

West Northamptonshire Council

Planning Service Transformation – Action Plan

	PAS Recommendation	WNC Transformation workstream	WNC Actions	Accountability	Timescale for Implementation	Progress
1	<p>Improve the way the planning teams are managed and led to build a stronger sense of shared purpose and start to agree and develop good:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people management practices; • customer focus; and • behaviours and culture <p>for the new planning service.</p>	Vision and Leadership	<p>Recruitment to permanent AD position.*</p> <p>Recruitment to permanent Planning Leadership Team and Team Leader positions.</p> <p>Introduction of Leadership Training programme.</p> <p>Introduction of WNC line management training for Principal Planning Officers and above.</p> <p>Introduction of pilot WNC talent management and succession planning programme.</p> <p>WNC Corporate Induction for all new starters to embed our WNC culture and behaviours.</p> <p>Dedicated Customer Experience training for full Planning Service.</p>	Assistant Director and Planning Leadership Team	2023 Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4	Underway and commenced in January 2023

2	<p>Analyse existing committee decisions and activity to inform a review the scheme of delegation and the number of committees to provide a committee structure and process fit for a unitary council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve culture and practice of planning committees to reduce the risk to the council including eliminating the use of substitute members on planning committees • ensure that householder and minor applications only go to committee in exceptional circumstances <p>trial a significantly reduced number of committees with a proportionate geographical spread (based on workload)</p>	Performance Management	<p>Conduct an evidence-based review and make recommendations to rationalise the number, structure and format of all WNC Planning Committees to ensure they are fit for purpose and represent a unitary council.</p> <p>Review and make recommendations regarding the governance and remit for the Planning Policy Committee.</p> <p>Provide an ongoing dedicated Member Training programme to ensure robust decision making and continuous learning alongside consistent excellent conduct.</p>	<p>Director of Legal, Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director, Place • Assistant Director, Planning • Democratic and Standards Committee • Leader and Portfolio Holder 	2023 Q2	<p>To be commenced April 2023 and implemented in May 2023</p> <p>Review in 2024 Q2.</p>
3	<p>Implement the planning service restructure as quickly as possible after the new Director is in post.</p>	Vision and Leadership	<p>Restructure the full planning service under the ethos of 'one service, one team' ensuring it is fit for purpose for a unitary authority.</p>	Assistant Director	2023 Q1 and Q2	<p>Underway and commenced in January 2023</p>

4	Develop a workforce development plan for the service to include succession planning, training programmes for “growing your own” and introduce linked career grade role.	Vision and Leadership	<p>Continuation of the existing career grade planner roles in the new structure.</p> <p>Introduction of Apprenticeships alongside the existing Graduate programme.</p> <p>Introduction of formal APC mentoring programme.</p> <p>Adoption of WNC corporate mentoring once pilot complete.</p> <p>Introduction of pilot WNC talent management and succession planning programme.</p> <p>Introduction of the Planning Service ‘Future Leaders’ programme of CPD and networking events.</p> <p>Continued development of the Planning Service CPD Hub.</p>	<p>Assistant Director supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Director HR • WNC Learning and Development leads 	2023 Q3 and Q4	To be commenced in June 2023
5	Implement a robust service performance management framework to provide the data and information necessary to understand how the service is	Performance Management	<p>Ensure regular meetings with DLUHC to maintain support and the sharing of best practice.</p>	<p>Assistant Director supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Performance Team • Head of Technical Support 	2023 Q1, Q2 and Q3	Underway and commenced in February 2023

	performing and inform what resources are needed.		<p>Update corporate performance indicators to continually reflect statutory national targets.</p> <p>Embed a culture of performance management via weekly performance reports, fortnightly Planning LT and monthly Place DMT.</p> <p>Ensure supportive performance management throughout the entire Planning Service via regular 1-2-1s, team meetings and Appraisals.</p> <p>Introduce the Planning Performance Agreement Service for large schemes.</p>			
6	<p>Consider opportunities for more planning training and development for town and parish councils, in conjunction with West Northamptonshire members and officers to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the planning system works; • some illustrative specific planning applications with 	Community and Partnership Engagement	<p>Utilise the platform of NCALC's existing training programme to reach Parish and Town Councils and provide bespoke training.</p> <p>Improve regular communication links with local councils via the Parish Briefing and a pilot Operation Focus Group.</p> <p>Undertake a regular satisfaction and feedback survey with the support of NCALC to inform and</p>	<p>Assistant Director supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Leadership Team • Head of Communications • WNC Parish Liaison Officer • NCALC 	2023 Q3 and Q4	To be commenced July 2023

	<p>explanations around reasons for decisions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some illustrative specific enforcement cases with explanations around reasons for action or not; and <p>some assessment of overturns and appeals showing lessons learnt.</p>		improve our customer experience on an ongoing basis.			
7	Develop a comprehensive approach, capitalising on the opportunities of a new unitary council, to involving and engaging internal and external stakeholders to work together to develop the new local plan.	Achieving Outcomes	<p>Continuation of the production of the single Local Plan for West Northamptonshire.</p> <p>Undertake a proactive consultation and engagement programme on the Local Plan.</p> <p>Update the Local Development Scheme (LDS) to ensure the milestones for the single Local Plan are refreshed and fit for purpose.</p>	Head of Planning Policy	2023 and 2024 in line with the new milestones specified in the LDS.	Underway
8	Introduce a forum that engages with agents and customers to help shape the service and hear and address concerns.	Community and Partnership Engagement	<p>Introduce an Agents and Developers Forum for West Northamptonshire, linking with Inward Investment and Regeneration networks as appropriate.</p>	Assistant Director and Planning Leadership Team	2023 Q2 and Q3	Underway and first Forum scheduled for April 2023

			<p>Continue positive enabling relationships with strategic stakeholders and delivery partners, such as Homes England and key infrastructure providers.</p> <p>Embed a culture of customer satisfaction and continuous learning/improvement in the Planning Service for example, on 'project closure' ensure a customer satisfaction survey is issued and received to inform future practice and processes.</p>			
9	<p>Carry out process “quick wins” including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> validation –guidance to staff on acceptable technical support documents consultation – reduce unnecessary consultation with internal and external stakeholders <p>triage incoming applications for quick decisions</p>	Achieving outcomes	<p>Complete legacy process mapping exercise.</p> <p>Complete onboarding of DEF, WNC’s single software system for the Planning Service.</p> <p>Test temporary WNC processes and templates for a six-month period before a full review during 2024 to embed optimum unitary processes.</p>	<p>Head of Development Management supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Technical Support 	<p>2023 Q1, Q2 and Q3</p> <p>2024 full review</p>	Underway and DEF system ‘go live’ on 3 rd April 2023.
10	Carry out management “quick wins” including:	Vision and Leadership	Introduction of a monthly full WNC Planning Service team	Assistant Director and Planning Leadership Team supported by:	2023 Q1, Q2 and Q3	Underway and commenced January 2023.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> senior manager attending team meetings to agreed frequency; introduction of regular planning service newsletters/emails; and regular one to ones for all staff <p>prepare and implement an action plan to address staff survey results in consultation with staff.</p>		<p>meeting led by Assistant Director.</p> <p>Introduction of monthly WNC Team meetings for functional areas (Policy and Specialist Services, Development Management, Enforcement, Technical Support).</p> <p>Establish single WNC communication channels for the Planning Service on Outlook and Teams.</p> <p>Ensure a supportive culture throughout the entire Planning Service via regular 1-2-1s for all staff using the existing WNC 'VIP' mechanism.</p> <p>Adoption and ongoing implementation of the Planning Service Communications Strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Communications Assistant Director HR Learning and Development leads 		
11	Engage with PAS to benefit from their current support offer on improving the governance of developer contributions.	Achieving Outcomes	Undertake a DLUHC funded six-week review with PAS and Inner Circle Consulting to identify recommendations for a single	Assistant Director supported by:	2023 Q1, Q2 and Q3	Underway and commenced in March 2023

			<p>process and governance framework for WNC.</p> <p>Provide and update ELT and Members on the project programme and resource plan for corporate implementation.</p> <p>Ensure adequate resourcing corporately to deliver the project programme.</p> <p>Work with PAS to deliver Member training on S106/CIL.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Enforcement and Monitoring • S106/CIL Team Leader and team • Corporate Finance • Legal Services • Internal Audit 		
12	Consider working with PAS to establish realistic project management arrangements for progressing the council's new local plan.	Achieving Outcomes	<p>Work with PAS to review the revised draft LDS and project programme before presenting to Planning Policy Committee.</p> <p>Work with PAS to review existing Local Plan evidence base, identify gaps and produce robust standard briefs for procurement.</p>	Head of Planning Policy	2023 Q1 and Q2	Underway and commenced in March 2023

*WNC Actions highlighted in bold have been achieved.

Key:

	Underway in line with timescale
	Not yet commenced