

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023**

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

## **Sustainability**

Our cross-party member working group continues to meet on a monthly basis to drive our sustainability programme activity and we are grateful to all members involved for their time and commitment.

At the Cabinet meeting on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February, we presented our baseline emissions report for 2021-22; taking a step forward in meeting our sustainability goal to be net zero by 2030. This report provides a robust set of baseline CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions data for the Council's first year, April 2021 – 31 March 2022 and outlines WNC's intentions to eliminate or reduce these. Establishing the baseline for WNC emissions will enable the Council to develop a detailed emissions reduction plan and monitor progress towards our targets.

Publishing our emissions report is a pivotal step to ensuring we not only meet our target of being net zero by 2030 but go above and beyond this. To achieve our net zero goals will be challenging, and it will involve all of us across West Northants, nevertheless we've seen it as vital for the council to establish what it's own current emissions are, so that we can monitor them and report reduction numbers to the public.

By understanding our current CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions, we can ensure that we take the right steps to reduce these and put measures in place to protect our environment for years to come. Whilst the emissions report is vital in tracking our environmental sustainability, a great deal of work is also being done to ensure future social and economic sustainability, for both present and future generations.

Steps that the council is taking are many and varied, from our £8million scheme to decarbonise our rural leisure centres, to increased solar energy to reduce our emissions.

We encourage residents, businesses and other organisations to visit our website and review the emissions report, and also make a pledge to live a more sustainable lifestyle, inspiring others to come on this journey with us.

Our sustainability team continue to engage with residents, partners, parish councils, businesses and schools to raise awareness of sustainability and encourage uptake of relevant grants. Recent events have included a business start up event and school engagement.

We are proud to have been shortlisted in the Climate Response category of this year's Local Government Chronicle Awards.

## **Communications**

Recent communications activity has included creating awareness of such as:

- Cost of living: phase 2 including translations, Warm Spaces & community videos
- Health and Wellbeing strategy
- Weight management service
- Well Northants voting day
- No smoking day
- Adult Social Care framework principles design
- Local Area Partnership comms, scoping and planning
- Household Support Fund 4 planning and PR
- Special Educational Needs and Disability strategy engagement
- Rough sleeping/Homeless Strategy Comms
- Pride
- International Women's Day
- Discover Northamptonshire
- Debt and money advice
- Community Transport
- Homes for Ukraine sponsor case-study videos
- Council tax: annual billing
- Market relocation to Commercial St (ongoing Comms)
- Garden waste renewals and Direct Debit comms
- Abington and Fish St Public Realm works
- Marefair consultation
- Health protection workplace event
- Home to school transport
- Active Quarter
- Coronation planning & Comms
- Planning Dept focus week

## **Local Government Chronicle Awards**

These awards are highly regarded in the local government sector, so I am delighted to be able to report that the council has been shortlisted in four categories for this year's LGC awards. These categories are: 'Climate Response', 'Health and Social Care', 'Large Team of the Year' and 'Rising Star'. This is an excellent reflection of all the hard work that colleagues and councillors have put in to make a difference in West Northants.

## **Councillor Information Day**

Our councillor information day was held on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March, providing councillors with updates on transformation, children's trust, local area partnerships, councillor support and sustainability. Plans are being developed for our next councillor information day in the autumn and we welcome suggestions from members about any areas of focus they would like to see.

## **Thrive Awards**

We received 270 nominations for a whole range of individuals and teams across the organisation for our Thrive Awards celebrating those colleagues who go above and beyond to

demonstrate our values. Those who have been shortlisted by our panel of colleagues will be invited to the awards ceremony at the museum on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March.

## **Civic**

The Coronation Service will take place at Westminster Abbey in London on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2023, where His Majesty King Charles III will be crowned alongside Camilla, Queen Consort, and we are delighted to present members with a ceremonial pin badge to commemorate this historic occasion.

Across the Coronation Weekend, there will be further opportunities for people to come together across West Northants in celebration.

## **Plans for the Coronation weekend**

### Saturday 6 May

- Coronation Service in Westminster Abbey, coronation procession, Buckingham Palace balcony appearance by members of the Royal family. Screenings will take place in Northampton alongside a community celebration event in partnership with the Town Council.

### Sunday 7 May

- Coronation concert and lightshow at Windsor Castle, produced, staged, and broadcast live by the BBC and bringing together global music icons and contemporary stars in celebration of the historic occasion.
- The Coronation Big Lunch, at which neighbours and communities are invited to share food and fun together, will take at Delapré Abbey where residents will be able to enjoy a picnic with friends and family into the evening, and enjoy a range of performances and activities followed by screenings of the coronation concert.
- Street parties and events in other locations across the West Northants community are also being organised by town and parish councils and community groups, which will be promoted on our website and through our communications channels.

### Monday 8 May

- Members of the public will be invited to take part in The Big Help Out, which will encourage people to try volunteering for themselves and join the work being undertaken to support their local areas and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the Coronation Weekend.

### Coronation street parties and road closures

- Anyone who would like to organise a street party with friends and neighbours over the Coronation weekend to celebrate the Coronation can access useful information on our website.
- Applications for road closures should be made by **Monday 27 March 2023**. There is no charge for Coronation commemoration road closures from 6 to 8 May 2023.
- All coronation events taking place across West Northants can be shared on our website to populate the official interactive map and events listing, which will be promoted in the weeks and months leading up to the Coronation.

### Nominate your Coronation Champion

- Volunteers from all backgrounds and communities across the UK can be nominated for an award across 8 different categories. What's more, some of the volunteers will be invited to attend events taking place to celebrate Their Majesties' Coronation such as the Windsor Castle Coronation Concert or a Coronation Garden Party.
- To find out more information and how to submit your nomination see the Coronation Champions website.

### **Business Intelligence, Policy and Performance**

Activity has included:

- Completion of Quarter Three Corporate Performance Dashboard, monitoring progress against the delivery of our Corporate Plan and Priorities. This was taken to the Cabinet meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March.
- Supporting the development of 2023/24 service plans across the organisation to ensure delivery of our Corporate Plan.
- Supporting the development of Local Area Profiles (Using Local Insights tool as well as offline work) Developing and improving reporting in Adult Social Care enhancing ability to manage budgets and improve Data Quality

### **Transformation update**

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

#### Place

A second phase of efficiency work is currently being delivered within the Planning service, building on the early integration and initial £40k saving achieved in 2022/23, and delivering an additional £350k in 2023/24. The teams have co-located to Towcester, leading to greater productivity and consistency through the harmonisation of working practices. The more streamlined service structure is currently out for consultation, and work is on track to merge the IT systems of DEF Mastergov into a single system to aid joined up working.

Work has begun on a project to drive productivity in Home to School Transport and achieve £1.2m of savings against the backdrop of national rising demand and increasing costs. A revised policy has been co-produced and full consultation is being planned to get views. Post 16 provision is currently being benchmarked against other local authorities to understand our relative position, and the initial work in identifying and scoping safe walking routes, where capital money can be used to make children and young people's journeys to school safer, is underway.

Merging and making efficiencies on our current IT legacy system is also gathering pace in the directorate, with work advancing on a single system to hold our physical asset data, as well as a single system for Regulatory Services.

## Communities and Opportunities

Housing Solutions is set to deliver £500k through a focus on aggregation and driving change in how we approach temporary accommodation. Tier 4 of the restructure is underway to bring the teams and localities together. A single general homelessness pathway is currently being designed, which has been a significant pressure point over the last quarter. Measures have also been work-shopped and are currently being delivered to reduce the amount of Housing Subsidy loss, and therefore ensure the council collects the right funding.

The Debt & Money Advice project has made progress and is currently piloting integrating Welfare Benefit officers into Adult Social Care to provide a multi-disciplined and more integrated response to residents. Also, aligned to the Customer Excellence strategy, a pilot is being initiated for Customer Service agents to deal with more of the pathway at the first contact, therefore reducing delays and the need to pass customers between departments.

Investment has also been secured to review current cases within housing, so as to ensure people are in the right places and that the council are maximising the use of funding from central government.

## People

The Supported Living Review Project is gathering pace as the current 'as is' position has been mapped, and through current activity £168k of the £600k target for 2023/24 has been achieved early in this current financial year. Coupled with this our strategic direction in relation to supported living has been confirmed with providers via active engagement with the provider forum in February 2023, and reaching agreement with North Northamptonshire Council around splitting the existing arrangements.

A business case has been approved for an ambitious and complex project around Prevention and Wellbeing, which aims to better align Public Health and Adult Social Care investment in prevention at a community level, acting as a catalyst for a more system-wide approach to prevention. The project is currently understanding the complex 'as is' position in terms of service offering and costs.

## Corporate

The Customer Services programme has been focusing on driving efficiency and productivity for the organisation by migrating customer contact from more expensive and specialist workers and into the customer contact centre. Revenue and Benefit services have been migrated into the contact centre for a more consistent experience across the authority, and new processes have been defined whilst the service continues to monitor improvements in abandonment rates and satisfaction measures.

Other areas are being explored to align with the Customer Excellence Strategy including our internal help desk provision, as well as external facing elements such as School Transport.

Future Ways of Working continues at pace to deliver an ambitious £750k target. Work is ongoing in Daventry around the closure of Lodge Road and refurbishment of the Abbey Centre, as plans are now signed off for that location. A direction for ICT infrastructure around unifying networks is being progressed as well as a desk and space booking system to maximise the efficiency of our estate. This programme now will also take on the learning from the Customer Excellence Strategy and review the 'front door' requirements of our offices, in order to be responsive to customer demand.

Legal Services review is on track to deliver £500k efficiency saving, and in doing so moving to an in-house delivery model. Recruitment is progressing to bring the expertise in house, staff consultation has concluded with our existing in-house team and is seen positively. Progress is also being made on procuring and migrating several sources of legal cases into a single cloud-based system.

The Pay and Grading exercise continues the challenge of delivering a new pay structure for West Northants. Managers briefings have been concluded and a new process for a recruitment protocol has been introduced to ensure new posts being recruited to are aligned to the strategic goals.

### Finance

Transformation effort in this directorate has been concentrated on supporting the budget task force, which has culminated in the budget being presented. The programme management office have also been administering the Spending Review Panel to ensure prudent financial management, as well as supporting the panel in requests to recruit.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn  
**Leader of the Council**