

September 2022

Assets & Environment

Property Strategy and Estates

Since the last update, we are continuing to implement the new structure. Recruitment remains a challenge with numerous vacant posts in the structure.

It remains vital to understand the Council's estate and ensure income due is received. In particular, work has continued regularising the estates data of the former Northampton Borough Council (NBC) with a comprehensive review of all lease data from the former commercial estate nearing completion.

Key projects updates:

- **Estates Management Database Procurement** – Work is progressing on the procurement of a new estates management database that will replace the four separate processes that existed in the predecessor councils. We have commenced soft market testing to refine our expectations / requirements before we start a full procurement exercise later this year. The new system will be in place by March 2024.
- **Estates Coding** – A standardised estates coding for the Council has been agreed. The Asset Records Team have mapped all locations. We are currently reviewing the structure of the properties to determine if additional coding rationalisation can be achieved. The new codes will facilitate the consolidation of existing 60 costs centres, to support effective financial management.
- **Asset Valuations** – A new asset valuation schedule has been created but will need to be updated following recent work on the audits. We are currently in the process of tendering for a new external valuer. Tenders have been received and we aim to have a decision by mid-September. We are also continuing to support Finance with the closure of the 2020/21 accounts.
- **Aged Debt** – We are currently working with Debt Recovery to agree processes for wider tenant engagement and to pursue aged debt. We are also considering the potential impact that the Commercial Rent (Coronavirus) Bill may have on the Council's ability to recover all the debt.
- **Portfolio Review** – We have continued to review the corporate portfolio and identify outstanding lease events. We are currently working on a process to ensure that these are implemented, to ensure that we generate the maximum revenue returns as soon as possible.

- **EPC Assessment** – As part of the above portfolio review, we are also assessing current energy performance certificate (EPC) assessments, principally within the investment category at this stage, and are in the process of procuring an EPC on those properties where one is currently not available, or where it has previously expired. This is to assess the potential impact on the Council of the changes to the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) which come into force in 2023 and which could require expenditure to achieve the required MEES ratings.

Facilities Management

FM Structure

We are continuing with the implementation of the new FM structure; the focus has initially been on the FM senior management team. The Northampton Area Facilities Manager post has recently been filled by Shelley Parker, former Guildhall Facilities Manager. Recruitment to the 'Rural' Area Manager is at interview stage and is expected to be concluded in the next two weeks. We have also permanently recruited Samantha Chauhan as the local Facilities Manager for One Angel Square, County Hall and the Vaccination Centre. Samantha previously occupied this post on an agency basis.

Due to the challenge recruiting to the Head of Public Realm position, the Public Realm team will temporarily merge with the Facilities Management team reporting to the Head of Facilities. There are clear synergies and differences between the two service areas. There is potential for this arrangement to become permanent, but this will dependant on the success of the temporary arrangement.

Current projects

There are several projects underway which the Facilities Management team are either leading or have a key role within:

- **Budget mitigations** – We have provided several options for budget mitigations, with a proposed in year saving of £130K and a 2023/24 saving of £320K.
- **Postal integration** – The project sees the four former post services become one WNC service, based at the Guildhall. Following the implementation of hybrid mail and the redirection of post, the One Angel Square post room has now closed. All services, apart from Parking and the Stop Smoking team, are now using the electronic mail service for outgoing mail. The two remaining services expected to be onboard in the next few weeks. Once completed we look forward to the integration of the services in Daventry and Towcester, whilst also facilitating the closure of Lodge Road.
- **Office optimisation** – Working to create a property portfolio that fits the needs of WNC both in terms of accommodation and budget.
- **Decommissioning of Lodge Road and establishment of the Abbey** – FM will take the lead role in relocating services to new accommodation, decommissioning, and closing the building.
- **Integrating the Facilities Management Helpdesk service across WNC** – The requirement is currently managed slightly differently across WNC. With the expected outcome to have one integrated Property Helpdesk for WNC. The required systems elements are almost complete, and we are hoping to go live with Towcester in the autumn.
- **Integrated access control system for WNC** – Cabinet approved the budget of £80k. The IT Team is currently reviewing the proposed solution to determine what changes would be preferred so the start of implementation is temporarily paused until that work has been completed. Implementation of the works is being managed by the Construction Team.

- **St Johns and the Vulcan Works** – The Service has worked across Assets & Environment to transfer the operational ownership of these facilities to the new provider, procured by the Regeneration team. FM continues to support this site until the transfer is completed. Oxford Innovations have now been appointed as the operating contractor for these sites and we are in the process of handing over the operational control of the site to the it.
- **Installation of new Intruder alarms** – 13 corporate property sites have been completed and the IT Team will be adding data links.
- **Work Driver Policy** – We have created the draft policy is currently with the Health and Safety policy subgroup for review. We hope to be able to launch the policy in the autumn.
- **Fire Warden and First Aid requirements** – Agreed process and supplementary payments of £250pa, paid monthly, awarded to those staff that carry out Fire Warden, First Aid and Mental Health First Aid for WNC. Working through the final processes with the expected launch to be in the autumn.

Works

Property Maintenance & Assurance

Term maintenance contracts

Electrical and building fabric term maintenance contracts have been let on a 4-year basis to local suppliers that have serviced previously districts, borough and county councils. Further procurement activities continue to be procured as contracts existing prior to vesting day expire.

Statutory and mandatory compliance

Statutory compliance continues to be delivered as we bring together data and information from previous councils. Procure continues to put in place 4-year term contracts for asbestos, radon and water management.

Planned maintenance and minor works

A wide range of works continue, including:

Judges Lodgings: areas of the lodgings have been redecorated and floor finished replaced. It is intended to continue with the works to the exterior of the lodgings and roof. Subject to approval works will proceed to isolate building services so that the Lodgings are separated from neighbouring Sessions House.

Wootton Hall Park: Ex-DVLA and Bolton House have now been demolished and subject to the relocation of the met lab attached to Trading Standards these buildings will also be demolished.

Temporary accommodation: Working with housing colleagues to provide 18 houses in Daventry for essential temporary accommodation for the most vulnerable within the area is ongoing. 12 houses are now suitable for use.

Historic Monuments: Repairs to various structures are being procured.

Northampton PFI Schools

External consultants have been appointed to rebuild the PFI affordability model which will enable further discussion with the Department for Education to seek to recover additional facility management costs.

The first phase works to enable Hunsbury Park Primary to take SEND pupils has been completed. Works are now proceeding to complete the second phase for October half term and then the final new build to be complete by September 2023. Works have been completed at Blackthorn's Primary and The Duston secondary school. Works also continue at Northampton School for Girls. Various schools to carry out modifications, and to meet special educational needs and disability (SEND) needs has continued.

The PFI Project team have been tackling the contractor in respect of its performance which has led to discussions with the Contractor and their FM contractor, Amey, at director level.

Policies

Both fire and radon policies have been signed off by the joint health and safety committee and are now live Council policies.

Construction The team is working on a wide range of projects from feasibility to construction. Highlights among the construction projects include:

Mulberry Place, Daventry: The cinema operator is still being pursued to complete the lease. Work is ongoing on the tripartite agreement between the contractor, the operator and the Council which will facilitate the settlement of the operator's costs which it incurred whilst the contractor was rectifying the ceiling drop rod issues which, in turn, delayed the fit out works. The Council is not required to pay any of those costs. The restaurant tenant's fit-out works have been much slower than anticipated, but these are likely to be open during September 2022.

Marie Weller Primary School, Towcester: The new primary school opened in September 2022, but the contractor is yet complete the correction of defects and some that were to be completed during the summer holiday remain. Dialogue with the contractor is ongoing.

Radstone Primary School, Brackley and Silverstone Primary School: Legal work between the Council and the liquidated original contractor's administrators is ongoing.

Elderly People's Homes (EPH): Refurbishment of water damaged shower facilities, undertaking works that have been identified via Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) and undertaking works that have been identified via building condition surveys.

Braunston – Daventry Cycle Track Phase 2 (from Canal & River Trust (CRT) access track near Braunston Tunnel West Portal to Braunston village via the Grand Union Canal towpath and existing highway). As a significant section is on CRT land, this requires its cooperation and partnership working. The Council has commissioned CRT to investigate options for the Phase 2 route and this is nearly completed with a draft report being produced for discussion. Funding from the Council's CIL fund is being sought for a further £500k to fund Phase 2.

Northampton Guildhall heating: The feasibility work to replace and relocate the boilers at the Guildhall is ongoing. Various options have been investigated, but further work is required as the existing cooling system has failed and there may be an opportunity to replace that also. The preferred option to replace the heating system will improve energy efficiency and access for easier installation, maintenance and replacement with little heritage impact.

Professional services framework: The successful and unsuccessful contractors have been notified and the award made with no legal challenges. The contracts are being completed by

the Council's lawyers which will allow the framework to be used. The legal work is taking longer than anticipated, but it is hoped that the framework will be open for use in September 2022.

Northampton Leisure Centres: The major scheme of replacement plant and equipment approved originally by the former NBC Cabinet is being implemented. The first phase of works has been completed. Options for work at Danes Camp have been evaluated and costed as have options for a second phase of work for Mounts Baths. It has been found that, due to the age and condition of some heating, ventilation and electrical equipment, more replacement and refurbishment works was necessary and is still required to achieve the original intended performance.

Whilst undertaking design and installation work, it was discovered that works to reduce fire risk at the leisure centres is likely to be required and so a budget was approved by Cabinet in February 2022 for any works identified by a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRAs are nearing completion, but additional investigation is needed regarding adequacy of fire compartmentation required to block the spread of fire. The works will be undertaken separately to the energy efficiency works described above.

Units 4-14 High March, Daventry: This project is to convert and refurbish six existing, individual, dilapidated commercial units that are adjacent to each other in a block to create circa 30,000 sq ft for a single tenant that needs to expand its business. A budget of £1.8 million has been approved. Multidisciplinary consultants have undertaken design and costings on options ranging from a basic refurbishment at circa £1.0m to achieving undertaking a refurbishment at £3.9 million which would achieve net zero in operation. Options are now being considered.

Completion of Highway Infrastructure at Middlemore Residential Estate, Daventry: Unfortunately, no tenders were received for completion of the remaining unsurfaced length of carriageway and footway. An alternative procurement route through the Council's construction frameworks is being pursued.

Legacy Bridge, Grand Union Canal Towpath, Braunston: This Canal & River Trust (CRT) project to replace an existing narrow footbridge which carries the towpath over an entrance to Braunston Marina has been subject to design changes which has resulted in more expensive foundations being required. The estimate cost has increased from £330k to £650k and the CRT will not be able to undertake this project without securing external funding.

Delapre Park – Active Travel Scheme and Cycle Hub: With the assistance of the Council, Delapre Park made an application to the Government's Active Social Prescribing Fund for circa £1.5 million as a Social Prescribing Pilot. The proposal was awarded £93k revenue funding to develop a feasibility project and this was submitted to the Department for Transport at the end of April 2022 with a hope to secure further revenue funding of £150k per year for three years to operate a pilot project. Unfortunately, the application for pilot project funding was unsuccessful. Options are being developed for the delivery of this project, one being to work with the Council's Highways Team to try to secure further Government Active Travel funding when it becomes available in the future. Applications have been submitted internally for CIL funding and Public Health Grant funding to support the implementation of the project should future Government grant not be awarded or is insufficient.

Delapre Park – Gate Lodge Conversion – Feasibility work has been completed and it has been concluded that the currently vacant and dilapidated lodge could be renovated and reconfigured to provide office and meeting accommodation for the Far Cotton & Delapre Community Council.

Funding will be sought to establish a budget to develop the project supported by a business case. Bat surveys are currently being undertaken and a cost estimate is being produced.

Abington Park (East) Toilets: The existing toilet block and changing facilities on the eastern part of the park are subjected to repeated vandalism and the flat roof of the changing facilities is a health and safety concern as people climb on to it and that could result in injury. The project is to relocate the facilities to a location where they are subject to greater natural surveillance to deter vandalism, and to demolish the existing facilities. The preferred location will be determined by consultation with users of the park, an assessment of whether the preferred location is reasonably practicable in terms of capital and revenue costs associated with the location and whether it would meet the objectives of security and practicality. The initial cost estimate is £1.2m and it is proposed that this be funded from CIL. This is awaiting approval of funding.

Queen's Green Canopy: To celebrate the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022, the Queen's Green Canopy (QGC) tree planting initiative has been created. This "invites people from across the United Kingdom to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee". WNC's role has two aspects: Firstly, engaging with parish councils and community groups to help them achieve suitable planting. Secondly, to agree and secure planting on WNC land. In both cases this needs to include consideration of the future management of maintenance of the trees. In order to deliver the second aspect, it will be necessary to have funding for the purchasing and planting of semi-mature trees on WNC land. Unfortunately, an application for Public Health Grant funding was declined so funding remains an issue. The Council has purchased commemorative plaques which are now available for organisations/groups to collect and place at their planting project.

Long Buckby Flood Alleviation Scheme: Working with the Flood & Water Team to deliver a flood alleviation scheme which is at design stage. Investigations into utility locations and pipe conditions along with statutory approvals from Anglian Water are ongoing. The works will temporarily prevent access to an agricultural field, so the framer requires the investigation works to be delayed until September 2022 after harvest. The project has a series of complications and risks which need to be addressed before work can commence.

New Towcester Care Home: Initial feasibility work has enabled a site to be identified in Towcester. This can now be taken forward with further investigation and discussion with stakeholders to determine if constructing a new care home with circa 100 bedrooms to enhance provision in the area is viable. Funding will be sought to establish a budget to undertake more detailed feasibility work supported by a business case. This is ongoing.

Refurbishment of New Street Toilets, Daventry: This is a legacy project and being delivered through the Council's construction framework. The works are nearing a start on site, but this will not commence until the contract for the works has been completed and communications with interested parties have been completed to advise of the temporary closure whilst work is undertaken. Temporary toilets will be provided.

Northampton Central Library: A budget of £425k was approved to address building condition problems identified by a condition survey. These works identified mainly relate to the roof and fenestration. The works are currently at design and specification stage.

Abington Museum: A budget of £270k was approved to replace the defective heating system, improve ventilation and radon issues. Design options are being produced.

Booth Meadow House: Works to refurbish roofing and cladding are required and design options are being produced.

Replacement of Footbridges in Northampton: The Council owns several bridges in parks and open spaces and three at Kingsthorpe Nature Reserve have been identified as being in very poor condition need to be replaced. A budget of £100k was approved for this year, but additional funds will be required to undertake the works. Design and procurement options are being considered.

Northampton Childrens Trust Projects: Property condition surveys have identified a significant scope of refurbishment works that are required to keep the properties safe, warm and dry. A programme is being produced to implement works to address this. Properties where works are being planned are:

- Welford House – Phase 1 complete, Phase 2 in design.
- Arnold House – currently at design/specification stage for showers.
- Family Forum Centre, Weston Favel
- Daventry West Children’s Centre
- Kingsthorpe Grove Children’s Centre
- Farm Youth Community Centre
- Blackthorne Community Centre
- Thorplands Community Centre

Proposed new schools: Feasibility work is proceeding on the following:

- New 2FE primary school on the Overstone Leys SUE funded from S106 contributions.
- New 2 FE primary school on Norwood Farm SUE funded from S106 contributions.
- Conversion of a former young people’s secure unit at St John’s, Tiffield to provide an extension to the existing Gateway SEND School which is on the same site. This is feasible, but the estimated cost was significantly above the target budget, so this is being considered further.
- New SEND school, also at St John’s Tiffield. Feasibility work is being undertaken to see how the site can accommodate a new all-through 250 place school.

Other school works:

- Work is in progress on the provision of new toilets and a covered outside play area at Pitsford Primary School. This is currently being procured.
- Project at Harlestone Primary School to provide a new MUGA and playing fields drainage, funded from S106 contributions, is underway. Phase 1 is in progress and Phase 2 will be undertaken when planning permission has been obtained.
- Conversion of an existing building at the Dantre and Southbrook Learning Village (DSLIV) at Daventry for SEND provision with a budget of £500k. Design work has been completed and a planning application has been submitted, decision awaited.
- Energy efficiency – a project has been proposed for Council maintained schools which are suffering escalating energy costs. Consultants are being procured to assess what approaches can be taken to improve energy efficiency.
- Planned major maintenance: These works continue to be undertaken in phases whereby each school has a condition survey completed to identify issues. Works are then

undertaken to ensure that they are safe, warm and dry. Works include roof replacements, fenestration, drainage, structural and internal improvements.

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