

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL COUNCIL

29 June 2023

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

West Northamptonshire Council Chief Executive – Anna Earnshaw

Report Title	Annual Report and Summary of performance 2022/23
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## List of Approvers

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

## List of Appendices

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

### 1. Purpose of Report

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

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

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

## **2. Executive Summary**

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

## **3. Recommendations**

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

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

#### **4. Reason for Recommendations**

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

#### **5. Report Background**

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

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

## **4 Issues and Choices**

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

## **5 Implications**

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### **5.1 Resources and Financial**

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

## **5.2 Legal**

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

## **5.3 Risk**

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

## **5.4 Consultation and Communications**

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

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

## **5.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny**

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

## **5.6 Climate Impact**

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

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

## **5.7 Community Impact**

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

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

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

## **6 Background Papers**

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None