

November 2022**HOUSING**

Our Housing Solutions Transformation project is underway with the first of our work packages our single/general homeless integration workshops taking place next week to explore what can be improved and where our priority opportunities lie.

Collaboratively working with Adult Social Care with monthly get togethers to better understand each other's worlds as we jointly review and overcome the barriers to good outcomes for our residents. A pilot project is underway in the rural areas to undertake joint assessments of our most vulnerable clients. We have already achieved a positive outcome for a resident with physical disabilities to retain his independence and move into social housing.

The first explorative session of the Fuel Poverty Task and Finish Group has taken place to collectively mitigate cost of living and fuel poverty issues, to feed into the Anti-Poverty Strategy Oversight Group.

We held our first joint rural Homeless Prevention Network meeting, bringing together over 100 partners, both statutory and voluntary to improve partnership working.

We are working with Public Health and colleagues in North Northants to apply for new SSMTR Housing Support Grant funding of £1.5 million for 22/23 and 24/25 to grow our evidence base on housing related needs of people in treatment and effective housing interventions to increase the proportion of people recovering from drug and alcohol dependency in stable and secure housing.

New governance framework between WNC and NPH

A new governance and relationship framework has been co-designed and created by WNC and Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH). It includes structures and process to ensure accountability, risk, issue and opportunity management and provides regulatory assurance.

A fundamental principle underpinning the WNC and NPH framework is openness and transparency, this is a two way process to allow the relationship to maturely develop.

The framework will be structured through three areas – this is show in the figure below.

1) Joint- operational working groups

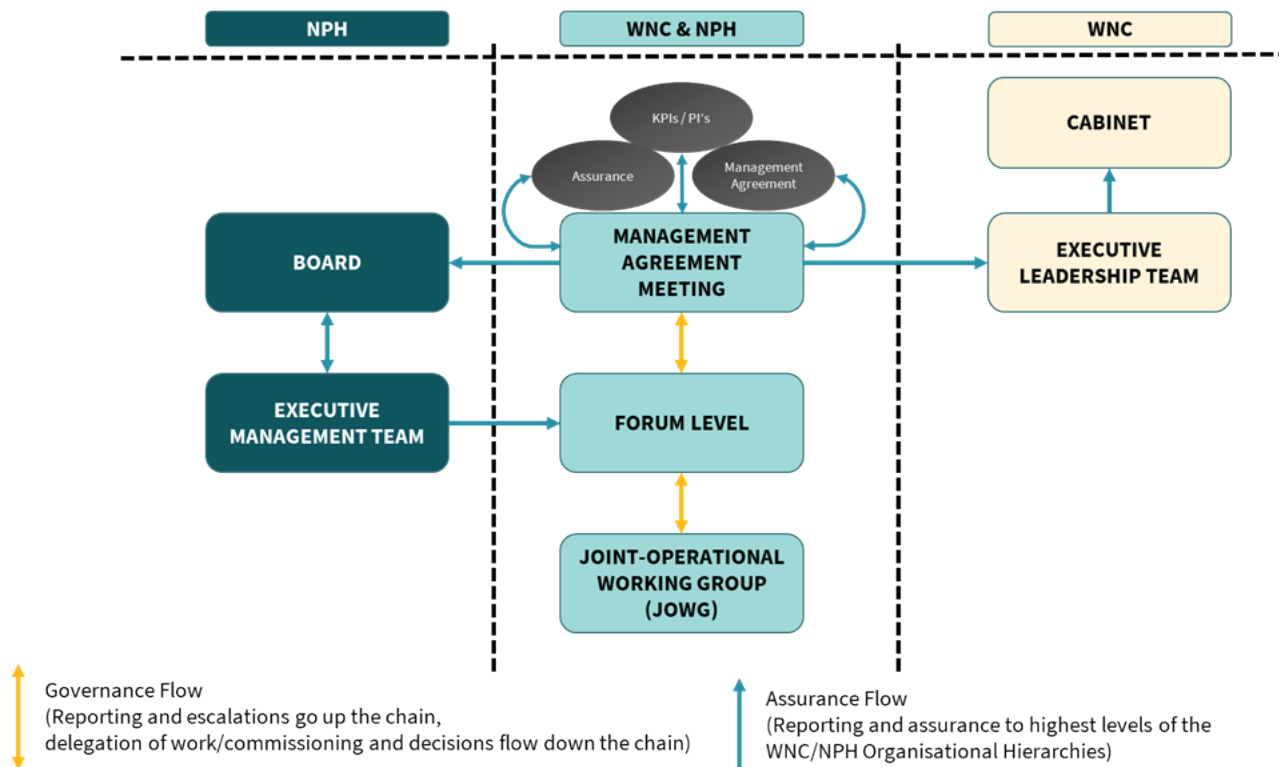
These are structured around day-to-day management of service area, many of which are already in existence. The groups support timely and effective management between WNC and NPH, with reporting and escalations from the groups may be included in the Forum meetings as required

2) Forum Level

The Place, Finance and People forums are the formal elements of the framework. The Place Forum's scope is homes, properties, and the built environment. The People Forum's scope is residents and tenants. The Finance and Resource forum scope is the financial and resource management between WNC and NPH.

3) Management agreement level

The Management Agreement Meetings of the WNC-NPH Governance Framework have a specific, long-standing remit surrounding the oversight and development of the WNC-NPH Management Agreement.



An Implementation Plan has been devised, with all elements of the governance framework to be in place by early Spring 2023.

Private Sector Housing

The Housing Enforcement Team continues to focus on issues around unlicensed houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Over the last two months we have been successful in seeing the conclusion of four cases in Northampton that have been addressed through housing financial penalties:

- Wheatfield Road – a fine of £2750, for failure to licence and some breaches of the management regulations
- Ivy Road – a fine of £12,400 for failure to licence and some major matters of disrepair
- Blisworth Close – a fine of £2000 for a landlord failing to licence two houses in multiple occupation
- Vernon Terrace – a fine of £5000 for a landlord failing to licence and matters of disrepair including electrical safety
- A landlord has also been issued a fine of £500 for failing to be a member of the landlord redress scheme

Whilst the landlord redress fine is set in legislation, the other fines are based on the Council's adopted Civil Penalty policy that has regards to the impact of the disrepair, culpability and mitigating actions.

The team also continues to work with the Council's legal services to progress cases in the Magistrates Court that have been delayed, by the Courts, as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Energy Efficiency

The Team have been successful in securing the award of £4.2m for investment in energy efficiency in West Northamptonshire properties. The scheme seeks to address issues of fuel poverty for low income households living in the most energy inefficient homes (EPC E,F and G) and for those property who do not have mains gas provision.

The Team will be working with the providers and pushing out more information over the next couple of weeks / months to ensure that our residents can gain the maximum benefit from the Central Government Grant Funding.

Home Adaptations

The Team continue to work with residents to ensure that they can remain safe at home, through the provision of home adaptations. During October 2022 we hit the milestone of having spent over £1m, with a further £1m committed and awaiting commencement of works of the Council's £2.5m funding for 2022/23.

CULTURE & LEISURE

Libraries and Business and IP Centre Northamptonshire

This year's Libraries Summer Reading Challenge entitled "Gadgeteers" ran between July and September and proved to be a bumper year. Books and activities themed around science, technology and inventions encouraged children from 4 - 11 to keep up their reading practice over the long summer school break. After reading 6 books and collecting sets of stickers they received a certificate and medal to reward their hard work. This is the first time since the Covid pandemic that the scheme has run fully as it moved online when libraries were closed, and the uptake has been incredible. In West Northants 4,540 children joined the challenge and 76.6% completed it, receiving their medals.

The 10 successful recipients of the Business & IP Centre Northamptonshire's Kick Start Small Business Grants were announced in September. Open to new SMEs in Northamptonshire the winning businesses range from HR consultancy services, an eco-friendly bespoke florist, garden maintenance and a supplier of Moldovan wines. The new businesses will each receive a £2,000 grant for business expenses, a year's free membership with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and ongoing support from the BIPC Northamptonshire team. The Small Business Grants formed an additional part of the Business & IP Centre Northamptonshire's Kick Start Programme, also containing FREE workshops and webinars which provide practical, jargon-free training and advice dedicated to supporting start-ups and SMEs. This is made possible as part of a 3 year project funded by the DCMS via the British Library. The winners completed an application process which involved attendance at a number of workshops as well as a "Dragon's Den" style session to pitch their applications to a panel of local business leaders. Full details of the grant awarded businesses can be found on the BIPC Northamptonshire website.

Sports and Active Lives

This year's Arts Trail ran 1st to 9th October with 18 locations across South Northants and Daventry localities hosting displays from local artists.

The Active Lives team has started working with Go-Beyond, event organisers for the Northampton Half Marathon, to help grow event participation numbers and community involvement during the annual race which is held every September.

Northamptonshire Archives and Heritage Service

The service was pleased to welcome many new faces to a Saturday event that was held as part of national Heritage Open Days. This allowed members of the public to have a glimpse at some of the remarkable archives and to enjoy a tour behind the scenes. It is not usually possible to open to the public the repositories where the archives are stored, because of the need to regulate temperature and humidity in this area, as well as for security reasons.

The service has been busy over the past few months dealing with enquiries, supporting researchers and processing accessions of records. The large collection from St Andrew's hospital will be received in instalments from October to December and the associated work of sorting and listing is likely to continue well beyond that time.

Councillor Adam Brown

Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Culture & Leisure