



## **Change Strategy**

### A roadmap for managing change

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## Executive summary

### **Introduction**

Local government in Northamptonshire is undergoing a significant transformation which will change the way local authority services are provided in this area for a generation.

The move to replace the existing two-tier system of local government – one county council and seven district or borough councils – with two new unitary councils from 1 April 2021 presents significant opportunities, but also poses a number of challenges.

Perhaps most significantly, there are approximately 5,500 people employed by the existing local authorities who will face the task of continuing to provide outstanding levels of service against the backdrop of uncertainty as they transition into employment, in a newly-established organisation, with new sets of cultural values, aims and ambitions.

Effective change leadership is crucial to establishing a workplace culture that values the contribution of every employee, both individually and collectively, and empowers all employees to use their skills, knowledge and expertise to make a difference to the people and places of Northamptonshire.

Swift action in response to the recent Covid-19 pandemic has seen action to implement radical change. For example, the introduction of mass remote working to enable key workers and implementing community hubs has joined up activity across the county.

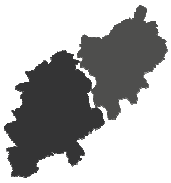
It is through this positive demonstration of leadership that we remain confident in building our strategic partnerships further and strengthening county-wide collaborations to deliver outcomes by putting people first, now and in the future.

### **Purpose**

The move to unitary presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design services that meet rising customer expectations in a sustainable manner, that are valued by residents, and a source of pride for employees.

Work undertaken by the Future Northants Programme approaching Vesting Day marks the start of the journey. While some transformation and 'quick wins' will be achieved through pre-Vesting Day work, the majority of transformational activity will be undertaken post-Vesting Day.

It is critical that this shift in focus is accompanied by a shift in mindset. The goals, challenges and environments needed to enable cohesion, integration and



improvement represent a different level of change. This transition will need to be recognised and managed appropriately.

This strategy sets out the framework for leaders and managers to spearhead change in a way that capitalises on the skills and expertise of the existing workforce and encourages them to contribute to building trusted, efficient and sustainable organisations.

It is acknowledged that due to resource constraints as a result of the Covid-19 response, and the timescales to deliver the work, it is not possible for every employee to be deeply involved in service design.

However, mechanisms such as the change champion network are being developed to facilitate two-way engagement. These mechanisms will support the efforts of line managers and subject matter experts who will naturally be responsible for engaging colleagues on these matters and ensuring their inclusion.

It is also recognised that work being undertaken by the Future Northants Programme in the run-up to Vesting Day is not the full extent of the work required.

Future transformational opportunities will exist, and it will be essential for the wider workforce of the two new authorities to be thoroughly involved far beyond Vesting Day.

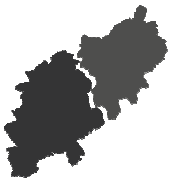
### **The impact of Covid-19**

The impact of the pandemic has been felt across all sections of society locally, nationally and internationally. Against a backdrop of uncertainty, local government continues to lead the frontline response to protect communities and will continue to do so.

These vital efforts have inevitably impacted capacity within the Future Northants Programme, including the heads of service and directors that are critical to the design and implementation phases.

A revised plan has been developed to deliver local government reform without interfering with the county's partnership response to the pandemic. The plan also reflects the government's decision to allow the formation of shadow authorities, each with a shadow executive consisting of current councillors, following the national postponement of local elections planned for May 2020.

The plan focusses primarily on ensuring that the two new authorities are safe and legal to operate on Vesting Day, with the majority of work to transform services being undertaken within those respective authorities from April 2021 onwards.



While the vision for the programme remains the same, the mission has been revised to reflect the updated plan.

<b>Our vision</b>	To create the two highest performing local authorities in the country.
<b>Our mission</b>	The Future Northants Programme team will put their heart and soul into serving the citizens of Northamptonshire by designing, planning and implementing services that are safe and legal on day one, with as much transformation as possible before Vesting Day. Transformation and aspiration will be at the forefront of our minds to enable our vision to be delivered by 2024.

### **Context**

When it comes to leading change in a complex environment, research suggests that it is neither practical nor efficient to adopt any one model or theory above another.

Instead, a blended approach combining appropriate techniques from a range of models tailored to local objectives and contexts are required to achieve desired outcomes.

The scale and pace of change that will be experienced in Northamptonshire is unique. Though other councils around the country are at various stages of journeys to unitary, the situation in Northamptonshire is both an exciting and complex mix of ingredients thanks to these local factors:

- establishment of a trust organisation to deliver children’s services
- integration of health and social care
- repatriation of LGSS services
- financial complexity of disaggregation of the county council combined with aggregation of borough and district councils
- additional challenge of recovery from the pandemic affecting all councils

It is recognised that each of the Future Northants work programmes all have varying degrees of change requirements so this strategy outlines a pragmatic approach to identifying the scope of the change, assessing the impact, and making outcome-based decisions to propose suitable management plans.

### **Guiding principles**

Creating a safe-to-fail environment which encourages innovation and develops a culture of continual learning and improvement is critical to establishing a

workforce that is productive, efficient and well-equipped to deliver the new organisations' visions.

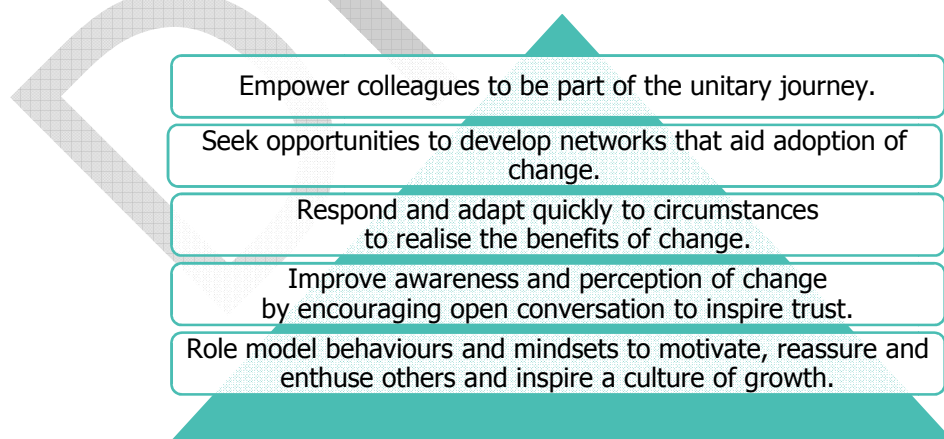
It is accepted that a thriving organisational culture requires significant internal investment, and any new cultural values that the organisations strive to embed will take time to mature.

While the seeds of change will be sown through the work initiated by the Future Northants Programme, this set of guiding principles will underpin the change approach to ensure that any plans are designed to enable people and places to flourish. These principles are:

- adapt and be flexible
- put people at the centre of decision-making (so that decision making is as close as possible to residents and customers by empowering our frontline colleagues)
- design around people not processes
- model the behaviours we want to see and encourage others to do so
- recognise the impact that individual's make and leverage accordingly

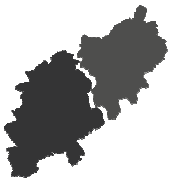
## Objectives

The overarching objective of this strategy is to help people deal with the impact of major change, on a large scale. The Future Northants Programme is an enabling mechanism to transition the eight existing authorities into the new councils of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire, and aspires to achieve these ambitions to support the design, creation and stabilisation of these authorities:



*Figure 1: strategic ambitions*

These ambitions reflect the guiding design principles for the North and West authorities detailed in the Prospectus for Change.



Formation of the shadow authorities will initiate the establishment of new cultural identities for the authorities of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire.

These cultural identities will go through several stages of development, reflective of the process set out to establish the organisations. Each stage of the process and many of the major milestones (establishment of the authorities, appointment of interim and permanent chief officers, elections) offers successive opportunities to underline the vision, mission and behavioural competencies.

While this should be acknowledged as a genuine opportunity for colleagues at all levels of the organisation to connect with their employer, it is not without significant challenge.

The merits of investing in measures to establish, grow and solidify a modern workplace culture will bring many rewards, not least uniting employees behind a common set of values. However, cultural change is not achieved quickly, especially when undertaken on such a large scale.

## **Approach to managing change**

### **Helping people to manage change**

A change manager is assigned to each programme of work to:

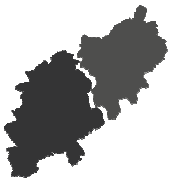
- assess readiness for change
- develop strategies to facilitate change
- coach leadership teams in preparing for, and implementing change

The programme has a change manager to support programme teams to:

- facilitate learning and development change activities across the programme team
- manage cross-cutting change initiatives to support the change management team
- sustain consistency in change activities into the business

The role of a change manager is to maintain a high-level overview of all areas of work in their programme and the programme overall. They support their project teams to identify and facilitate faster adoption of new ways of working to maximise the benefits associated with the change.

They also support senior leaders and line managers to design appropriate support mechanisms for helping their teams manage the effects of change.



Programme	Change manager
Adults'	
Children's	
Corporate	
Finance	
IT & Customer	
Place – North	
Place – West	
Future Northants Internal	

*Figure 2: Future Northants change managers*

The job of creating the two new councils for Northamptonshire must not be seen as the responsibility of the Future Northants Programme alone.

Colleagues in services, as subject matter experts, will be the driving force for stabilising the services provided by the two new councils post-Vesting Day.

To this end, line managers and service leaders, as well as the senior leadership team and elected members, must assume responsibility for leading their employees through this change.

In the same way that the Future Northants project managers can structure the work required to transition to unitary, the change managers can act as a trusted confidant and impartial adviser to service leaders, supporting them to make informed decisions about how best to engage, inspire and develop their teams to realise the full benefits of the opportunities that lie ahead.

### **A timeline for change management activity**

Changes are happening continuously and it is accepted that some people will be more adept at dealing with the impact than others, yet these transitions happening at a time when people are facing considerable personal upheaval due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The scale and pace of the changes associated with the move to unitary will increase significantly as Vesting Day approaches, and again once work to transform services begins.

For this reason, it is essential that change management activity is aligned to the outcomes associated with the four core phases of the Future Northants Programme: recalibrating, integrating, transforming, normalising.

Figure 3 highlights some core activities that the Future Northants change managers will lead to support work undertaken in their programme's work areas, and gives a broad expectation to the focus of change management activities until Vesting Day.

These activities are not intended to showcase any definitive timescales as it is recognised that the pace of each programme, and the projects it encompasses, will move at a different pace.

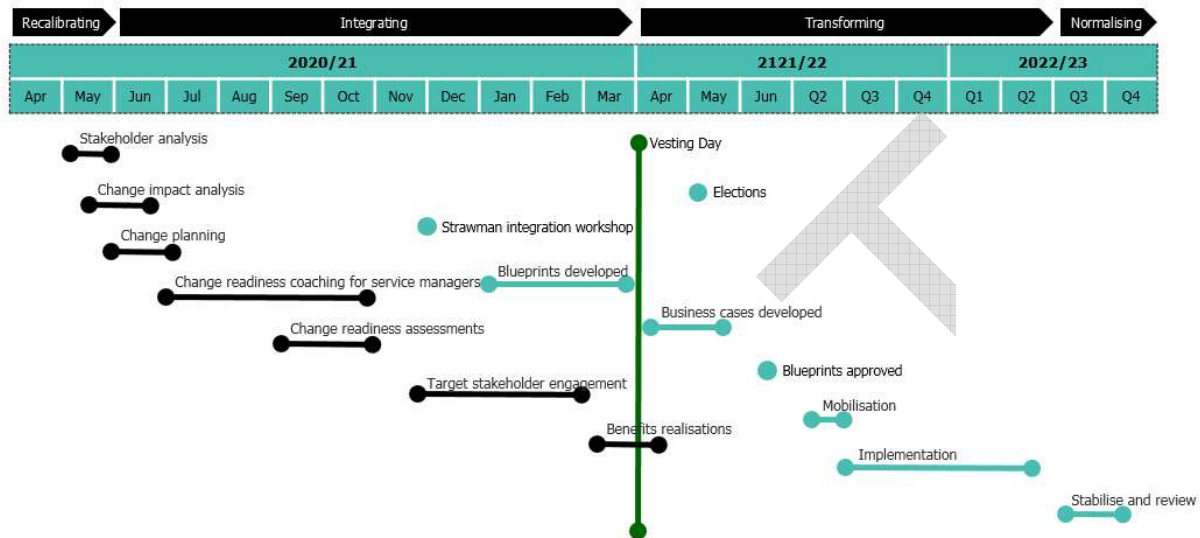


Figure 3: high level change management activities

### A common-sense approach to assessing change

While consistency remains an important factor in developing an approach to lead change across multiple organisations with contrasting cultural differences, so too is the ability to adapt and respond quickly to remain relevant to the target audience, and we recognise that one size does not fit all.

To this end, the change managers have developed a common sense approach to assessing the extent, complexity and requirements of the change, using knowledge, experience and providing a consistent methodology to gather intelligence.

Not only should this reassure stakeholders that a standard approach is being used to assess requirements and readiness, but it also ensures continuity across the programmes should the need for additional change manager support in specific areas be identified.

Figure 4 articulates the approach that a change manager follows to assess readiness for change.



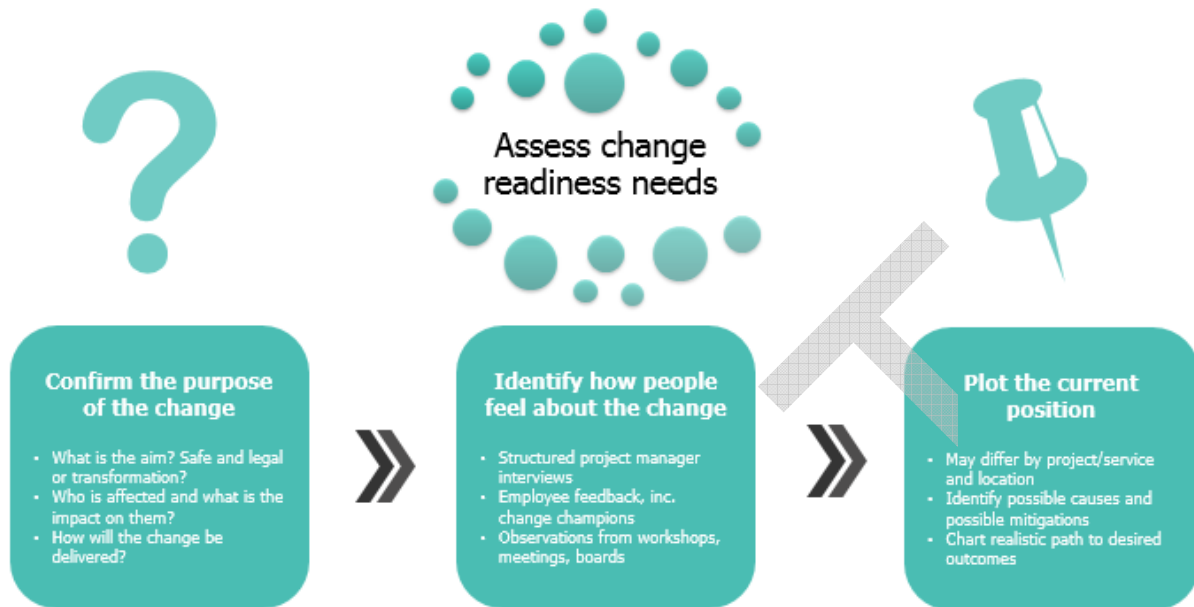


Figure 4: approach to assessing change

The approach allows the change manager flexibility in determining which approaches (see Figure 5 for examples) are most appropriate for the circumstances. It is important that the change manager is not restricted in their ability to create a blended approach that reflects the nature of the change.

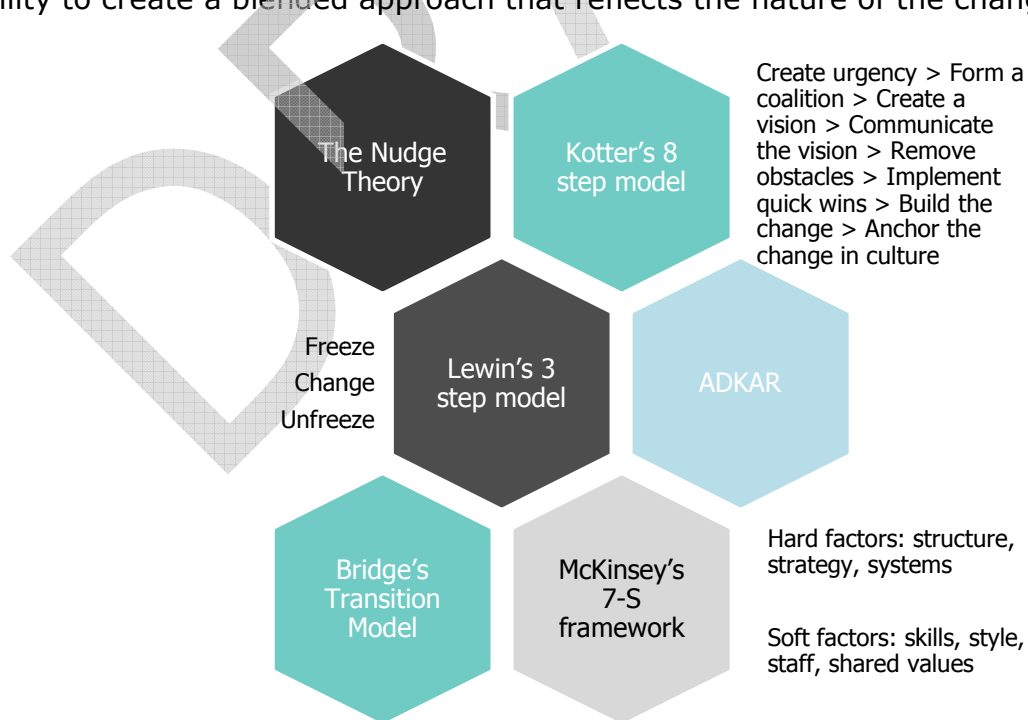


Figure 5: examples of available models

Once a suitable method has been determined, either a detailed change plan is created or a number of change management actions will be built into existing project plans depending on the scale and complexity of the identified change.

### **A toolkit for managing change**

The approach provides the change manager with an array of tried and tested tools and techniques to facilitate change.

Centred on a guiding coalition of core stakeholders and best practice methodologies are the various mechanisms that a change manager will consider deploying to support change management activities.

These may be used independently or as part of a package and may be facilitated by a change manager, member of the programme team or a service leader. Whatever mechanism is proposed and deployed, it will be underpinned by local insight.

The tools and techniques detailed in Figure 6 should not be considered a definitive list.

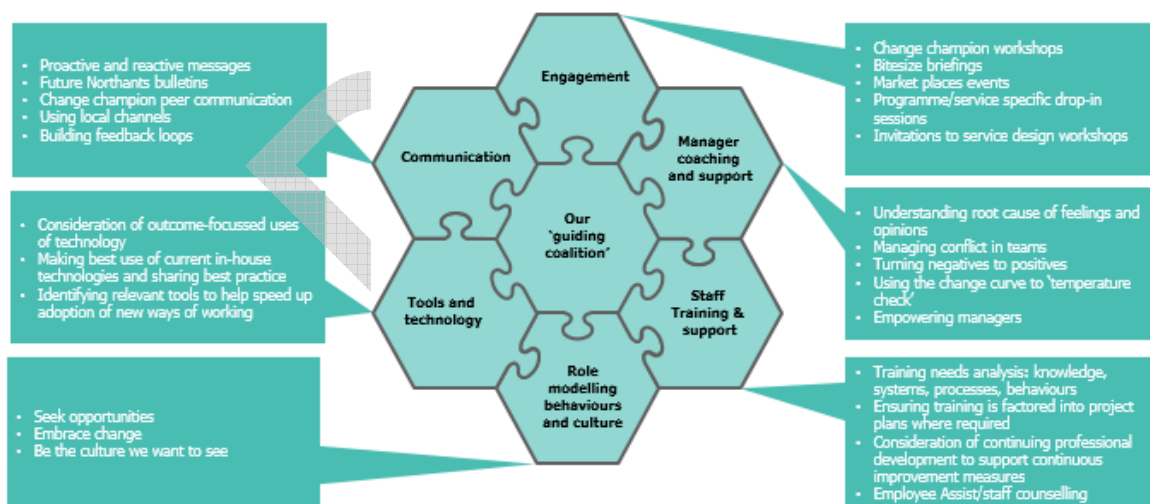


Figure 6: example of tools and techniques for enabling change

### **Outcomes of effective change management**

Much like the activities detailed in Figure 3, the anticipated outcomes will vary according to the stage of the programme.

While the outcomes associated with specific activities will be detailed in individual change working plans, the outcomes detailed in Figure 7 give a high-level overview of the expectations of combined change management activities during the core phases of programme delivery.

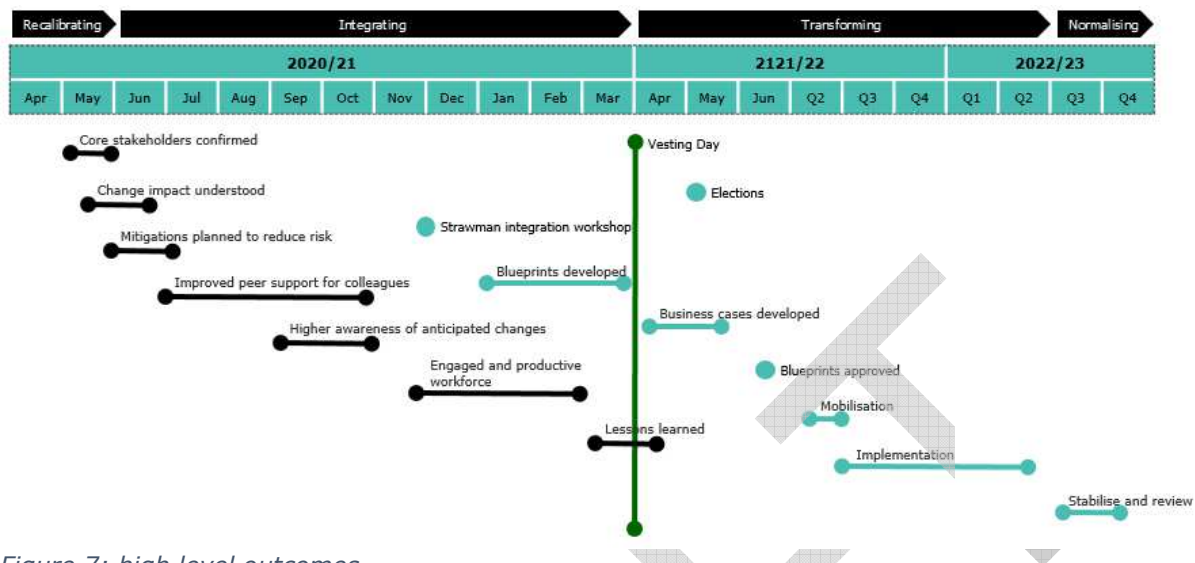


Figure 7: high level outcomes

## Considerations

### Linked documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the Prospectus for Change - the Next Chapter, and the Future Northants Communications & Engagement Strategy (internal and external).

### Governance

This strategy is managed by the Future Northants change managers under the strategic guidance of the Future Northants Programme Director and collective ownership by all members of the programme team.

The focus and scope of programme-specific change activities will be presented to individual programme boards by each change manager, with change managers agreeing appropriate reporting mechanisms with the head of programme and their boards.

## **Risks and mitigations**

The primary risk to achieving the ambitions of this strategy, and the objectives detailed in individual change management plans, revolves around people and their acceptance of what the impacts of the change will bring and what it means to them.

It is broadly recognised that with any change concept, people will fall into three categories. Those who will be:

- unsupportive of the change no matter what
- supportive providing they have the right level of support to see the benefits associated with the change
- supportive of the change no matter what

Assessment of the current position against desired position allows a detailed plan to be created, which will identify any specific risks associated with that change and any mitigating actions to be put in place.

The ultimate risk is that the objectives detailed in this strategy fail to be achieved, which is why this strategy advocates the use of a consistent but agile framework for managing change which can be adapted quickly to respond to changing circumstances or shifts in opinion.

## **Resistance**

People may resist change for a variety of reasons, which may include fear of the unknown, trust in the rationale for change or those responsible for implementing it, or a misunderstanding of the impact.

Common factors such as fatigue from sustained organisational redesign, poor leadership and communication approaching and during a change, and faith in the competency of those in a position of leadership and/or trust may also cause people to resist.

With support from change champions, change managers will identify the relevant factors which will inform the strategies developed to manage the change.

## **Timelines**

The timeline for local government reorganisation in Northamptonshire presents a risk. Many of the long-term benefits of effective change management will only be, at best, partially realised ahead of Vesting Day.

The transformation phase that will begin after Vesting Day relies entirely on a motivated and productive workforce that has a collective understanding and commitment to the organisation's vision.

Depending on the scale of change experience in a particular area, it is entirely possible that change fatigue could set in. For the organisations to remain on course to achieve their ambitions, employees will need to maintain pace, while in many cases, shifting their focus from the short and medium term to the long.

This strategy aims to build solid foundations for realising long term benefits over a sustained period of operation post-Vesting Day, putting each council on a sure footing to build effective change practices into their operating processes.

### **Leadership**

A person's perception of a situation is heavily influenced by those around them, and the level of trust they place in those individuals.

As the design of future services becomes clear and to avoid a risk, service leaders will need to be fully engaged to appreciate the value of change management leading to teams feeling less isolated.

The feelings associated with the changes likely to be experienced pre- and post-Vesting Day are likely to be different, requiring service leaders to use different tactics with a different mindset to secure continued engagement.

Part of the change manager's role is to coach service leaders on change management, whether this is the practical application of techniques or facilitating workforce engagement.

Naturally, all members of the Future Northants Programme will be in a position to lead and influence change, especially pre-Vesting Day. It is vital that the team role models the competencies and attitude needed to bring about successful changes.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The success of this strategy will be measured by the realisation of the benefits associated with the change.

Benefits will be detailed in the relevant project or change plans which will be subject to the reporting mechanisms of programme implementation boards.

In addition, the Change Management Strategy underpinning the implementation plan will set out the actions, outputs and outcomes pre-Vesting Day, and be



developed to include the same level of detail post-Vesting Day at an appropriate point in the future.

The plan will be a 'living document' reflecting the collective efforts of the change managers.

- ENDS -

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