that this position is because of strengthened performance.

Northamptonshire Police arrested 36% of domestic abuse perpetrators in the 12 months up to March 2022 and this is significantly above the national average of 27.3% in the same period and may help to explain the current victim satisfaction rate which sits at 90.7%. Victim satisfaction and the early arrest of perpetrators figures are very much linked.

Children and Young People's Voices

Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) has Young Inspectors are part of their Practice Week Teams. They contribute to the design of the Practice Weeks, the assessment processes and are an integral part of developing recommendations for action planning. The principle of the Young Inspectors scheme is for young people to quality assure the services and provisions available/provided for children and young people and to be able to provide positive feedback and areas for improvements, highlighting and sharing good practice.

NCT benefits from strong engagement of children and young people through our formal participation groups - Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Council and Shooting Stars (children with special educational needs and disabilities) and Young Inspectors, whose voice shapes the Trust's vision, transformation, and review of services. This has been evidenced through internal and external quality assurance, including Ofsted visits. We know that there is much more that we need to do though t ensure that the voice of the child is captured, and this feedback is used to influence change.

This has supported the development of a Children & Young Peoples Engagement Strategy which sets out a vision and strategic priorities for 2022-25. The aim of the strategy is to make sure:

- Our children and young people have a voice about decisions that affect them
- Our children and young people are given as many opportunities as we can for them to engage and participate and are supported to do so
- Our children and young people are listened to and their views help to shape our services
- Our children and young people are able to hold us to account if we are not listening and using their views to influence how we are doing things
- Using the strategic priorities for engagement, linked to our improvement plan priorities, we will develop our annual engagement action plan each year to deliver this strategy over the next 3 years.

Children and young people are engaged at an individual level. Some examples of this include;

- Roll out of confidential virtual platform for children and young people to express their views
- introduced a more child and young person friendly version of the Child in Care plan to help looked after children and young people engage more in the decisions being made about them.
- There is a successful Independent Visitors Service that matches volunteers with looked after young people to be a mentor/friend
- Developed a dictionary to assist our workforce in using language that is appropriate and meaningful to children and young people, rather than jargon or labelling language
- Children and young people are aware of the compliments, comments and complaints process and work has been undertaken with the complaints team to ensure the process is user friendly
- Created videos of some young people sharing their experiences of attending child protection conferences and what difference this has made for them
- There are some great examples of children and young people having their voices heard by the professionals working with them and this being used to inform the work done with them
- Some good examples of safety plans, care plans and pathway plans developed in conjunction with children and young people

Children and young people are engaged at a service level. Some examples of this include:

- Feedback loop form has been developed on the Young Northants website to provide a confidential anonymous space for children and young people to give feedback on services.
- Children and young people are aware of the compliments, comments and complaints process and work has been undertaken with the complaints team to ensure the process is user friendly
- Children and young people have been recruited to a Young Inspectors group and have taken part in a project on children and young people in custody working directly with the police.
- Children and young people have taken part in the commissioning of services alongside commissioners, both in helping to develop service specifications and in evaluating bids.
- Children and Young People have met with Ofsted Inspectors on several occasions to give their views

Engagement of children and young people at a strategic level. Some examples of this include:

- Well established groups for children in care, care leavers and children with disabilities mainly centred in West Northamptonshire. The Participation and Engagement team have built great positive relationships with all groups so that the children and young people feel safe and free. Weekly groups run for each as well as holiday activities.
- Excellent contribution from children and young people to NCT's Equalities Strategy on what they would like to see to improve inclusivity of participation.
- There is a programme of activity for children and young people to take part in formal participation groups, especially over the school holidays. This provides opportunity to capture the voice of the child.
- A new participation group has been set up for children and young people with a child in need or child protection plan to help us improve.
- Brilliant care leavers council, children in care council and group for children with disabilities.
- Fabulous Participation and Engagement Team who support young people to express their views.
- Starting to use social media and virtual platforms more effectively to increase our reach.

Work of the Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO)

LADO continued to work using virtual platforms in 2021/2022; this has enabled partner agencies easier access to Joint Evaluation Meetings (JEM's) and LADO-led professionals' meetings as needed. Full LADO data is not yet available for the financial year (2021/2022) as some cases have not yet been concluded.

LADO received 429 contacts in the year which is a significant reduction (32% n202) from 2020/2021 (n631). 89 contacts were managed as consultations (compared with 90 in 20/21) and 340 were managed as LADO referrals (541 in 20/21). It is likely the reduction of referrals is largely due to the closure of Rainsbrook STC part-way through the year as this organisation had previously been, by far, the most significant source of LADO referrals. This trend is

reflected in the highest number of contacts by occupation (residential workers, including Rainsbrook); whilst this reduced to 22.1% (n95) it was still the highest percentage by occupation. The other occupation with contacts in double percentage points is foster carers (10.9% - n 47). With residential workers and foster carers, this data may reflect increased pressures on homes caring for children who were in their care for more time as a result of lockdowns.

During 2021/2022 LADO worked closely with management and regulators for Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre (STC) prior to its closure in 2021. LADO has also continued to work closely with CQC and NHSE and hospital management to oversee improvement in safeguarding provision for young people placed at St Andrews specialist inpatient mental health provision in Northamptonshire. LADO has highlighted concerns about these providers' safeguarding to local Strategic Partner Leads which has enabled oversight and action. For both of these large providers, there has been significant LADO input at case level (peer-on-peer violence, allegations against staff) along with support for internal safeguarding management and wider partnership oversight of the provisions. In part, due to concerns highlighted by LADO, both providers reduced numbers of residents to improve care arrangements for those remaining whilst supporting work on systemic staff performance and training. Ultimately, Rainsbrook STC closed as it could not address these issues, including as identified by LADO. LADO continues to work with all parties to drive improvements at St Andrews Hospital.

LADO has supported the wider children's workforce through ready access to consultation and also provided training for internal and external partners on the role of LADO, particularly where this overlaps with the agency's own safeguarding duties. LADO consultation is available daily, with a 'Duty LADO' available every day to help partners identify safeguarding threshold referrals.

In early summer 2022, changes were made to how agencies access LADO support and consultation; these changes were advised through NSCP webpages and presented to multi-agency service delivery improvement group. Further improvements are underway to improve LADO recording and reporting processes, routing all referrals through MASH and onto a confidential section of the CareFirst children's database.

LADO attends Licencing forums to support partnership safeguarding duties and planning in West and North Northants Unitary authorities; this includes premises (off and on licence) and taxis. LADO is involved in making sure children's safeguarding is considered in these forums.

LADO training delivery was devised around thematic information provided in previous year's data; for example, LADO delivered training for Passenger Assistants in transport with vulnerable children (virtually) after identifying an increase in referrals and complaints in this area. This will be replicated for data from 21/22.



4. Plans for 2022-2023

Continue to strengthen our responses to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people

- **Timeliness of initial and review health assessments for children in care** - remains below target and focused work is being undertaken between Northamptonshire Children's Trust and health commissioners and providers to ensure the health needs of all children are understood and supported in a timely way.
- **Right placement in the right area for the child** – focus on stronger collaborative working with relevant partners to ensure a child is placed in the most appropriate setting to improve their experiences and outcomes.
- **Cost of living crisis** – ensuring support is readily available to newly identified vulnerable families whilst continuing to support those already known to services.

Development of new governance arrangements for the NSCP

- Creation of a Strategic Assurance Board meeting three times per annum to oversee the work of the partnership
- Commissioning of an Independent Chair of the partnership to strengthen and improve the partnership's safeguarding responses.

Creation of a Countywide Safeguarding Children structure

- The NSCP, in liaison with the Integrated Care System (ICS) and two local Community Safety Partnership Boards is developing a countywide safeguarding children structure. The main purpose is to streamline safeguarding work and activities to provide a consistent, robust response to the children, young people, and their families in our county. A draft structure was agreed by the end of this reporting period with phase two being developed for the creation of an Operational Management Group to focus on delivering priorities.
- There will also be a focus on creating a children and young people's group to create a direct line of communication for safeguarding forums to hear their voices and understand their concerns, utilising existing means.

Develop bespoke local virtual training

- Under contract with Virtual College for e-learning, the partnership now has the facility to develop its own local content training courses to be hosted on the virtual College platform.
- This will provide opportunities for local priorities and learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.

Strengthening the response to Child Exploitation

- **Adolescent Risk Management (ARM)** - The partnership will review its current response to young people at risk to ensure an effective pathway to identify and support children at risk of Extra-Familial Harm.
- **QLIK Data Reporting** - Northamptonshire Police has been developing the QLIK data reporting system to see how this could be expanded to include data for all agencies to map young people and / or locations where exploitation is suspected of taking place. It is hoped that the data contained within this system can then be used to highlight potential areas for intervention at an earlier stage and is hoped to be available for 2022-23.

Consistency and promotion of good practice

Review of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

- Further refresh of Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), developed in partnership, with an ongoing rollout of thresholds training.
- Focus and improve on the quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of referrals into MASH with improved signposting to reduce the number of cases where no further action is required.
- Ensuring partner representation is adequate.

Public Neglect campaign

- Raising the importance and significance of neglect and this will include continuing to support professionals' knowledge and confidence in dealing with neglect, along with an understanding of the Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) to support workers assessments of neglect.



Appendix 1 – Governance and Accountability

Statutory and Legal Context

In July 2018, [Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018](#) was published. It replaced previous versions that set out the requirements for local authorities to establish Local Safeguarding Children Boards and is in accordance with Section 13 and the objectives set out in Section 14 of the Children Act.

Working Together 2018 was published in response to The Wood Report and sets out the requirements for a system that focuses on the needs and interests of children and families and not the other way around. In such a system, practitioners will be clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together in partnership with others.

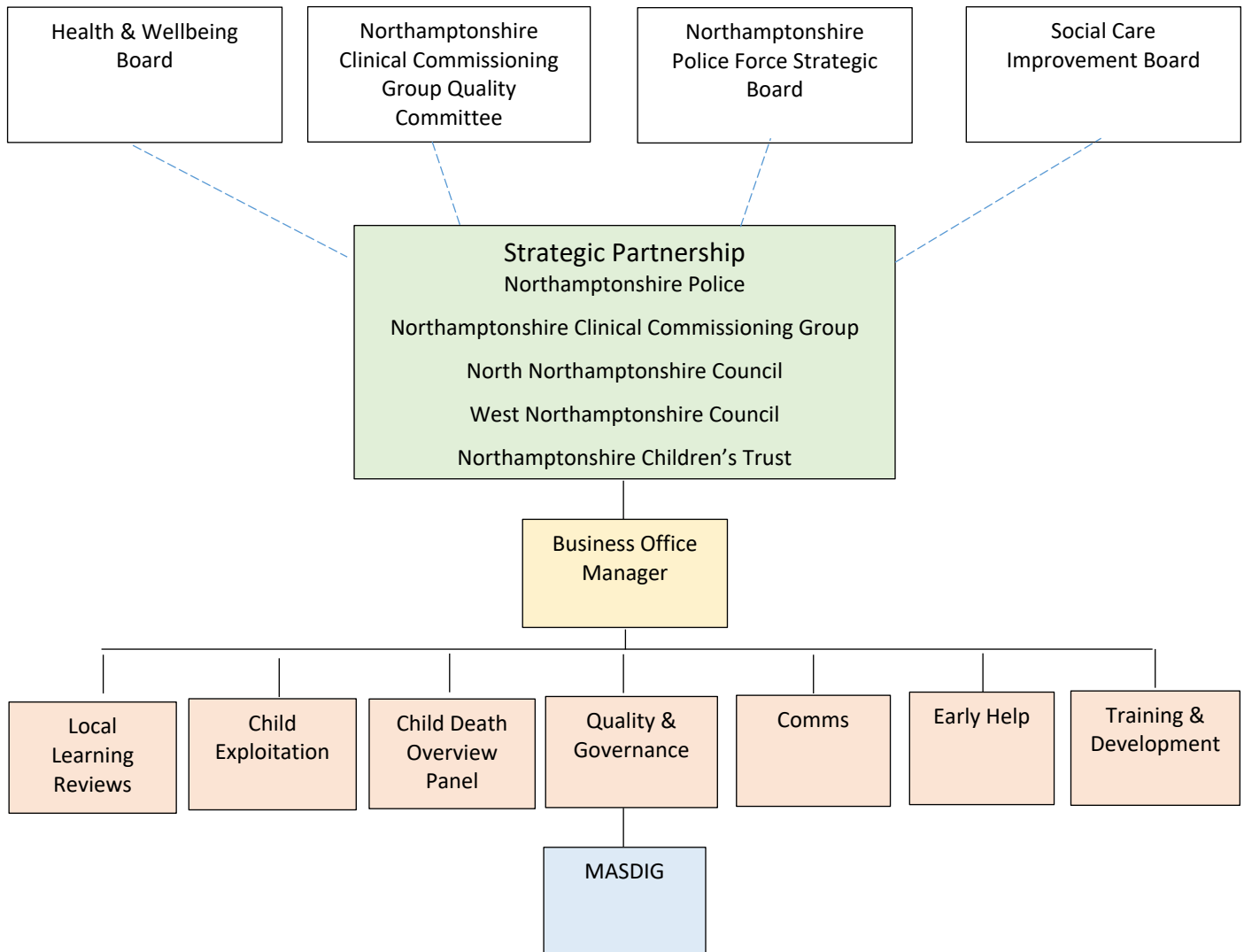
Local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The NSCP is not an operational body and therefore has no direct responsibility for the provision of services to children and their families. The NSCP's responsibilities are to hold partner agencies to account for their safeguarding arrangements and ensure the quality of those arrangements through policy, guidance, setting standards and monitoring.

The delivery of services to children and their families is the responsibility of the partners – the commissioning and provider agencies, not the NSCP itself.

[The Children Act 2004](#), as amended by the [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#), strengthens this already important relationship by placing new duties on key agencies in a local area. Specifically, the police, clinical commissioning groups and the local authority are under a duty to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

Appendix 2 – NSCP Structure



Full Partnership

It was agreed that the full Partnership would meet twice yearly to review the previous six months of activity and look to the next 6-12 months to set priorities.

As Covid-19 has continued to provide concerns and difficulties through the year, there have been no full partnership meetings in this period. This has been acknowledged as a clear gap that could impact on the strength of the partnership and forms part of the ongoing discussions around the NSCP review.

Strategic Leads

The Strategic Leads Group has continued to meet on a monthly basis.

During 2021-22, the Strategic Leads representatives have changed, largely to reflect the county is now set out as two unitary authorities, therefore representation comprises:

The group comprises:

- Director of Children's Services for North Northamptonshire Council
- Director of Children's Services for West Northamptonshire Council.
- Assistant Chief Constable and Deputy for Northamptonshire Police.
- Chief Nurse and Deputy for Northamptonshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- Chief Executive and Deputy for Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- Director or Safeguarding, Northamptonshire Children's Trust
- School representation as a fourth non-voting agency. This is currently a Head Teacher from a special school and Head Teacher from a primary school.

- Representative for the Office for Police and Fire Crime Commissioner.
- Independent Scrutineer

Please note from 1st July 2022, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) replaced the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Independent Scrutineer

Provides assurance in judging the effectiveness of multi-agency arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in Northamptonshire, including arrangements to identify and review Child Safeguarding Practice Review cases. His role is objective and acts as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection to drive continuous improvement.

The NSCP established the areas of activity for scrutiny in its initial Governance Document as follows:

- Attend the Strategic Leads Group and Strategic Partnership Group.
- Review the Partnership's annual report.
- Review audits and performance data, including Section 11 and Section 175 audits.
- Determine the effectiveness of arrangements to identify and review local child safeguarding reviews.
- Involvement in the escalation and conflict resolution process.
- Have regular direct contact with frontline practitioners to receive frontline practice feedback.
- Ensure the voice of the child is at the heart of all aspects of safeguarding and receive direct feedback from children, young people and their families to monitor the effectiveness of their voice and experiences with performance and practice.
- Embed scrutiny as a positive process and measure throughout the partnership with learning as the outcome.
- Ensure informed challenge from elected Members takes place.

Continues to provide constructive challenge and scrutiny with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and identifying relevant and constructive learning to strengthen services in the future. His suggestions and observations will continue to support Strategic Leads through 2022-23.

Sub Groups

NSCP Sub Groups have continued to meet on a virtual bi-monthly basis.

Quality and Governance

Aims to develop a culture of open, honest, and meaningful challenge and scrutiny, in order to identify areas of good practice and areas of concern and to make recommendations for action and improve safeguarding and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of single agency and multi-agency safeguarding processes incorporating audit, performance analysis and views of children, families and practitioners.

The Sub Group has processes in place to manage:

- Section 11 and Section 175
- Multi-Agency Practice Review
- Scorecard key performance data

The Multi-Agency Practice Review process has been reviewed and refreshed and a schedule developed to consider key priorities over the next twelve months.

Training and Development

Due to an increased agreed training budget for 2021-22 and 2022-23, the sub group is focusing on developing a face-to-face training offer through classroom and/or virtual platforms.

E-Learning is due to move to a new management system from June 2022, which will allow the creation of bespoke training courses to be accessed via the same on-line platform. These courses will focus on local learning and priorities identified through scorecard data and learning from local reviews.

Local Learning Review

Responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of local arrangements to safeguard and protect children through individual Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, ensuring dissemination of lessons learned, and monitoring implementation of actions arising from case learning.

A key achievement in the past year has been to finalise the updated NSCP suite of guidance and documents in line with Working Together 2018; to support case learning, including Rapid Reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and this is now available on the NSCP website.

The sub group over the past year has been focusing on managing case learning activity. The culture of undertaking effective reviews must be an iterative process, and almost every case the sub group has worked on this year has prompted reflection and learning on how to further improve processes.

Please see Appendix 3 for statistics and further information on the reporting period.

Early Help

Aims to understand the current Early Help Offer across the Partnership and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating strengths and gaps in the system which will inform the revision of the Early Help Strategy and work focus for the next three years.

This year the sub group has focused on refreshing the Neglect Strategy and reviewing the Early Help Strategy and action plans.

Early help provision remains a focus for the partnership, and with the launch of the Integrated Care System (ICS) due in July 2022, work has been undertaken to ensure early help's profile is heightened with the creation of an Early Help Partnership Board, that will report into the NSCP and ICS with activity reports. This will be in place from mid-2022.

Child Exploitation

Aims to understand and reduce the prevalence of child exploitation in Northamptonshire and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating responses to tackling child exploitation by meeting the aims and objectives set out in the Northamptonshire Child Exploitation Strategy.

This sub group has not met regularly throughout 2021-22 due to unforeseen circumstances and changes in chairing the group; however, a Child Exploitation Strategy was developed and agreed towards the end of the year and an associated action plan will be created to drive forward measures and tasks through the next financial year.

Communication Sub Group

This sub group has been reinitiated to focus on working with schools and students to develop videos for young people, made by young people focusing on topics they want to learn more about. This fantastic initiative has been well received but unfortunately, the lockdown and immense pressures on schools has meant this has not been able to be launched.

The group has created a NSCP YouTube Channel in readiness for when schools have re-opened and settled to pick this great opportunity up again and a forward plan of topics has been created.

In going forward, this group will also focus on developing content for regular NSCP newsletters, theme based, that can be disseminated across the partnership.

Child Death Overview Panel – The overall purpose of Northamptonshire CDOP is to undertake a comprehensive and multiagency review of all child deaths, to better understand how and why children across Northamptonshire die, with a view to detecting trends and/or specific areas which would benefit from further consideration.

The national process of reviewing child deaths was established in April 2008 and updated in Chapter 5 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. It is the responsibility of the Child Death Review Partners to ensure that a review of every death of a child normally resident in their area is undertaken by a CDOP. Child death review partners are local authorities and any clinical commissioning groups for the local area as set out in the Children Act 2004, as amended

by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Across Northamptonshire, the Child Death Review Partners are the two Local Authorities and NHS Northamptonshire CCG and locally it has been agreed that CDOP should remain within the remit of local safeguarding arrangements and processes managed from within the Business Office.

The process for reviewing child deaths commences with Notification to the Child Death Review team and culminates in final scrutiny at the Child Death Overview Panel.

A multiagency Child Death Review meeting should be held for each child death by the professionals directly involved in the care of that child during their life and the investigation after their death. A Child Death analysis form should be drafted at these meetings and sent to CDOP for final review. The Child Death Review process integrates with the Perinatal Mortality Review Programme and the Learning Disability Mortality Review Programme (LeDeR).

All data from Child Death Reviews is submitted to the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD) for the purposes of data analysis and learning at a national level.

Please see Appendix 4 for statistics for the reporting period.

Appendix 3 – Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

For the period April 2020 – March 2021

- Seven Rapid Review were undertaken.
- Three requests for consideration of a review were deliberated.
- Two Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews were published in December 2021.
- A third CSPR was published in March 2022.
- Four new CSPR's were commissioned during the period first April 2021 to 31st March 2022.

Some key Safeguarding themes from 2021/22:

Knife crime, gang associations and criminal exploitation have been increasingly recognised as significant concerns nationally but have not previously been the focus of case learning for the Northamptonshire safeguarding partnership.

Two of the CSPRs initiated this year are seeking to obtain learning following the deaths of young people because of knife wounds and include thematic learning from other more minor incidents. This has highlighted adolescent neglect as a contributing factor to the vulnerability of young people linked to knife crime incidents.

Co-sleeping or unsafe infant sleeping continues to be a theme, in association with additional concerns including neglect, parental alcohol misuse, and non-engagement. The confirmed or emerging findings are consistent with those identified in the National Panel's thematic review of cases of sudden and unexpected death in infants. Some of these cases continue to raise concerns about the multi-agency response to neglect.

Following the success of the one-year pilot of 'DadPad,' which was commissioned by Northamptonshire CCG to support the reduction of non-accidental traumatic head injury in babies, this project has now been commissioned for a further four year period.

DadPad is an app and book for father to be and new fathers that aims to provide them with guidance on how to develop the mind-set, confidence and practical skills needed to meet their babies' physical and emotional needs. It is also intended as a resource to assist professionals to engage and build relationships with new fathers and fathers to be.

During the first six months of the app availability, downloads equates to fifty per cent of all new births in the county. Top topics viewed included: when the crying won't stop, safe sleeping and surviving without sleep.

Disguised Compliance

There is a regularly recurring theme of disguised compliance, or very often clearly evidenced noncompliance and disengagement. There is an ongoing need to focus on how to support practitioners to safeguard children when parents do not engage or are actively hostile.

Neglect

See above section 2 – Taking Positive Action Early Enough

Supervision

The partnership has noted that the quality of staff supervision has been highlighted and therefore partners have been encouraged to review supervision policies and procedures. Processes have been strengthened to ensure professionals have opportunities to discuss their cases and, focus on those where they have concerns. This is ensuring professionals are confident in managing their caseloads and that children, young people and their families receive the level of support needed, particularly with complex families.

Invisible Parents

CSPRs and Rapid Reviews this year have once again highlighted potential risk from parents or partners who were not visible to agencies working with the mother of a child who was subsequently injured, and where the parent or partner has subsequently been charged in relation to nonaccidental injury.

This has triggered a debate about how police intelligence on adult violence, criminality and gang association can be shared in a proportionate way. This is a significantly challenging question, but case learning has demonstrated that we need a shared multi agency understanding about when such information should be sought within child protection processes, and the circumstances in which police should proactively disclose concerns about risky adults, for example when it is known that the adult is about to become a father. This will be developed further in 2022-23.

Appendix 4 – Child Death

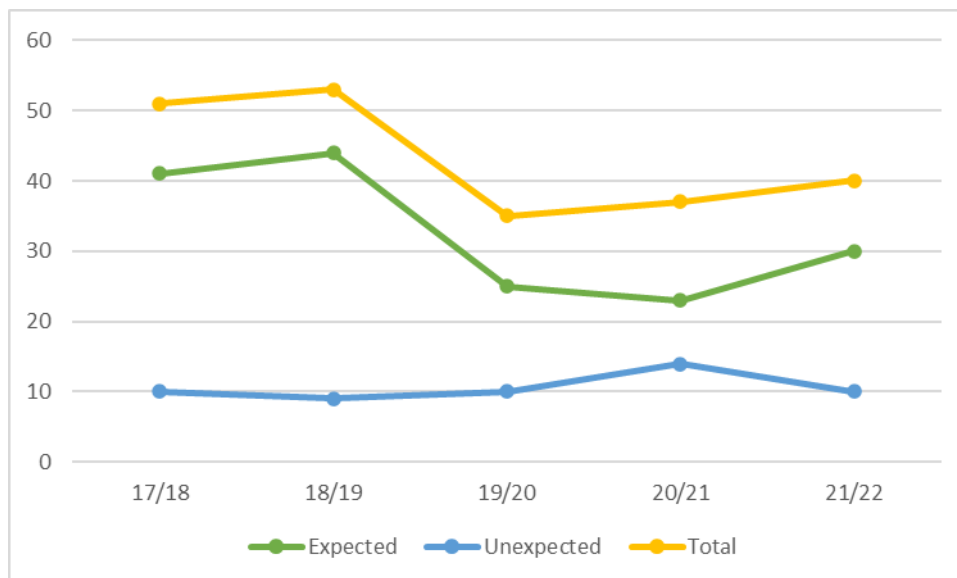
Child deaths in Northamptonshire have shown a slow increase over the past three years after falling significantly in 2019/20. However, with the exception of 20/21 when an increase was seen, unexpected deaths have remained steady over the past 5 years.

It should be noted that detailed analysis and conclusions to be drawn from the data are limited due to the fortunately small numbers of deaths that occur on an annual basis.

Fig. 2. Child death notifications by year:

	21/22	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18
Expected	30	23	25	44	41
Unexpected	10	14	10	9	10
Total	40	37	35	53	51

Fig 3. Five-year child death notification trends



70% of all child deaths across Northamptonshire occurred in the first year of life with unexpected death occurring more commonly in this age group than any other. This is in line with national figures reported by the National Child Mortality Database (NCMD).

Appendix 5 – Partner Contributions for 2021-2022

Partner Income 2021/22 from Strategic Partner agencies	Annual Contribution to NSCP Budget
North Northants Council	£24,646
West Northants Council	£26,351
Police Funding	£43,000
Health Authority Contribution	£48,949



WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

8th November 2022

Councillor Mike Hallam: Cabinet Member for HR & Corporate Services

Report Title	Economising on mobile telephony
Report Author	Chris Wales, Chief Information Officer chris.wales@westnorthants.gov.uk

Contributors/Checkers/Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	31/10/2022
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	24/10/2022
Other Director/SME	Sarah Reed	19/10/2022
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	

List of Appendices

n/a

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to investigate an opportunity to make significant revenue savings on the cost of our mobile telephony.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Considerable work has been done to look at reviewing key technology contracts, looking for opportunities to renegotiate rates with the aim of achieving better value-for-money. Mobile technology is a key element of our ways of working at West Northants Council both during

after Covid; with more hybrid working, spend has increased in this area. Our existing mobile telephony supplier has offered us a new contract, which can be taken up within a matter of weeks, that will deliver a 56% saving on current spend.

- 2.2 Corporate Services is seeking Cabinet approval to commit to a new contract, with an estimated £135k per annum saving for the Council which will reduce our current spending pressure on mobile technology as well as delivering ongoing efficiency savings.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet delegate authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for HR & Corporate Services to award and enter into a renegotiated contract with our existing supplier.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 Renegotiating the contract will enable the Council to achieve a reduction in the order of £134k per annum for WNC against the existing contract cost as well as reduction in cost for our partners North Northamptonshire Council and the Children's Trust. The latter impacts directly on the cost to the Council.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 Under the former LGSS shared service model, a joint contract for mobile telephony was taken out with a mobile telecoms company by Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of itself, Milton Keynes Council and Northamptonshire County Council (NCC). On Vesting Day, West Northants Council inherited NCC's participation in this contract, covering its own usage and also that of former NCC staff in North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) and the Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT).
- 5.2 The contract currently costs around £640,000 per annum (variable depending on usage), of which WNC pays around £241,000 and NCT pays around £160,000. The remaining £239,000 is paid for by NNC.
- 5.3 The next renewal point for the contract is in June 2023. It would be challenging, but possible, to migrate to a new provider at this time, should we tender the contract. This is due to the logistical challenges of changing over almost 6,000 SIM cards in all devices. This would include staff handsets but also infrastructure requiring a data connection, e.g. traffic lights and digital signage on highways.
- 5.4 An analysis conducted on the inherited contractual spend against commercial offerings suggests that the Council (and the other former LGSS partners) are paying a relatively high cost for the service.

- 5.5 Council officers have pro-actively raised this concern with our mobile telecoms provider. The supplier has offered the opportunity to break the existing contract and take out a new one on a “2+1” basis (two years, with an optional extension of a further year). The new contract would be priced at around 56% cheaper than the existing one. For WNC, this equates to approximately £106k per annum overall, against the existing cost of £241,000. For NCT, this equates to £70k per annum, against the existing cost of £160,000. For NNC, this equates to approximately £105,000, against the existing cost of £239,000.
- 5.6 Given the need to realise significant savings for the organisation, which also benefits the Children’s Trust and North Northamptonshire Council, officers are seeking permission from Cabinet to explore this option, with delegated authority to enter into an agreement as described whose maximum length would be three years, and an approximate value of £281,000 per annum (so around £843,000 if taken for the full three years).

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 If councils wait until June to go through procurement, there will be a missed opportunity for 6 months of savings; approximately £67k in savings for WNC and NNC, and £45k for NCT. Missing this opportunity is unwise in the current harsh economic landscape. There is also a medium risk that should a different supplier be selected, SIMs would not be transferred over to a new supplier in time, alongside existing project timelines.
- 6.2 Opting out of a full procurement in June means we will not be able to test the market for an even cheaper solution. However, given the current macroeconomic state, officers deem it unlikely that costs can be driven down further than a 56% reduction in price.
- 6.3 Should officers agree to renegotiate the existing contract now, this would be done through a procurement framework, under a Direct Award Contract (DAC). DACs occur when a contract is awarded to a contractor without a competition, when there is only one appropriate supplier who can meet the criteria, or when there is a material change to an existing contract; the latter two factors would apply here as we would need a) continued service, and b) a significant change in the existing contract. All DACs over a value of £30k must be published.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

Pursuit of the new contract option, if agreed, would result in a saving to WNC equivalent to approximately £135k per annum, £134k per annum for NNC and a saving to NCT of £90k per annum. Final numbers would need to be calculated based on exact distribution of usage costs between the Council, NNC and NCT. Further, as the new contract would form a direct relationship between the Council and the telecoms provider, versus the indirect relationship currently held by CCC, Council officers would have the ability to better directly manage and control costs.

7.2 Legal

The Council must comply with Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contract rules in relation to procurement of contracts. This proposal would utilise a framework arrangement to enable the negotiation to proceed without the need for a tendering exercise. The terms and conditions of the framework will dictate the procurement.

7.3 Risk

As a council we must comply with the Public Procurement Regulations 2015. Without utilising a direct framework call off, we would have to consider alternative frameworks or otherwise go to open market. Given the preliminary work already made seeking a framework this has been mitigated.

7.4 Consultation

No statutory consultation is required; however, engagement and consultation has been undertaken with the procurement team and our counterparts in CCC and MKC.

7.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

The details of any agreed new contract can be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on request.

7.6 Climate Impact

There are no climate impacts arising from this proposal.

7.7 Community Impact

In seeking ways to reduce the cost of Council contracts, the Council delivers public good for the community by using public money efficiently.

7.8 Communications

There is no communication impact arising from this proposal.

8. Background Papers

n/a

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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