

Thursday 2nd December 2021

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

Members may have noticed that the most recent list of Cabinet Member responsibilities circulated included 'Sustainability' listed under my direct responsibilities, and I have now had discussions with a number of you around this subject.

Whilst climate change and environmental issues is a vital part of WNC's work and focus towards sustainability, economic and social sustainability are also important. The three are also interconnected and indeed cannot be looked at in isolation as they jointly drive the preservation, progress and prosperity of West Northamptonshire. All three elements are also given prominence within the seventeen UN Sustainability Goals agreed in 2015 at COP21 and evaluated more recently during COP26 last month. Work within the environmental pillar is the most progressed, however economic and social sustainability are of course areas in which the council is also already undertaking significant work, through initiatives including our economic regeneration plans and Anti-Poverty Strategy.

Whilst we are taking a little extra time to finalise and enhance our approach to climate change and environmental sustainability, we are also now encompassing this work into a wider Sustainability Strategy. My view is that the key aspects of this strategy must go further than what I observe many councils to be doing on climate change and sustainability, and it needs to be bold. It also needs to provide a framework and platform that will drive and facilitate community and wider stakeholder engagement and commitment, and not just a strategy and action plan for the council's own commitments and work towards achieving 2030 targets. The sustainability of our West Northants area is the collective responsibility of every resident, business, group, sector and so on, all pulling towards the same direction, and needs to become something that everybody feels a commitment to and also, that remains alive beyond council electoral cycles. I also believe this should include reviewing and reporting regularly on progress to the council and to the residents and businesses of West Northants, and we will be looking to create a cross-party committee to take oversight of, and some responsibility for, this initiative and programme as we facilitate this collective journey towards our region's social, economic and environmental sustainability by 2030.

Given the wider brief of this Sustainability Strategy, I have asked Cllr Fiona Cole to support as Assistant Cabinet Member to myself on Sustainability, based on her work so far on this and her strong professional expertise and experience in this area. We will be working closely alongside Cllr Colin Morgan who has been overseeing the climate emergency work and Cllr Phil Larratt as Cabinet Member with responsibility for climate change. As this wider sustainability strategy progresses however, we will clearly be working alongside all Cabinet members and Directorates within the council, as well in collaboration with external stakeholders, as the

environmental, economic and social sustainable progress of West Northamptonshire sits within the scope and remit of everyone.

We anticipate having final draft ready for publishing and sharing with you over the coming weeks, and will confirm exact timescales shortly.

Communications

- City Status: communication and engagement has been taking place across West Northants in support of the Northampton City Status bid included in tonight's agenda and we have seen an overwhelmingly positive response from our communities.
- A councillor working group on residents' communications has been established to support development of our communications strategy and approach.
- Media Relations: We are working to build our relationships with local and national media and ensure that we are proactive in our approach. Media coverage is featured every week in the councillors' briefing.
- Branding: work continues to establish the new West Northants brand and support colleagues to apply branding correctly helping to build recognition and trust with our residents and wider communities.
- Social media: Our social media channels have been established and continue to increase their reach and impact including tik tok and Instagram, which have featured prominently in our city status campaign.
- Internal communications: our internal communications channels including intranet, all staff briefings, weekly councillor briefings, CEO's Blog and Teams channels continue to grow and are increasing engagement.

Business Intelligence, Policy and Performance

- Work has taken place to develop and refine our performance reporting through our corporate dashboard and our Quarter 2 position will be reported to Cabinet on 7th December.
- Work continues on our website project to improve the quality of information and online services available to our residents. Thank you to those councillors who have provided help with testing new areas and providing feedback.
- Staff networks continue to develop and have played a key role in celebrating events including Pride and Black History Month. Our Networks include Black and Minority Ethnic colleagues, Carers, Disability, LGBTQ+, Armed Forces Community, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Armed Forces Community. The networks are staff led and have sponsors from our senior leadership team, and are helping to promote equalities across our organisation and to develop a new culture of inclusivity and innovation.

Transformation

A vital aspect of the budget setting work that has been taking place has focused on pursuing ways of transforming our services to both increase or maintain service quality and seek to deliver them as cost-effectively as possible.

Therefore the main driver for the Transformation team in quarter 3 has been supporting the Star Chamber meetings with directorates in which initiatives and ideas with suggested financial benefits were agreed and will now feed into the pipeline of projects. Also, working closely with

Executive Leadership Team (ELT), the team are engaging in a prioritisation exercise to hone the aims, objectives and capabilities needed to be delivered over the medium term.

The Transformation team is also supporting early stage proposals and business cases to ensure that transformation projects fit with the corporate direction but also allowing better use of resources and ultimately increase productivity.

Outside of project and programme delivery, the change and engagement managers have been supporting a number of workshop days across the directorates to support in bringing staff together and focusing on their purpose and their customers. The team also delivered, in conjunction with customer service colleagues, member sessions in the Guildhall seeking members' expertise and experiences around customer service.

Finally, recognising that there is still a significant amount of effort to disaggregate some services, whilst also bringing together functions from the four sovereign authorities, the team has been strengthened with the capacity to drive this at pace.

In terms of the main aspects of the Transformation Portfolio key developments can be summarised as:

Stabilisation

The team continue to work to complete projects that began pre-vesting day to ensure the stability of services, along with other areas required to support service delivery;

Currently happening:

- Inter Authority Agreements (IAAs) between WNC and NNC are being finalised.
- Revenue and Benefits Project is now concluding and is on track to deliver the required £200k savings. Similar projects across Internal Audit, Executive Support and Communications also continue.
- The prioritisation activity as well as Star Chambers have also led to a number of projects coming on stream with the aim of stabilising delivery in services and to improve quality, project such as Staff Alert Register and the integration of systems in housing.

Improvement Opportunities

Three key Transformation Priorities are;

- How We at WNC Work – Focusing on delivering a modern, effective and resilient workforce by equipping staff with the right tools, space and policies to deliver high quality services.
- Enabling People to Live Their Best Lives – expanding the three conversation model to help the residents we support lead independent lives.
- Green and Prosperous Place – Focusing on our carbon reduction commitment through safe and sustainable growth.

Alongside this, 3 cross cutting themes have also been identified to support our priorities and the wider organisation;

- Commissioning, Contracts, Commercial and Income Generation – ensuring our commercial decisions are sound and offer value for money as well as ensuring our approach to commissioning and market development meets organisational need.

- Digital, Technology, Automation and Innovation Hub – Focusing on leveraging the most appropriate digital tools at the right time and also driving more strategic decisions for the authority around technology options.
- Customer Experience and Innovation Hub - Focusing on putting the customer experience at the heart of service design and delivery.

These priorities will shape how the team delivers projects in the future as well as start to define new initiatives that deliver on the Corporate Plan, balancing this against the financial requirements of the budget and initiatives identified through the Star Chamber process.

Disaggregation / Aggregation

Work to disaggregate the services is ongoing. Change requests have been approved for services where timescales against the original task and finish group timeline and blueprint needed to be amended, and work continues to finalise the disaggregation plan for all hosted services.

Currently happening:

- Delivering the plan and tasks for those services disaggregating this year.
- Lead services are being reviewed for potential separation requirements.
- Remaining change requests to amend services timeline are underway.

Recently completed:

- Exit plan template has been finalised in readiness for capturing surviving terms for the receiver councils to accept the disaggregated services.
- Impact assessments have been completed to support detailed project planning.

Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Leader of the Council