

29th June 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. An application for the UK100 Leadership Academy has been submitted for a further working group member.

A school presentation at Northampton School for Girls was well received, we will continue to engage with schools and look at options to deliver more face-to-face talks.

No Mow May has officially finished, a debrief meeting has been arranged to look at lessons learned and plan any changes for next year. Although quite a significant change in attitudes to not cutting grass and verge areas, we have seen many embrace this idea, to the benefit of enhancing biodiversity.

We are in active discussions with University of Northampton PhD students about joint projects to look at scope 3 supply chain emissions.

Collection of the 2022/23 emissions data is now underway, and an emissions reduction plan is in development, following the publication of our baseline emissions data. This will enable the delivery of our 2030 net zero target for West Northants Council.

Communications

Our communications service have led work on our second annual report which is on tonight's agenda and celebrates the many achievements of our hard working colleagues and councillors over the past year, the huge amount of progress we have made as a new council along with the challenges we face.

Work is underway on the first issue of our new West Northants resident magazine, which was recommended by a cross-party working group some time ago, and which will be launched this summer, providing all residents with useful information about local services and events.

The communications service continues to deliver a high volume of proactive campaigns including:

- Armed Forces Week
- Heat health
- Special Educational Needs and Disability
- ASC system transformation

- Director of Public Health report comms
- Health & Wellbeing strategy
- Learning & Development
- Apprenticeships
- Boundary review
- Voter ID
- Legal services team launch
- Safer interactions -customer services team
- Do it online campaign
- Equality Strategy Launch
- Governance
- Registrars
- You said we did
- New Payment options
- Coat of Arms
- Canvass 2023
- Best Practice for contract management
- Corporate Social Value

Local Government Chronicle Awards

The council was proud to be a finalist in this year's LGC awards in four categories!

These included Climate Response, Health and Social Care, Large Team of the Year and Rising Star, and we received two highly commended awards for Health and Social Care 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.

Civic

Coronation:

Across the Coronation Weekend, people came together across West Northants in a splendid celebration.

The Coronation Big Lunch took place at Delapre Abbey on Sunday 7th May with over 5,000 residents enjoying picnics and a range of performances and activities with friends and family into the evening, followed by screenings of the coronation concert.

Street parties and events in other locations across the West Northants community were also organised by town and parish councils and community groups which were promoted on our website and through our communications channels.

On Monday 8 May 2023, members of the public took part in The Big Help Out across West Northamptonshire, volunteering to support their local areas and create a lasting volunteering legacy from the Coronation Weekend.

Transformation

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

Consultation has begun with HR and the unions on a revised aggregated structure which will deliver £350k efficiency in 2023/24 and to enhance this the phase 1 of the DEF Mastergov system has now been delivered onto a single system for WNC for planning. Phase 2 will drive forward further efficiencies and exploit the advantages of the new system, with a 'go live' date of July 2023. A local plan workshop has also been scheduled and all members invited.

The Home to School Transport Policy proposals consultation continues with feedback being sought through the consultation survey, mailbox and the 5 consultation events held across West Northamptonshire. Planning work has also began on refreshing our independent travel training offer as well as on safer walking routes. Also, WNC is looking to build partnerships with local leading Virtual Reality suppliers to provide experiences in a safe environment to encourage children and young people to travel independently.

Communities and Opportunities

Housing solutions and aggregation transformation remains on track to deliver its £500k target in a very difficult operational environment. As well as structural changes to align roles and responsibilities, work has focused on drafting a single allocations policy, with operational managers in both WNC and Northamptonshire Partnership Homes providing feedback. A single homelessness pathway workstream continues to develop our offer against rising demand, national policy and rising housing subsidy loss. In terms of system architecture, options have been presented to rationalise our systems in this area and provide a single system depending on choices around the allocations policy.

The Debt & Money Advice project has been bringing together officers from across WNC's services which provide debt and money advice into a single team to provide efficiencies and consistency, and to this end from May 23rd two officers from adult social care have joined the team for an initial two-month pilot.

People

Reablement West continues to tightly monitor the number of starts in the service each week and the reduction in care hours the reablement offer has delivered, continuing the robust tracking which has delivered £4m in cost avoidance over a 3 year period. Recruitment of staff is still a risk, as it is nationally, however the service is currently able to fill 73% of roles.

The Home Care Redesign project is on track for implementation in August 2023. Fifty five providers responded to the tender for this project which is very positive. Those tenders are currently being evaluated, with the aim of awarding the contract at the end of June 2023, which is currently on track.

The Supported Living Review Project is gathering pace as the current 'as is' position has been mapped, and through current activity £314k of the £600k target for 2023/24 has been

achieved. The project continues to analyse provider returns to establish a complete 'As Is' demand analysis for current housing stock within the supported living/supported accommodation markets.

Optimisation of single-handed care is a £1m project that in 2022/23 secured £817k of saving as well as significant cost avoidance. In order to build on that success, the project is delivering the recruitment of additional resource to proactively review a list of 200 high-cost packages where double handed care is still in place.

Corporate

The Connected Customer programme continues to delivery on the customer excellence strategy by bringing initial contact services into the contact centre. The project has onboarded the Revenue and Benefits team in Northampton, reducing the abandonment rate of calls and delivering a more consistent experience for across West Northamptonshire. The project team are currently preparing to onboard Planning Services in the next phase, so that agents can provide customers with advice and information for which there is not a requirement for a back-office expert. The delivery of a single customer experience management system continues at pace with Daventry's legacy system being integrated in the current phase. The programme is also initiating workstreams around ensuring web content is inclusive to all residents.

Future Ways of Working continues at pace to deliver an ambitious £750k savings target. The Abbey Centre works continue at pace with the first cohorts of staffing moving in throughout June 2023, although this has of course been negatively impacted by the flood caused by a leaking water tank. Work has also been completed with Northamptonshire Children's Trust to facilitate their move into Abbey to provide a better, joined up locality offer to residents. Teams have also come together in our other locations, such as Revenues and Benefits having moved into One Angel Square, again supporting the aggregation of services.

The Legal Services review is on track to deliver a £500k efficiency saving, and in doing so moving to an in-house delivery model. Recruitment is progressing well with posts being successfully filled at all levels, thus mitigating one of the largest risks in the project. The migration to a single cloud-based instance of IKEN remains on track.

Pay & Grading has successfully delivered circa 1,200 outcomes on time and in a coordinated manner, as well as running the communications and a number of briefing sessions for various levels of the organisation. The focus for the project is to now manage the appeals process in the same efficient manner, and develop the support offer for career management to support impacted employees.

Finance

Transformation support is currently focused on initiating a project to ensure that West Northants Council can develop a roadmap to be PCI DSS compliant, and thereby reduce that organisational risk. This involves services across the authority as well as coordinating action on our IT infrastructure.

Transformation have also been supporting the activity surrounding services and charges with North Northamptonshire.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council