



Meeting: Council
Date: Thursday 26th October 2023
Time: 6:00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street, Corby NN17 1QG

The meeting will be available for the public to view live at our Democratic Services' YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@NNCDemServices>

Council Membership:

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair), Councillor Lora Lawman (Vice-Chair), Councillor Jean Addison, Councillor Tim Allebone, Councillor Valerie Anslow, Councillor Ross Armour, Councillor Charlie Best, Councillor Paul Bell, Councillor Matt Binley, Councillor Jennie Bone, Councillor David Brackenbury, Councillor Wendy Brackenbury, Councillor Cedwien Brown, Councillor Scott Brown, Councillor Leanne Buckingham, Councillor Lyn Buckingham, Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Councillor Jon-Paul Carr, Councillor Robin Carter, Cllr Melanie Coleman, Councillor William Colquhoun, Councillor John Currall, Councillor Alison Dalziel, Councillor Mark Dearing, Councillor Dez Dell, Councillor Scott Edwards, Councillor Jonathan Ekins, Councillor Emily Fedorowycz, Councillor Martin Griffiths, Councillor Jim Hakewill, Councillor Clive Hallam, Councillor Ken Harrington, Councillor Helen Harrison, Councillor Kirk Harrison, Councillor Larry Henson, Councillor Helen Howell, Councillor David Howes, Councillor Philip Irwin, Councillor Bert Jackson, Councillor Ian Jelley, Councillor Matt Keane, Councillor King Lawal, Councillor Graham Lawman, Councillor Anne Lee, Councillor Richard Levell, Councillor Paul Marks, Councillor Dorothy Maxwell, Councillor Peter McEwan, Councillor John McGhee, Councillor Zoe McGhee, Councillor Andy Mercer, Councillor Gill Mercer, Councillor Macaulay Nichol, Councillor Steven North, Councillor Jan O'Hara, Councillor Dr Anup Pandey, Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood, Councillor Mark Pengelly, Councillor Harriet Pentland, Councillor Roger Powell, Councillor Elliot Keith Prentice, Councillor Simon Rielly, Councillor Russell Roberts, Councillor Mark Rowley, Councillor Geoff Shacklock, Councillor David Sims, Councillor Jason Smithers, Councillor Chris Smith-Haynes, Councillor Joseph John Smyth, Councillor Mike Tebbutt, Councillor Sarah Tubbs, Councillor Michael Tye, Councillor Malcolm Ward, Councillor Malcolm Waters, Councillor Kevin Watt, Councillor Keli Watts, Councillor Andrew Weatherill and Councillor Lee Wilkes.


Members of The Council are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed on the agenda.

Agenda

Item	Subject	Page no.
01	<p>Apologies</p> <p>To receive any apologies for absence.</p>	
02	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 31st August 2023</p> <p>The minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 31st August 2023 to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	9 - 24
03	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Members to declare any interest as appropriate in respect of items to be considered at the meeting.</p>	
04	<p>Chair's Announcements</p> <p>To receive any announcements from the Chair.</p>	
05	<p>Leader's Announcements</p> <p>To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.</p>	
06	<p>Public Participation</p> <p>(i) Public Statements</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To consider public statements received in accordance with public meeting procedure rule 15.</p> <p>(ii) Public Questions</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To consider public questions received in accordance with public meeting procedure rule 16.</p> <p>(iii) Petitions</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">To receive petitions qualifying for full Council in accordance with the council's petition scheme.</p>	
07	<p>Executive Presentations</p> <p>To receive any presentations from the Executive in accordance with meeting procedure rule 3.1 (vi).</p>	

Items requiring a decision		
08	<p>Motion Presented to Council on 31 August 2023 - Conclusion of Debate</p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Valerie Anslow and seconded by Cllr Lyn Buckingham-</p> <p><i>“It is clear that the country as a whole is in the midst of a real and continuing housing crisis, we acknowledge the enormous challenge and pressure faced by our members of Staff on homeless presentations in recent years.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst we acknowledge the pressures, we also feel much more should be being done by this council to put housing and homelessness on top of the agenda.</i></p> <p><i>There are blockages and delays in our house building/development programmes which although could be perceived as down to external forces, also see us prepared to be selling off surplus land instead of finding constructive ways to build.</i></p> <p><i>We have seen over the past two years, massive delays in processing housing applications, far in excess of the time needed to prevent homelessness effectively, which although reported that the backlog being cleared, the backlog is again growing to an unacceptable over three months wait for applications being processed.</i></p> <p><i>We have seen homeless families be moved away from support and education networks because of lack of temporary accommodation, bringing disruption and chaos for families already facing hardship. Despite this Council putting forward resources to assist with rough sleeping programmes, (building on the successes of finding bed spaces during the height of the Covid pandemic) it seems that very little progress is being made in this area also partnering with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise.</i></p> <p><i>This motion asks that North Northamptonshire Council develop its vision and strategy for the building and development of social housing and prevention of homelessness including, if appropriate, a review of the allocations strategy to support programmes that prioritise our duty under the armed forces covenant, the growing need for homeless provision for single women and young care leavers, in North Northamptonshire. Acting quickly and decisively ensures that right to buy receipts are not swallowed by raising build costs and that North Northamptonshire Council also commit further investment in housing.”</i></p>	-
09	<p>Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Strategy Annual Report 2022/23</p> <p>To note the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022/23.</p>	25 - 61

10	<p>Revenue Budget Update 2023/24</p> <p>To seek council approval for the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs of the Development and Regulatory Services Case Management Systems and the inclusion of ongoing annual revenue savings of the system into the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).</p>	63 - 66
11	<p>Motions on Notice</p> <p>To consider motions received in accordance with Meeting Procedure Rule 18 as follows: -</p> <p><u>Motion 2 (From 31st August 2023)</u></p> <p>To be proposed by Cllr Anne Lee and seconded by Cllr Keli Watts:-</p> <p><i>“The Alfred East Art Gallery in Kettering has now been closed for two years for works to improve and maximise its potential. North Northants Council undertakes to keep councillors informed of progress made on repairing the roof of the building, and to request that the Executive progress the project with a view to reopen the Art Gallery by the summer of 2024 at the latest.”</i></p> <p><u>Motion 3 (From 31st August 2023)</u></p> <p>To be proposed by Cllr Jim Hakewill and seconded by Cllr Charlie Best:-</p> <p><i>“This council treasures the Library Service and the many events and personal well-being experiences provided by our libraries, whether in the Statutory or Community Managed Library (CML) family. Many of the assets of our libraries have been, and are today, shared across the entire County.</i></p> <p><i>Before any proposals for change in the way in which our libraries are funded, managed, and operated there must be a clear, compelling, financially sound, and customer-service-oriented business case, subjected to wide public consultation and full scrutiny by North Northamptonshire (and ideally, jointly, with West Northamptonshire) Councillor colleagues.</i></p> <p><i>This will ensure that everyone involved in running our libraries and everyone who benefits from the vast array of books and events will be able to confidently continue to enjoy the same services when visiting their local library in the future.”</i></p> <p><u>Motion 4 (From 31st August 2023)</u></p> <p>To be proposed by Cllr Emily Fedorowycz and seconded by Cllr Harriet Pentland:-</p> <p><i>“The River Nene is one of NNC’s most important assets in terms of tourism and ecology and, as such, needs proper guardianship.</i></p>	

	<p><i>The Environment Agency has primary responsibility for the River Nene. NNC is one of many that has riparian responsibilities and also an important role in flood management.</i></p> <p><i>This Council will:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ask the Environment Agency (EA) to provide the current levels of pollution in the Nene River and North Northants waterways;</i> • <i>Continue to engage with the EA and Ofwat to understand what work is being undertaken in North Northamptonshire to protect waterways from pollution and consider options for ensuring the health of our waterways including, but not limited to, investigating Bathing Water Status for key leisure areas;</i> • <i>Continue to engage with the EA and Ofwat on the processes for feeding in reports of pollution incidents.”</i> 	
12	<p>Councillor Questions</p> <p>To receive questions from members (including those adjourned from 31st August 2023) in accordance with meeting procedure rule 17.</p>	
Urgent Items		
	<p>To consider any items of business of which notice has been given to the Proper Officer and the Chair considers to be urgent, pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972.</p>	
13	Close of Meeting	
	<p>Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer North Northamptonshire Council</p>  <p>Proper Officer Wednesday 18th October 2023</p>	

This agenda has been published by Ben Smith.

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Public Participation

The Council has approved procedures for you to present petitions or request to address meetings of the Council

ITEM	NARRATIVE	DEADLINE												
Members of the Public Questions	Questions may be submitted by members of the Public to meetings of the committee. The question must be in writing and submitted 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. No debate on questions or answers. A period of 15 minutes (Chair's Discretion) is allocated for Public Questions.	5:00 pm on Monday 23 rd 2023												
Members of the Public Agenda Statements	Members of the Public may make statements at meetings in relation to reports on the agenda. A request to address the committee must be received 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. The member of the Public has a maximum of 3 minutes to address the committee. A written copy of the statement must be submitted by the deadline indicated.	5:00 pm on Monday 23 rd 2023												
Members of the Public Petitions	Anyone who lives, works or studies in North Northamptonshire may submit a petition to the Council. Depending on the size of your petition it will be responded to as follows: - <table border="1" data-bbox="325 757 1094 1379"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Signatory Threshold</th> <th>Description</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Petition which triggers a debate</td> <td>1,500 +</td> <td>Any petition with 1,500 or more signatures will trigger a debate at a Full Authority meeting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Petition which calls an officer to account</td> <td>750 – 1,499</td> <td>Any petition with 750 – 1,499 signatures will summon a senior officer of the Authority to give evidence at a public Authority meeting.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Standard Petition</td> <td>5 – 749</td> <td>Any petition with 5 – 749 signatures will be referred to a senior officer of the Authority to provide a response.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Signatory Threshold	Description	Petition which triggers a debate	1,500 +	Any petition with 1,500 or more signatures will trigger a debate at a Full Authority meeting.	Petition which calls an officer to account	750 – 1,499	Any petition with 750 – 1,499 signatures will summon a senior officer of the Authority to give evidence at a public Authority meeting.	Standard Petition	5 – 749	Any petition with 5 – 749 signatures will be referred to a senior officer of the Authority to provide a response.	
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These procedures are included within the Council's Constitution. Please contact democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk for more information.

Members' Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded of their duty to ensure they abide by the approved Member Code of Conduct whilst undertaking their role as a Councillor. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, you must declare the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** other Registerable Interests, you must declare the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but must not take part in any vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** your own financial interest (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest) or **relates to** a financial interest of a relative, friend or close associate, you must disclose the interest and not vote on the matter unless granted a dispensation. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.

Members are reminded that they should continue to adhere to the Council's approved rules and protocols during the conduct of meetings. These are contained in the Council's approved Constitution.

If Members have any queries as to whether a Declaration of Interest should be made please contact the Monitoring Officer at – monitoringofficer@northnorthants.gov.uk

Press & Media Enquiries

Any press or media enquiries should be directed through Council's Communications Team to communications@northnorthants.gov.uk

Public Access and Enquiries

The public are welcome to attend the Council's meetings in person using the Council's public gallery. Public enquiries regarding the Council's meetings can be made to democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk

Webcasting

Meetings of the Council will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be filmed, except where there are confidential or exempt items. A copy will be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy.

If you make a representation to the meeting, unless you have specifically asked not to appear on the webcast, you are taking positive action to confirm that you consent to being filmed. You have been made aware of the broadcast and entering the Council Chamber you are consenting to be filmed by North Northamptonshire Council and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting.

If you do not wish to have your image captured you should sit in the public gallery area that overlooks the Chamber.

The Council is obliged by law to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, blog or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. The Council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

The Council intends to webcast all of its public meetings held at the Corby Cube, but if it is unable to do so, for the avoidance of doubt, the meeting will continue as scheduled and decisions and minutes made available on the Council's website in the normal manner.

If you have any queries regarding webcasting or the recording of meetings by the public, please contact democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk



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Agenda Item 2



Minutes of a meeting of the Council

Held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 31st August, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Barbara Jenney (Chair)	Councillor Lora Lawman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Jean Addison	Councillor Ian Jelley
Councillor Valerie Anslow	Councillor Matt Keane
Councillor Ross Armour	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Paul Bell	Councillor Anne Lee
Councillor Charlie Best	Councillor Paul Marks
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Dorothy Maxwell
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Peter McEwan
Councillor Wendy Brackenbury	Councillor John McGhee
Councillor Scott Brown	Councillor Zoe McGhee
Councillor Cedwien Brown	Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Leanne Buckingham	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor Lyn Buckingham	Councillor Macaulay Nichol
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Jan O'Hara
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr	Councillor Dr Anup Pandey
Councillor Robin Carter	Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood
Councillor Melanie Coleman	Councillor Mark Pengelly
Councillor William Colquhoun	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Roger Powell
Councillor Dez Dell	Councillor Elliot Prentice
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Simon Rielly
Councillor Jonathan Ekins	Councillor Russell Roberts
Councillor Emily Fedorowycz	Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Jim Hakewill	Councillor Jason Smithers
Councillor Clive Hallam	Councillor Joseph John Smyth
Councillor Ken Harrington	Councillor Mike Tebbutt
Councillor Helen Harrison	Councillor Michael Tye
Councillor Kirk Harrison	Councillor Malcolm Ward
Councillor Larry Henson	Councillor Malcolm Waters
Councillor David Howes	Councillor Andrew Weatherill
Councillor Philip Irwin	Councillor Kevin Watt
Councillor Bert Jackson	

Officers

George Candler (Chief Executive (Interim)), Adele Wylie (Executive Director of Customer and Governance and Monitoring Officer/Deputy Chief Executive (Interim)), and Ben Smith (Head of Democratic Services).

Also in attendance

Ciaran McLaughlin (Director of Grant Thornton), Susan Hamilton (Interim Director of Public Health)

250 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tim Allebone, Jennie Bone, Mark Dearing, Helen Howell, King Lawal, Richard Levell, Steven North, Geoff Shacklock, David Sims, Chris Smith-Haynes, Sarah Tubbs, Keli Watts and Lee Wilkes.

251 Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to an amendment to minute 247, as follows:-

That the third paragraph relating to Motion 2 – Kettering Leisure Village be amended as follows (added words are in bold for reference only):-

‘An amendment to the motion was proposed by Cllr Helen Howell and seconded by Cllr Anup Pandey to delete the final sentence (**which had stated ‘A viable business case needs to be urgently created and a budget agreed, prior to the advised closure date of the 3rd July 2023.**) in its entirety and replace it as follows:-‘

252 Declarations of interest.

The Chair asked those members who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

The following interests were declared:-

Name of Councillor	Minute Number	Interest	Reason for Declaration
Cllr Lyn Buckingham	262 Motion 4 (River Nene)	Personal Interest	As a campaigner for waterways over a number of years
Cllr Dez Dell	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Disclosable Interest	As a member of the Committee for the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum, so undertook to leave the room at the commencement of the debate, and to not take part in either the debate or vote.
Cllr Paul Marks	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Personal Interest	As a member of the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum
Cllr Anne Lee	262 Motion 2 (Alfred East Art Gallery)	Personal Interest	As a former committee member of the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum

253 Chair's Announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:-

Civic Duties

It had been a very busy few weeks on civic duty with the Chair and Vice Chair having the pleasure of being out and about in the area, with a full diary in the coming weeks as well.

The Chair and Vice Chair were looking forward to being part of some very enjoyable and interesting events within North Northamptonshire.

254 Leader's Announcements

The Leader made the following announcements:-

Derek Lawson MBE

The Leader was very saddened to learn of the death of Derek Lawson MBE, the past mayor and longest serving member of Higham Ferrers Town Council.

He had enjoyed a long career in local government, which had included election to the Higham Ferrers Borough Council in 1964. He had served on the successor Town Council for 57 years and amassed a wealth of knowledge and experience.

He was the mayor of Higham Ferrers on three separate occasions, 1966-67, 1977-78 and 1999 to 2000. He was the Leader of the Council for five years.

Derek was also a member of East Northamptonshire District Council for 20 years, where he was Chairman in 1987-88, and Northamptonshire County Council for 40 years where he was also the chairman in 2007-08.

He was also Vice-Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel which was part of the Northamptonshire Police Authority before the position of Police and Crime Commissioner was created.

A long list of further achievements included being chairman of the Board of Governors at both The Ferrers School and the Henry Chichele School in Higham Ferrers. He was also the Chairman of the Towards a Safer Higham Panel and was involved in the campaign for Yes to Rushden Lakes and Chowns Mill Roundabout. Derek was also heavily involved in the preparation of the Higham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan.

For his years of commitment to local government, Derek was awarded an MBE in 2017 in recognition of his years of service and dedication to the town. Derek was also presented with an honorary Freeman of Higham Ferrers in 2022.

In noting his impact on the Town Council and the local government landscape could not be understated, the Leader requested that a one-minute silence be observed to mark the passing of Derek Lawson, MBE.

[Councillors, Officers and members of the public paid their respects in silent tribute]

Women's England Football Team

The Leader wished to acknowledge the success of the women's England football team in reaching the final of the European Championships. He hoped their performances would inspire women and girls to play football up and down the country, noting that there had been a big increase in women playing locally.

255 Public Participation

The following members of the public made statements to Council:-

- i) Chris Stanbra – in support of the preparation of a sound business case before any disaggregation changes were made to the way in which libraries were run.
- ii) Clerk Mitchell – in support of the Alfred East Art Gallery project being progressed with a view to reopening the Art Gallery by the summer of 2024.

A copy of the public statements submitted to Council are filed with these minutes, as Appendix A.

256 Executive Presentations

The Leader confirmed that there were no Executive presentations to be made on this occasion.

257 Auditors' Annual Report 2021/22

Consideration was given by Council to the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 for North Northamptonshire Council which had been produced by the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton, and following consideration by the Audit & Governance Committee on 14th August 2023. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 8'.

Councillor Andrew Weatherill moved and Councillor Jonathan Ekins seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

Ciaran McLaughlin, a director of Grant Thornton, then presented the report to Council and answered a number of questions from councillors.

During questioning and subsequent debate, it was principally noted that the report was a final interim report, which would remain interim until the completion of the Council's financial statements' audit for 2021/22.

Overall, the Council was seen as being in a positive position given that the audit covered the first year of operation as a new authority. The three amber ratings around the main headings of financial sustainability, governance arrangements and use of resources was seen as in line with the majority of authorities across the country and compared favourably with any of the new authorities that had been created over the last two years.

Whilst a number of improvement recommendations were contained in the report, it was emphasised that these were centred around improving the arrangements of the authority, rather than identifying any significant weaknesses.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted upon, with 58 councillors in favour, 2 against, and 4 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

That Council notes the Auditors Annual Report 2021/22 at Appendix A to the report.

Reasons for Decision:

To note the work of Council and the Audit & Governance Committee in exercising its duties and responsibilities to consider reports of the external auditor.

Other Options Considered:

No alternative options considered. It is important for the authority to consider its governance and assurance arrangements and to respond to recommended improvements to its practice.

[Councillor Andrew Weatherill left the meeting at this point and did not return.]
[Councillor Clive Hallam entered the meeting at this point.]

258 Approval of Pay Structure and Terms and Conditions

Consideration was given by Council to a report seeking approval of the pay structure and terms and conditions of employment for adoption by North Northamptonshire Council. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked 'Agenda Item 9'.

Councillor Jason Smithers moved and Councillor Lora lawman seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During debate of the motion it was noted that whilst the Council workforce had been on interim pay terms and conditions since April 2021, the national pay award had been paid to all employees during 2021-22 and 2022/23, as well as pay increments, regardless of whether it was a contractual entitlement. £7.4m had also been set aside for the 2023/24 pay award and for implementing the pay and grading proposals.

It was further noted that the approval of the Council's pay and grading arrangements would be an important step in the authority becoming an employer of choice, with councillors emphasising the need to attract and retain the best talent.

Councillors also emphasised how a strong and stable workforce was fundamental to the successful achievement of the Council's vision and priorities.

At the end of the debate a recorded vote was requested and accepted, which was as follows:-

In favour (57)

Cllrs Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Paul Bell, Matt Binley, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Scott Brown, Lyn Buckingham, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Melanie Coleman, John Currall, Dez Dell, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, Jim Hakewill, Clive Hallam, Ken Harrington, David Howes, Barbara Jenney, Matt Keane, Philip Irwin, Bert Jackson, Ian Jelley, Kirk Harrison, Helen Harrison, Larry Henson, David Howes, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Anne Lee, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Peter McEwan, John McGhee, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Jan O'Hara, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Mark Pengelly, Harriet Pentland, Roger Powell, Elliot Prentice, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Jason Smithers, Joseph Smyth, Mike Tebbutt, Michael Tye, Malcolm Ward, Kevin Watt and Keli Watts,

Against (1)

Cllr William Colquhoun

Abstentions (3)

Jean Addison, Emily Fedorowycz and Zoe McGhee

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Pay Structure at Appendix B to the report;
- b) That approval be given to the adoption of North Northamptonshire Councils Terms and Conditions at Appendix C to the report.

Reasons for Decisions:

- *Implementing a new pay structure and terms and conditions for North Northamptonshire Council is an important decision that will help to further, shape our workforce now and in the future.*
- *Decisions relating to new pay and grading arrangements have significant financial implications for the council and whilst these have been built into the Medium-Term Financial Plan, approving the adoption of these proposals is a decision for Council, in accordance with the Constitution.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *Continuing to employ people on 'interim' terms and conditions.*
- *Starting the pay structure at a lower pay point and decreasing the pay differential between pay bands.*

259 Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023/24

Consideration was given by Council to a report which set out the contents of the Youth Justice Plan for the Northamptonshire Youth Justice Service, for 2023/24. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked 'Agenda Item 10'.

Councillor Scott Edwards moved and Councillor Macaulay Nichol seconded the motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During debate it was noted that there was a lot of positive feedback on the work that the Youth Justice team had been undertaking, especially in relation to tackling repeat offending. The work being undertaken by local area partnership detailed in the Plan was also seen as positive.

It was emphasised that developing the prevention and diversion services for young people through early help was of vital importance in order that they were not criminalised.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 60 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the content of the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24 at Appendix A to the report;
- b) That the Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service's priorities for 2023/24 be noted, as set out in the plan.

Reasons for Decisions:

- *To accord with the constitution of the Council where the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Policy Framework that is decided by Full Council.*
- *To provide strategic direction to the Youth Offending Service that is delivered by Northamptonshire Children's Trust.*

Alternative Options Considered:

None - As well as being a requirement of statute, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required.

260 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022/23

Consideration was given by Council to the Director of Public Health's statutory Annual Report for 2022/23. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 11'.

Councillor Helen Harrison introduced Susan Hamilton, the interim Director of Public Health to present her annual report, who subsequently answered questions on a range of topics.

Councillor Helen Harrison then moved and Councillor Wendy Brackenbury seconded a motion to move the recommendations in the report.

During questioning and subsequent debate, the public health team was praised for the work it undertook, including its ambitions, vision and priorities for improving public health across North Northamptonshire.

Susan Hamilton was also thanked personally for her work in steering the public health team as interim director.

Particular concerns raised were the current waiting lists for doctors and dentists in North Northamptonshire. Although it was noted that GP appointments and dentistry were commissioned and dealt with by the Integrated Care Board, rather than Public Health or within the council's other service areas, it was considered the Council should seek to exert its influence where possible.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Management Board would be meeting shortly to decide on priorities for the scrutiny workplan over the coming months, which was expected to include in its topics, the scrutiny of GPs and dentistry.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 57 in favour, 0 against and 5 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

That the contents of the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022- 2023 and the recommendations made within it, attached as Appendix A to the report, be noted.

Reason for Recommendations –

- *To accord with legislation or the policy of the council. This is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role.*

Alternative Options Considered:-

- *None as this is a statutory requirement of the Director of Public Health role. The North Northamptonshire Public Health team was formed during the period covered by this report. Establishing the priorities for improving public health in North Northamptonshire was a key focus of 2022-23 and provides the focus of this report.*

261 Capital Programme and Revenue Budget Update 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report requesting approval for a virement of a capital scheme in excess of £0.5m, new borrowing in relation to a capital scheme, and the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs. A copy of the report is filed with the agenda, marked as 'Agenda Item 12'.

During debate it was noted that the new equipment in relation grounds maintenance would be more environmentally friendly than the old equipment, with electric vehicles and equipment to be used where possible. It was also noted that the new Education Case Management System would assist parents and guardians in navigating their way through the process of seeking school places for their children.

Following conclusion of the debate, the motion was voted on, with 61 in favour, 0 against and 0 abstaining.

The motion was **approved**.

Resolved:-

- a) That approval be given to the funding for the following changes to the capital programme:
- i) Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £3.298m for phase 2 of the Refugee Resettlement Scheme funded through £1.298m from the Local Authority Housing Grant and a virement of £2m from the Housing and Homelessness prevention capital programme to the Resettlement capital programme to meet the match funding requirement for the grant.
 - ii) Environmental Services ground maintenance equipment – approve a budget in 2023/24 of £445k for the replacement of grounds maintenance equipment funding from borrowing.
- b) Approval be given to the funding for the following changes to the revenue budget:
- i) Education Case Management System (ECMS) – approve a revenue budget of £1.362m in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new ECMS funded through use of the Transformation Reserve, and approve the inclusion of ongoing revenue costs of £131k in 2024/25 and £142.5k in 2025/26 into the MTFP.

Reasons for Recommendations:

These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as:

- i) To support the housing provision in North Northamptonshire;*
- ii) To support the achievement of corporate plan objectives; and*
- iii) To improve service provision in relation to children, young people, parents and carers*

Alternative Options Considered:

- i) Alternative options in relation to the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme can be summarised as follows:-*
 - Do nothing – if the Council does not participate in this programme, it will not receive the funding allocation and the challenge of finding onward settled accommodation for refugees will remain;*
 - Commit to delivering a smaller number of homes – whilst this may be easier to achieve, the government grant allocation will reduce proportionately and less homes will be acquired into our temporary accommodation stock. Ultimately fewer additional homes will be available to the Council to use as affordable housing for our residents in the longer term.*

- ii) *Alternative options in relation to Environmental Services Grounds Maintenance Equipment can be summarised as follows:-*
- *External grants were explored but are not available for plant equipment. The option of leasing new equipment was considered, but not deemed to represent value for money and therefore borrowing is the most cost-effective funding source. The other alternative option would be to not approve this scheme. However, this would have an adverse impact on meeting service needs and the achievement of NNC's corporate objectives.*
- iii) *Alternative options considered for the ECMS can be summarised as follows:-*
- *Do nothing;*
 - *Apply for a variation with the current supplier, subject to this option being available under the current contract and such modification satisfying the Public Contracts Regulations 2015; Reprocure the current system through a direct award; or Build a bespoke system for the Education Service. More detail in relation to alternative options considered by the Executive in respect of the three schemes are set out in the reports presented on 12th July and 17th August 2023, as referenced in Section 8 of this report.*

262 Guillotine Motion

Councillor Jason Smithers, in noting the substantive business of the meeting had now been completed, moved that the guillotine not be extended beyond the three hour time limit for the meeting. Councillor Andy Mercer seconded the motion.

In accordance with meeting procedure rules, the motion was not debated and was immediately put to the vote.

A recorded vote was requested and accepted, which was as follows:-

In favour (37)

Cllrs Paul Bell, Matt Binley, David Brackenbury, Wendy Brackenbury, Cedwien Brown, Lloyd Bunday, Jon-Paul Carr, Robin Carter, Melanie Coleman, John Currall, Scott Edwards, Jonathan Ekins, David Howes, Bert Jackson, Kirk Harrison, Helen Harrison, Philip Irwin, Ian Jelley, Clive Hallam, Graham Lawman, Lora Lawman, Dorothy Maxwell, Paul Marks, Andy Mercer, Gill Mercer, Macaulay Nichol, Anup Pandey, Tom Partridge-Underwood, Harriet Pentland, Roger Powell, Russell Roberts, Mark Rowley, Jason Smithers, Joseph Smyth, Mike Tebbutt, Malcolm Ward, and Malcom Waters.

Against (21)

Cllrs Jean Addison, Valerie Anslow, Ross Armour, Charlie Best, Scott Brown, Lyn Buckingham, Leanne Buckingham, William Colquhoun, Dez Dell, Emily Fedorowycz, Jim Hakewill, Matt Keane, Anne Lee, Peter McEwan, John McGhee, Zoe McGhee, Mark Pengelly, Elliot Prentice, Simon Rielly, Kevin Watt, Keli Watts,

Abstentions (1)

Cllrs Barbara Jenney,

Resolved:-

That in accordance with meeting procedure rule 10, the meeting conclude at 9.00pm, three hours after its commencement, the substantive business of the meeting having been concluded.

263 Motions on Notice

Motion 1 – Housing and Homelessness

Councillor Valerie Anslow moved and Councillor Lyn Buckingham seconded the motion as set out on the agenda for the meeting.

Following an initial period of debate the guillotine was reached and so the meeting was concluded.

[Note:- At this point of the meeting, in accordance with meeting procedure 10.3 the following outstanding items of business were adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Council are:-

- *Motions on Notice*
 - *Motion 1 – Housing and Homelessness*
 - *Having been in mid-debate at the conclusion of the meeting would serve as the first substantive agenda item at the next ordinary meeting of Council.*
 - *Motion 2 – Alfred East Art Gallery*
 - *Motion 3 – Library Services*
 - *Motion 4 – River Nene*

 - *Councillor Questions]*
-

264 Councillor Questions

[This item was adjourned until the next ordinary meeting of Council]

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

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Item 6. Public Participation (i) Public Statements Received

Statement 1 – Chris Stanbra

Good evening councillors. A special good evening to the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member with responsibility for Libraries to whom this statement is directed. I am here tonight to speak in support of the motion on the library service proposed by Cllr Hakewill and seconded by Cllr Best. You have a long agenda tonight. Please keep in mind what's been said by members of the public by the time it comes to the debate.

I am speaking in a personal capacity but should make you aware that I am a volunteer at Danesholme Library, a community managed library in Corby. I invite all of you to pop in when the library is open, and if any of you would like to become a volunteer at Danesholme Library, see me afterwards.

Cllr Hakewill's motion is very clear in its call for a "clear, compelling, financially sound, and customer-service-oriented business case" before any disaggregation changes are made to the way our libraries are run. Who could disagree?

It has been estimated by your council colleagues in West Northants that disaggregation of the library service could end up costing that council increased revenue costs of either ninety five thousand pounds per annum or two hundred and five thousand pounds per annum depending on which option is chosen. Similar costs would surely be incurred in North Northants, possibly more as we don't have a central library or a distribution base for books in the North as both of these are located in Northampton and we would surely have to set up and pay for such facilities.

The leaders of this council make a virtue of financial probity and prudent budgeting. Surely you will all want to ensure that any decision to incur increased revenue costs is backed up by the business case that Cllrs Hakewill and Best are calling for and that it has been "subjected to wide public consultation" as called for in the motion. I urge you to support the motion as written. Thank you.

Statement 2 – Cllr Clark Mitchell, Kettering Town Council

Firstly, chair thank you for letting me speak, I understand there was confusion over the 9am Monday deadline so I do appreciate you allowing this.

I am here to day to ask council to support Cllr Lee's motion in full I will explain why however if you were at the scrutiny panel on Tuesday you will have heard a lot if what I am about to say already.

I was on the planning committee back in January 2021 that first approved the new build element of the GLaM project (gallery library and museum) I'm really proud of the fact that I am able to say I voted for this project because it is a fantastic opportunity for the town of Kettering and the region of North Northamptonshire, when open it will increase footfall which will boost the town centre and the new business hub will give the people who work in the town a fantastic facility to support themselves, the officers and executive of KBC deserve thanks for getting the grant from SEMLEP that made this possible. I know its frowned upon to mention names but they know who they are. Well done.

I didn't expect to have to be here speaking about it, I thought it would have opened and been great but unfortunately here we are over two years down the line and it is only the library (a statutory service) that is open.

This got me concerned enough to send in an FOI asking about the conditions put on the funding. It was after all the Gallery, Library and Museum project, I wanted to know if there was a risk that the funding could be with held. The answer I got did not alleviate these fears.

I asked (amongst other things)

If NNC were to fail to achieve these conditions could you advise of any funding that would need to be returned and to whom.

The answer I got was.

The Get Building Fund committed £3m via SEMLEP. It is not clear at this point what might have to be repaid if some elements are delayed or not opened. BIPC will be opening in 2023 so, for example, this element of the criteria would have been fulfilled.

I Then asked

Are there any other grant conditions that would require NNC to repay any or all of the funding received?

The grant is dependent on milestones for the build being met, which has been achieved. Also dependent on outputs being delivered as agreed in the monitoring and evaluation procedures, there remains a risk if these are not achieved that there could a claw back of part of the grant already received.

These answers really worry me, there is a risk (albeit small) that if this facility doesn't open fully the money could all be called back by SEMLEP and then the residents of this region end up with nothing. I have already been told that the museum may never reopen.

I asked Tuesday's scrutiny panel to chase up the answers to what the risk to NNC actually is and what mitigations are in place but the easiest way to stop any risk is to get the facility fully open as quickly as possible and give Kettering the cornerstone of its heritage quarter that it deserves.

Please support Cllr Lee's motion and once again thank you for your time.

End of Public Statements

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Council 26th October 2023

Report Title	Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022-23
Executive Member	Councillor Scott Edwards, Executive Member Children, Families, Education & Skills
Report Author	Thomas Norford, Corporate Parenting Project Officer, Northamptonshire Children's Trust. Thomas.Norford@NCTrust.co.uk

Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022-23

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide the Council with an update on the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The annual report is structured as follows:

- **Executive Summary.** Summarising the report as a whole.
- **Governance and Statutory Context.** Sets out the legal underpinning of corporate parenting, and the structure and role of the Board, including in light of the creation of the Trust and creation of two unitary councils.
- **Board activity.** Summarises the activity of the Board during the reporting period, including meeting arrangements, membership and service reports.

- **Young people’s participation and successes.** Including details of the summer celebration event for children in care, and how the Board celebrates and includes young people.
- **Corporate Parenting Board diagnostic.** Details about a diagnostic exercise carried out with the Local Government Association, with identified strengths, risks and opportunities for development.
- **NCT’s Improvement Plan progress.** Setting out progress achieved and areas for development under the improvement plan’s six key headers.
- **Appendix: four priorities.** Progress and areas of development in respect of the four priorities set out in the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-25.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Council:

- i) Approve the content of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report which gives an overview of the Corporate Parenting Board’s activities.
- ii) Note that the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-25 sets out four key priorities and the update on each areas progress contained in the annual report.

3.2. Reasons for Recommendations:

- To promote and monitor the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Corporate Parenting Strategy;
- To encourage all Members and employees to recognise their role as corporate parents;
- Provides members with an overview of the work of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust and supports the discharge of their Corporate Parenting duties.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered – Do Nothing – The Council has statutory duties as Corporate Parent for children in care and care leavers. Whilst the role of the Director of Children’s Services and Lead Member is defined in legislation there are wider corporate responsibilities on all staff and elected Members. Not approving the Corporate Parenting Annual Report would mean that the Council may fail to deliver all or parts of its statutory responsibilities in this area.

4. Report Background

4.1. Local Authorities and their partners are responsible for ensuring that Children in care and care leavers are as safe and well cared for as any other child. This responsibility is called ‘Corporate Parenting’ and applies equally to children who have entered the UK from overseas and are separated from their families. Corporate Parenting responsibilities rests not only with social workers and their managers, but also Council Officers and Members and any other agency that

provides services and support to children in care such as health services, housing departments, the police and schools. Corporate parents have specific duties for young people leaving care and making the journey to independence.

- 4.2. The report sets out the role, structure and activity of the Corporate Parenting Board, including progress achieved against the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Improvement Plan and the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Being a Corporate Parent means doing everything we can for every child in the Council's care, and every care leaver, to give them the opportunities that other children get. This covers everything from keeping an eye on their progress at school, to looking after their health and wellbeing, to preparing them for life as independent adults – and supporting them when they get there.
- 5.2 The Council has statutory duties as a Corporate Parent for children in care and care leavers. Whilst the role of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member is defined in legislation there are wider corporate responsibilities on all staff and elected members.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. For the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report to be presented to Members in accordance with the Council's governance framework.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. The annual report sets out the Council's Corporate Parenting responsibilities and aspirations for children and young people and is intended to help the local authority devote appropriate finances and resources to meeting these aims.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 The collective responsibility for Local Authorities in terms of Corporate Parenting is set out in the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The central role of councils as effective Corporate Parents has been emphasised by government in the publications Care Matters: Time for Change (DCSF 2007), Care Matters: Time to Deliver (DCSF 2008) and consolidated in aspects of the Children and Young Persons Act (2008) alongside other legislation and statutory guidance that determines our duties as set out in the annual review. The Board itself is not a statutory body, however, selected service reports are required to be seen by a suitable oversight body, and Board fulfils this function.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. The Annual Report aims to help the Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust meet its Corporate Parenting objectives and priorities.

7.3.2. The Council has identified 'Brighter, Better Futures' as a key priority of the corporate plan. This will be done by supporting partners and the Children's Trust to provide higher standards of support. The Annual Report enables the Council to gain oversight of the services delivered by NCT and to help the Council to understand how better support for Children, Young People and Families can be delivered.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. Relevant risks are those associated with the Council and the Trust failing to meet its Corporate Parenting responsibilities and aspirations for children and young people, including:

- Children and young people have poor outcomes and do not achieve their potential.
- NCT and Council employees do not recognise their role as corporate parents.

7.4.2. Overall, these risks imply a deleterious impact on the outcomes for children in care.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. The Council continues to work with partners including Northamptonshire Children's Trust to promote the objectives and outcomes within the report as needed.

7.6. Consideration by the Executive

7.6.1. This report was considered by the Executive at its meeting held on 12th October 2023.

7.6.2. The Executive welcomed that the board was positive in both its intentions and commitment to its legal obligations and commented that it had produced a constructive report, noting the four priorities that formed the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2025.

7.6.3. The Executive also noted that a North Northamptonshire specific report would be received for 2023/24 and praised the excellent communication and involvement of young people in the findings of the report before members.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by the Council's Scrutiny committees.

7.8. **Equality Implications**

7.8.1. The report considers the safety and wellbeing of North Northamptonshire children in care and care leavers, including those living out of county.

7.9. **Climate and Environment Impact**

7.9.1. None specifically identified.

7.10. **Community Impact**

7.10.1. The recommendations aim to improve outcomes for North Northamptonshire children and young people in care and care leavers, including in the community.

7.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

7.11.1. None specifically identified.

8. **Background Papers**

8.1. [Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022-23 – Report to Executive on 12 October 2023](#)

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Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2022 – 2023

*“Children, Young People and Families at the heart of all we do - in every decision
we make and every action we take”*

Olivia Ives
Assistant Director Corporate Parenting

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Introduction

Welcome to the annual report for Northamptonshire's Corporate Parenting Board. This sets out the activity of the Board for the 2022-23 period, and some of the exciting developments happening within Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

Corporate parenting means giving the same level of care and support that any parent would want for their own child. Parenting does not simply stop as a young person reaches maturity, so this responsibility extends to helping children in care successfully transition to independent adulthood. Celebrating children and young people is also important, and it is wonderful that we have reintroduced large-scale, annual celebration events. As well as celebrating 'headline' achievements such as sporting and academic excellence, we want to highlight the small steps our children make which add up to massive progress. This can mean simply feeling able to sit with foster carers for a meal or having a phone call with a family member.

Young people have made an increasingly important contribution to Board over the year, not least our new care-experienced Board member, and our fantastic care-experienced Apprentice Champions. There is more to do, however, to make sure young people have a major say in the operation of the Board and shaping our services.

Many innovative and far-reaching initiatives are helping to improve outcomes for Northamptonshire children and young people, and partnership working with other organisations is a recurrent theme of these initiatives. New monthly panels, for example, are helping children secure a permanent home at the earliest possible stage, and helping older young people transition to independence. The Valuing Care project, which commenced in February 2023, is helping the right resources reach the children who need them most. The project is taking place in collaboration with Impower and operates through the principles of therapeutic care.

A diagnostic exercise with the Local Government Association highlighted many strengths of the Board, as well as opportunities and areas for improvement. The outcomes of this were insightful and welcome. The decision has been taken that henceforth each council will operate its own Board, in keeping with Ofsted's requirement to assess each council's data separately. We relish this challenge, which will increase elected members' capacity to scrutinise and challenge services for children and young people in their areas.

Executive Summary

Corporate parenting means promoting the same outcomes that any good parent wants for their child. This responsibility for local authorities and their partners is set out in legislation, government publications and statutory guidance.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust delivers children's social care across the county on behalf of West and North Northamptonshire Councils. During the financial year 2022-23, the Corporate Parenting Board met five times, and remained a single entity covering the whole county. It was chaired by both councils' elected lead members with cabinet responsibility for children's social care. As of May 2023, the Board has disaggregated, with each council facilitating its own Board.

Aside from its own annual report, during 2022-23 the Board received and scrutinised annual reports from the Independent Reviewing Officer Service, fostering and adoption services, the Virtual School, and the Integrated Care Board. Statutory health assessments remained an issue of intense scrutiny for the Board, but members were somewhat reassured by the remedial actions being undertaken.

Every Board meeting included a scorecard of selected metrics, prompting debate and challenge from Board members. This showed recovery in terms of some key health-related metrics, and continuing strong performance in terms of care leavers in employment, education and training. Ad-hoc and thematic reports to the Board included a detailed presentation around the sufficiency of foster places and the challenges therein; services available for young people leaving care, including disparities in council tax exemption schemes between the two councils; an update on a national safeguarding review for children with disabilities in residential placements; and care-experienced people's contact with the criminal justice system.

Although there is more to do, the Board made sure young people's voices were heard and utilised. A care-experienced young person was recruited to the Board as a full member, and the Board liaised with the Trust's participation groups. In many cases, young people contributed to the reports and presentations which came to Board, particularly the leaving care item. Every Board included a dedicated slot for celebrating the achievements of children and young people, and a very successful celebration event took place in July 2022 with children nominated for awards in four categories.

The Local Government Association diagnostic exercise in March 2023 highlighted many strengths of the Board and areas for opportunities and improvement. The Trust's Young Inspectors team contributed to this valuable process. Key outcomes included the need for greater young people's participation in Board, and a shared vision of corporate parenting among members.

Northamptonshire's improvement journey is captured in the overarching Improvement Plan, which lists aims and activities in six key areas: excellent leadership; recruit, retain and develop an awesome workforce; relationship-based practice; quality assurance and learning; healthy partnerships; and effective use of resources. Key developments include the Valuing Care project, the Sufficiency Strategy and new panels created to promote children's early permanence and transition to independence.

The Trust's Corporate Parenting Strategy includes four aims which we want to achieve for children and young people: live safe, be safe; fulfil potential; develop resilience; and enjoy good health and wellbeing.

1. Governance and Statutory Context

What is corporate parenting?

Local authorities and their partners are responsible for ensuring that care-experienced children and young people are as safe and well cared for as any other child. This responsibility is called 'corporate parenting' and applies equally to children who have entered the UK from overseas and are separated from their families. Corporate parenting duty rests not only with social workers and their managers, but also any other agency that provides services and support to children in care such as health services, housing departments, the police and schools. Corporate parents have specific duties for young people leaving care and making the journey to independence.

Legal background

The collective responsibility for local authorities was first laid out in the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. The central role of councils as effective corporate parents has been emphasised by government in the publications *Care Matters: Time for Change* (DCSF 2007), *Care Matters: Time to Deliver* (DCSF 2008), and consolidated in aspects of the Children and Young Persons Act (2008). Other legislation and statutory guidance that determine our duties include:

- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 Children and Adoption Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 (as amended by the Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014
- The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013
- Adoption and Care Planning (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2014
- The Care Planning and Fostering (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2000

Principles of corporate parenting

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 provided a welcome distillation of corporate parenting responsibilities through seven principles of corporate parenting. Local authorities and their partners are required:

1. To act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

The Act introduced some new responsibilities relating to children in care and care leavers. These include a requirement to publish a 'Local Offer to Care Leavers,' setting out the services available to young people leaving care, extend the provision of personal adviser support to all care leavers up to the age of 25 and to provide education advice and guidance to young people formerly in care. The Act also introduces a number of requirements to ensure that court processes are focussed on long term plans for and specific needs of the child.

The Care Leavers Charter

The Care Leavers' Charter is a set of promises to care leavers, published by the Government in 2012. It is "Designed to raise expectation, aspiration and understanding of what care leavers need and what the government and local authorities should do to be good corporate parents." The Charter will "Remain constant through any changes in legislation, regulation and guidance."

We promise:

- To respect and honour your identity
- To listen to you
- To believe in you

- To inform you
- To be a lifelong champion
- To support you
- To find you a home

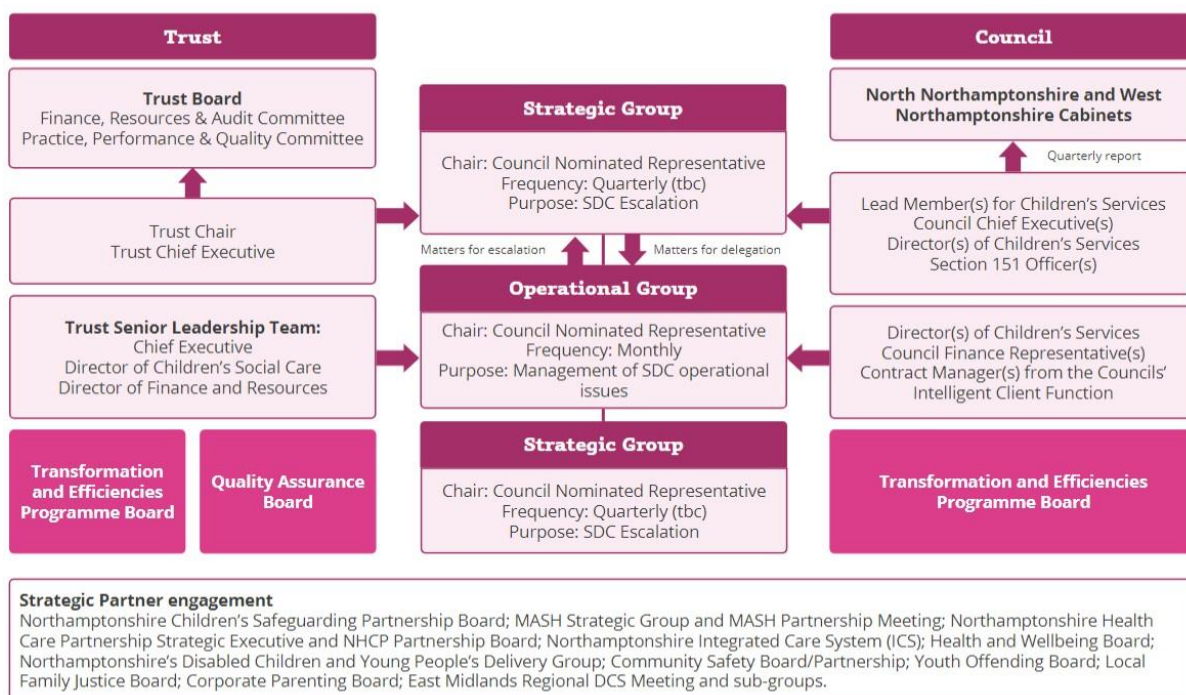
NCT has developed a separate set of promises to care leavers which have been adopted by the Board.

[NCT and the move to unitary authorities](#)

From April 2021 Northamptonshire County Council and seven district and borough councils were replaced by two new councils: North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council. Some services which were delivered by different councils were brought together (aggregated), while others which were delivered by the county council were split (disaggregated).

Northamptonshire Children's Trust was established on the 1st of November 2020 to deliver children's social care across the county. It is owned by West and North Northamptonshire councils but in order to achieve operational independence it has its own board of directors which sets strategic aims for the Trust, oversees its management and holds the executive team to account.

Northamptonshire Children's Trust governance arrangements



The disaggregation of the Corporate Parenting Board, 2023

A decision was taken at the inception of NCT for there to be a single Corporate Parenting Board inclusive of both councils, with shared chairing duties. However, as of May 2023, each council will hold its own Corporate Parenting Board. This decision was geared to allowing each council greater scrutiny and accountability, and ultimately better outcomes, for children and young people under their remit. The decision to disaggregate also reflects Ofsted's requirement for disaggregated data for the two councils.

The Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers

The Board's pledge to young people in care and care leavers was drawn up in conjunction with the Children in Care Council and is available to view on the Young Northants and the Trust's websites.

We will help you be physically and emotionally healthy

We will have achieved this when:

- You have the right support for your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and you do not have to wait too long for it.
- The adults close to you understand your needs.
- You have a good understanding of your health needs and history, when you are in care and when you leave care.

We will make sure you are living in the right place

We will have achieved this when:

- You are living with people who understand you, care for you well and build a positive relationship with you.
- You have a safe and stable home life.
- Where you are living does not affect how well you are looked after.

We will make sure you have great relationships in your life

We will have achieved this when:

- You have regular contact with those who are important to you, as long as it's safe.
- You understand why you are in care and are involved with the plans that affect your life.
- We are warm and courteous towards you, do what we say we will, and respect your culture and identity.
- You have enough quality time with the adults (social worker, personal adviser, teacher, doctor, nurse) who are there to support you, at a time that is convenient to you.
- Changes of social worker or personal adviser are avoided wherever possible. Any changes are explained to you, and you are introduced to the new person properly.

We will make sure you get a good education

We will have achieved this when:

- You are achieving the best you can.
- You have a stable school where you feel safe.
- You feel part of your school community and are able to take part in clubs and activities.
- You have adults who understand your needs and put the right things in place to support them.

We will help you prepare for the future

We will have achieved this when:

- As you become independent, you have a suitable place to live which feels like a proper home.
- You are in education, employment or training, helping you reach your potential.
- You are helped to manage your money effectively and get the right benefits.
- You have access to leisure services and can get around easily.

We will involve you in developing our services and holding us to account

We will have achieved this when:

- We celebrate your successes.
- We actively seek and take account of your views, wishes and feelings to improve our services to you.
- You can access useful and accurate information about services available and the people who can support you.
- You feel able to share complaints compliments and comments about our services.
- There is a range of opportunities for you to get involved to with helping to improve all services to children and young people.

2. Board Activity, 2022-23

Membership and meeting arrangements

During the reporting period, a single Corporate Parenting Board operated in the county, with representation from both councils. It met every two months, aside from July 2022 when the meeting was cancelled to allow focus on the Children in Care Celebration and Awards. Meetings took place both in person and via video link. Cllr Scott Edwards (North) and Cllr Fiona Baker (West) shared chairing duties. As of March 2023, the membership of Board was as follows:

West Northamptonshire members:

Fiona Baker (Chair, Con), Louisa Fowler (Con), James Hill (Con), Stephen Hibbert (Con) Harry Barrett (Lab).

North Northamptonshire members:

Scott Edwards (Chair, Con), Lora Lawman (Con), Macauley Nichol (Con), Gill Mercer (Con) [replaced Cedwien Brown], Leanne Buckingham (Lab) [replaced Zoe McGhee].

Board was also attended by Trust officers and other representatives, including:

- Chief Executive Officer and Director of Children’s Social Care for Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT).
- Directors and Assistant Directors for Children’s Services, West and North Northamptonshire Councils.
- Assistant Director and Strategic Manager for Corporate Parenting, NCT.
- Head of Adoption, Fostering and Children’s Homes, NCT.
- Strategic Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service, NCT.
- Principal Social Worker, NCT.
- Head of The Northamptonshire Virtual School.

- Head of the Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service.
- A Children's Trust board member.
- A care-experienced young person.
- Vice Chair, Northamptonshire Foster Carers Association.
- Assistant Director, Housing and Communities, WNC.
- Chief Nursing Officer and Designated Nurse, Northamptonshire Integrated Care Board.
- Corporate Parenting Project Officer (providing administration and other support), NCT.

Other NCT officers and representatives of partner agencies attended as required, on invitation.

Annual reports

While Board is not a statutory body per se, legislation requires that an appropriate oversight body has sight of certain statutory annual reports. Our Board fulfils this function, providing scrutiny and oversight to NCT services. Where possible, reports for Board are summarised for presentation during the meeting, with the full reports being shared a week prior.

The following annual reports were scrutinised by Board during 2022-23. Note, however, that the annual reports related to the year 2021-22 unless otherwise stated.

The Independent Reviewing Officer Service.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) ensure care plans meet the needs of children and young people. They follow up on agreed actions and make sure people do what they say they will do. IROs chair children's statutory annual reviews, and make sure the child's voice is an integral part of the process.

NCT has 16 full-time and 1 part-time IRO, who between them chaired over 3000 children and young people's reviews during 2021-22, compared with just under 3000 the previous year. 87% of initial reviews took place within the statutory timeframe, with this figure rising to 90% for second reviews and 95% for those subsequent. Pleasingly, 92% of children participated in their review in some way, whether through the Mind of My Own children's mobile app, in person, a letter or other means. In many cases, children chaired their own review and chose the meeting location. Every IRO report now includes a letter written directly to the child or young person themselves. Government guidance recommends an IRO caseload of between 50 and 70. Our average caseload was 74 for the reporting period, reflecting the increasing children in care population.

During the year a new care plan format was developed in consultation with young people, which they reported finding easier to follow. The service continues to work closely with CAFCAS and regional IRO forums, to develop good practice and escalate concerns.

Locally, IROs raise formal and informal escalations on individual cases where there could be significant impact for children and young people. Key findings from this process are shared in a

quarterly report to the Quality Assurance Board. Arising themes are addressed in regular service managers' meetings and monthly performance clinics.

Ongoing priorities for the IRO service include ensuring that the voice of children and young people is central to review and care planning processes, and holding monthly meetings with service managers to share concerns and good practice. IROs are being encouraged to fully evidence the direct and indirect contact they have with children and young people and their families.

Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report.

The Board approved its annual report for the year 2021-22.

The Fostering Service.

NCT's Independent Fostering Agency operates on behalf of both councils. The service undertakes many statutory functions concerning foster carers, including assessment and review, approval, supervision, support, and training.

At the end of the reporting period, 72% of children in care lived in a fostering placement, as opposed to residential care or other arrangements. Nationally and locally, recruitment and retention of foster carers remains a huge issue. Around 41% of Northamptonshire children in care live in agency foster care placements as opposed to 'in-house' placements. Finding suitable in-house placements for sibling groups, older children, and those with complex needs remains a challenge. 34 new foster carers were recruited by the end of the year, and although this was 3 less than the previous year, it represented a net gain of 2 households. The percentage of children who lived in the same placement for 2-plus years remained strong, at 66%, indicating that most children are placed in homes that meet their needs. In April 2022 there were 213 approved mainstream in-house fostering households, as well as 122 approved family and friend households.

The service undertakes a wide ranging of marketing activities to recruit new carers, including the use of Google adverts, Facebook campaigns, and web videos. Awareness days throughout the year such as Mother's Day and Hidden Heroes Day were also used to reach a wider audience. Our Christmas advent calendar on social media showed a different reason to foster for each day of the month, as shared by our carers. Through social media, the service shared 'a day in the life of' different roles such as a foster carer, social worker, panel advisor, and foster carers' birth children.

Other developments in the service include streamlining recruitment, assessment and approval processes; improving reporting systems; appointing a new registered manager; holding timely retention meetings with carers who are thinking of leaving; and further development of the resilience carer scheme, for children with complex needs. Staff have undergone secure base attachment and dyadic development training. Our foster carers, meanwhile, now have access to the National Association of Therapeutic Parenting. This provides access to training, webinars and

networks of support with a focus on therapeutic approaches. The service continues to strengthen its links with the Northampton Foster Carers Association, the vice-chair of which attends Board.

Board challenged the service regarding Regulation 24 cases. These are cases in which children are placed with people with whom they already share a connection. Fostering agencies are required to assess these places within a certain period, which can be extended to 24 weeks. The majority of the service's cases are assessed within timescale; if they are not assessed in time, it is often due to delays with medical or background checks. In some cases, it is appropriate for the child to be placed with their connected persons, without those persons being officially approved as foster carers, and the service understands the narrative behind all such cases.

The Adoption Service.

Like the fostering service, the adoption service operates on behalf of both councils. Its remit includes recruiting and assessing prospective adoptive parents; family-finding for children who are being adopted; supporting families both before and after adoption; and helping adults who were adopted to access their records. The service includes the Adoption Panel, which considers approvals for adopters and proposed matches of children with adopters. The service is now part of Family Adoption Links, a Regional Adoption Alliance (RAA). This allows access to a wider range of training and resources, particularly in terms of finding matches for children, while retaining strategic control.

During the reporting year 26 children were matched with and placed with adoptive families. 41 children had a plan for adoption agreed, compared to 29 the previous year, an increase reflecting a recovery from the pandemic period. 26 new adopter households were approved, from 187 initial enquiries. 38 adoption orders were granted by the court. Positively, there were no adoption disruptions (that is, where a placement breaks down before the adoption order is granted) during the reporting year.

As with fostering, recruitment and retention activity includes a wide range of social media campaigning, in-person follow ups to enquiries, a comprehensive training offer, regular support groups and responsive actions taken when families are struggling. The service includes workers who are trained in therapeutic life story work and video interactive guidance. During the reporting period the service also sourced almost £1 million from the national Adoption Support Fund.

Board and the service itself agreed that the service's data collection systems require improvement; better systems will allow more time for practitioners to actively work with families. Other plans for the service include improving the feedback mechanisms for children and families, launching a new staff training plan and implementing the RAA's core training offer for adopters.

The Virtual School.

The Virtual School (VS) is a statutory body which promotes the educational attainment of children in care. This involves monitoring and improving the timeliness and quality of Personal Educational Plans (PEPs); monitoring children's progress, attendance and exclusions; and devolving the centrally funded money set aside for the education of children in care. For the first time, the VS presented to Board separate reports for the North and West authorities. The reporting period was for the 2021-22 academic year. During that time, the VS quality assured 1083 PEPs for statutory school-age children for the North, and 1313 for the West, reflecting the children in care population size for each area. For both authorities, just under 80% of PEPs were rated Good, a substantial improvement from 64% (North) and 65% (West) in the previous academic year.

The VS continued its school holiday activity programme, with 139 children taking part in events, and delivered a wide range of training to school governors, teachers, carers, parents and guardians. After an update to legislation, the VS now also delivers advice and guidance to previously looked after children.

Priorities for the VS include improving the quality and timeliness of the bespoke early years and post-16 PEPs; supporting schools around new exclusions guidance; and helping services ensure they discharge their duties to children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. The VS is also exploring the potential widening of its remit to include any children with a social worker.

Board challenged the VS regarding figures around fixed term exclusions for pupils, but acknowledged that the team proactively works with schools to explore alternative options. When appropriate the NCT Chief Executive has worked with council directors to avoid permanent exclusions for children in care.

The Integrated Care Board and the Health of Looked After Children.

Northamptonshire's Integrated Care Board (ICB) reported to the Board on how it had met its statutory responsibilities for children in care. While they may of course have similar health needs to their peers, children in care often have more acute needs because of a history of neglect and abuse. This is particularly the case for children from overseas who are separated from their families; the ICB carries out specific programmes for these children, such as screening for blood-borne diseases.

Performance around statutory health assessments for children in care has been a protracted issue in Northamptonshire and nationally, particularly the timeliness of initial health assessments when a child first enters the care system. This issue was raised at most Board meetings through the year, with members providing robust scrutiny. Challenges have included the availability of paediatricians, and the difficulty of assessing children with complex needs placed out of county. Remedial actions taken to improve this picture include detailed mapping and analysis of health assessment procedures and extra staffing to address a backlog of review assessments. Board was reassured that as of December 2022, the proportion of initial assessments taking place on time had risen to around

84%. It should be noted that while too many children's health assessments are late, any child with a known health issue is prioritised and receives a timely assessment and follow-up care. Board's ICB representative is also part of a regional group which intends to lobby central government to effect changes which would help local authorities and their health partners meet their statutory obligations.

Evidencing that children in care undergo a timely dental check has also been an ongoing challenge, not least due to issues with recording the checks when they happen. This picture has improved somewhat at the time of writing, however, and all accommodation providers have been asked to provide dental check details for all children in their care. Carers have also been provided with a letter to show to dentists, highlighting that children in care should be treated as a priority.

Northamptonshire's specialist Looked After Children's Mental Health Team continues to provide vital care and guidance; nearly 300 children were open to the service in 2022. Through a Public Health project, the team has now recruited an advanced mental health specialist to work in the Trust's Leaving Care Team. Ongoing priorities for the ICB include further improving the timeliness of health assessments, undertaking a review to understand the needs of separated children and improving data-sharing practices with the Trust. The Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) is a short behavioural and emotional screening questionnaire, which aims to provide information about a child's wellbeing. There have been challenges with the SDQ pathway in Northamptonshire and work has been undertaken with key partners to develop a new pathway and improve the SDQ process.

Performance scorecard

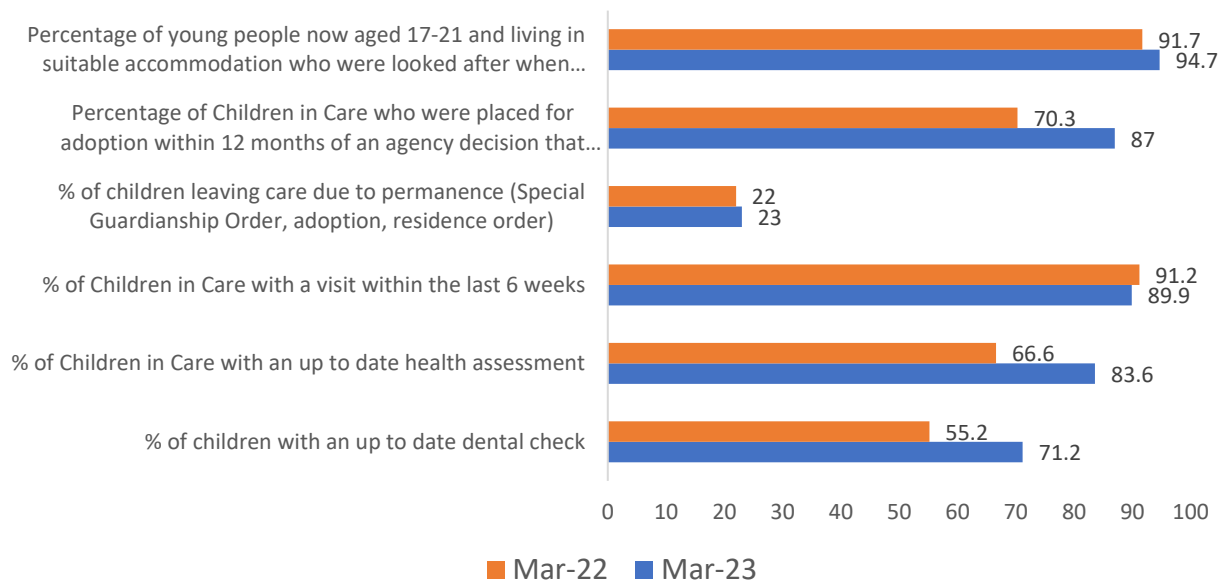
The Board reviews a performance scorecard at each meeting, providing an opportunity for dialogue, scrutiny and challenge between officers, partner agencies and elected members. Measures include some of the national metrics required by the DfE and the scorecard relates closely to the Trust's Improvement Plan. Measures are grouped under the following headings:

- General measures (such as population data, timeliness of statutory visits).
- Placements (proportion of children living out of county, placement stability measures).
- Adoption (timeliness of placements, number of orders granted).
- Care Leavers (accommodation, employment and training measures).
- Education (education plan timeliness and quality, exclusions).

Discussions focussed heavily on health assessment performance, with a specific agenda item on this topic coming to Board in January. However, the scorecard has been used throughout the year as a starting point for scrutiny of the Trust's and its partners' performance in many areas.

Often, this scrutiny has furthered members’ understanding of a child’s journey through care. For example, while scorecard averages may suggest that children wait too long to be adopted after an adoption order is made by the courts, this may disguise a very positive journey for individual children towards being adopted by a family that is perfect for them.

Performance Scorecard: Selected Mar 2022/Mar 2023 comparison data.



Thematic and ad-hoc reports

At every meeting, the Board focusses on a particular topic of relevance to care-experienced children and young people, informed by the NCT’s priorities and Improvement Plan, and feedback from young people themselves. Young people, NCT officers and partner agencies are often invited to contribute. Items may also be added to future agendas as a result of discussions held in Board.

The following provides a summary of the topics discussed at Board during the year.

Sufficiency update.

In recent years the population of children in care has risen markedly, placing a strain on the sufficiency of foster care placements across the country. The needs of children have also become increasingly complex, requiring carers with the specialist skills needed to meet such children’s needs. While they have reduced consistently over the last five years, the number of crisis and emergency placement requests remains a challenge.

In Northamptonshire, a high proportion of residential and fostering placements are provided by third party agencies such as Independent Fostering Agencies, which are Ofsted regulated. For older young people, Independent Supported Accommodation providers are often a very beneficial step on the

journey to independence. These providers are not regulated by Ofsted, but are required to abide by the Trust's framework agreement and will soon be required to abide by a national set of standards.

The Trust undertakes a range of activity to ensure that third party providers are meeting the needs of children in their care. This includes block-purchasing agreements, quality assurance visits and provider events. Around a quarter of our children in care live in placements outside the county.

While this can be due to a lack of an available placement in-county, it is often the most appropriate solution for the child's needs.

The Sufficiency Action Plan is geared to improving our sufficiency of homes for children in care. The plan includes commissioning two new emergency children's homes, a review of the leaving care accommodation offer, exploring new block placement contracts and working closely with partners to overcome challenges in the sufficiency market. An external review of our placement service found that we have a good understanding of our challenges, but there is much work to do.

The Placement Management Service receives many same-day placement requests, coming in peaks and troughs. Sometimes these cannot be fulfilled in-house, so the young person may move to an unregulated setting, which are subject to close managerial scrutiny. Such requests may be due to placement breakdowns and so encouraging placement stability has been a strong area of focus. Wrap-around support within the community can promote placement stability, an area for which elected councillors are in a unique position to help.

Board was also challenged to consider and drive the means of reducing the need for a such a high level of placement sufficiency in the first place. This would effectively mean reducing the number of children who are in care unnecessarily. This will be achieved through strengthened early help for families, high quality social work and edge of care services.

Services for Young People Leaving Care.

The Leaving Care Team, with the help of some enthusiastic (and somewhat raucous) care-experienced young people, shared with the Board activities in four areas: the Local Offer to Care Leavers, council tax exemptions, the new Accommodation Panel and the Independent Living Programme.

The Local Offer is a publication which sets out the services available to children moving from care to independence, including services available from partner agencies. The offer includes the provisions required by statute, such as a £2000 setting up home allowance. Northamptonshire young people also have access to a mental health professional within the Leaving Care Service, free halls of residence accommodation through the University of Northampton, council tax exemptions, and drop-in clinics with partner organisations such as housing services.

Consulting with young people themselves is a vital part of developing the offer, and young people have told us what they would like to see, such as improved access to leisure services and travel discounts. Young people spoke very positively about the support they receive from their personal adviser. At the time of Board an event was being planned to bring together national and local businesses, to challenge them to offer employment and other opportunities for our young people. The Leaving Care Team is now working to exploit the wide range of opportunities resulting from the successful event.

The Trust employs two care-experienced Apprentice Champions in the Leaving Care Service. They spoke powerfully about council tax exemptions for care leavers, and how the exemptions currently offered by the west and north councils vary, creating something of a 'postcode lottery.' Elected members themselves were challenged to take the issue up with their respective councils.

A new multi-agency panel has been set up which considers, on an individual basis, the accommodation and other needs of young people transitioning to independence. Housing services, adult social services and Prospects (a service which helps young people into work and training) are regular members, and the panel considers around twenty cases a month. This can include young people referred to the panel due to specific concerns. Typical actions resulting from the panel include helping remove barriers to housing applications being made, expediting referrals to adult services, and offering practical advice to personal advisers and social workers.

The Independent Living Programme runs over four days and helps young people gain the skills they need for moving on to independence. Board held a live question and answer session with a group of young people who had attended the programme. They had learnt a lot about topics such as budgeting, cooking, substance misuse and sexual health. While they feared the programme would rather drag, it was in the event very enjoyable, with some participants overcoming their shyness and making new friends. One young person was excited because the course had facilitated and prepared her for moving into a training flat. When asked what advice they would give other young people thinking of doing the course, they said 'Just do it, it's fun!'

National Safeguarding Review: Children with Disabilities.

In October 2022 the DfE's Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel published a review into very serious abuse to a number of children with disabilities and complex needs at three residential special schools in Doncaster. The panel chair wrote to all Directors of Children's Services in England requesting that reviews were undertaken in respect of disabled children living in residential settings. The Trust completed the review and reported its findings to Board.

The Trust identified five such children and undertook extensive work to look at their arrangements and needs. This entailed liaising with parents, social workers and commissioners, and understanding the voice of the children themselves. The report to Board confirmed that in each case, arrangements

were as they should be, although capturing data around Educational and Health Care plans and using it effectively was identified as an area for development. The process also involved looking at each of the establishments and ensuring there were no concerns or required actions; again, the outcome was satisfactory.

As well as the Corporate Parenting Board and the Local Safeguarding Partnership, the results of the process were submitted to the national panel overseeing the review, and to the regional DfE. The Trust has chosen to repeat the exercise every six months.

Care-experienced people and youth justice.

Colleagues from Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service (YOS) presented a detailed report to Board about care-experienced young people's involvement in the youth justice system, prompting lively debate among members.

Between June 2022 and January 2023, the proportion of YOS cases who were care-experienced rose from 15% to 16.3%. The proportion of first-time offenders who were care-experienced had fallen, due in part to the relatively new multi-agency Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children in Care and Care Leavers. However, the dip seen in reoffending rates for older teenagers was unfortunately not reflected among care-experienced young people.

There was no strong correlation between living in a residential setting and offending; young people who offend come from a variety of placement types, but notably, repeat offenders who are care-experienced have often undergone multiple changes of placement. A late entry to care is also a factor. Unsurprisingly, offending rates were closely aligned with deprived areas.

The YOS liaises closely with the courts, social workers and residential homes, to give guidance on how to communicate with young people. This involves understanding behavioural triggers and levels of risk, and management plans for dealing with incidents. Many offending young people from residential homes have been the victim of some form of exploitation; they are often faced with weighing the perceived risks from both the law, and criminal gangs. Often, they are more concerned with the wellbeing of their family than their own. A multi-agency approach is vital if these risks are to be mitigated.

A new multi-agency Out of Court Disposal Panel has been created. This means that for every young person who comes to YOS with some form of criminal outcome, a decision is made as to whether an out of court disposal is feasible. The new Turnaround project is also in place and helping to share responsibility for these young people more evenly across agencies. As a result, there are more Outcomes 22s, which is when the police decide to defer prosecution to allow an opportunity for the accused to engage with intervention activity.

3. Young People's Participation and Successes

Officers and elected members try hard to include young people in the Board's functioning, whether by inviting them to attend in person or provide materials such as videos or artwork. Materials prepared for the Board are written in a young person-friendly format wherever possible. The Board liaises closely with the participation groups: the Children in Care Council, the Care Leavers' Council, and the Shooting Stars group for young people with special educational needs or disabilities. Children and Young people's contribution is evidenced in many of the reports and presentations which come to Board, the IRO Annual Report for example, which includes feedback from young people and a special version of the report written directly to them.

While there is work to do, young people contributed significantly to the Board during 2022-23. One particularly welcome development was the recruitment of a care-experienced young person as a full member. As detailed above, young people presented their views to the Board about the benefits of the Independent Living Programme, issues around council tax exemptions, and their hopes for the Local Offer to Care Leavers.

Celebrating children and young people

Like any good parent, the Corporate Parenting Board celebrates the achievements of children. Every meeting includes a slot in which anonymised stories of children and young people's successes are shared, and all receive a certificate and shopping voucher in recognition. These achievements have included high-level accomplishments such as having written work published or securing first class degrees. But the Board also celebrates those ostensibly small steps, which add up to significant progress. This has included achievements as simple as being able to attend school regularly or engage with a social worker.

After a pandemic-induced hiatus, the Awards and Celebration Event for Children in Care returned in a big way in July 2022 and was a roaring success.



Over 400 nominations were received for children in four categories: Determined to Learn, Making a Difference, Aspirational Star, and Super Skills. Every nominee received a letter and certificate, personally signed by the Trust CEO Colin Foster. The event was held at Fernie Fields Sports Field in Moulton, Northampton, and was well-attended by children, foster carers and family members. Ample support was provided by a small army of volunteers, including members of our fantastic young people's participation groups who created a fantastic balloon arch. Both lead members from Board attended and were delighted to meet so many of our amazing children and young people. As well as the awards ceremony itself, events included a climbing wall, animal experience, live DJ, archery, football and a chill-out tent.



4. Corporate Parenting Board Diagnostic

A Local Government Association (LGA) team carried out a diagnostic exercise between 14th and 16th of March 2023, and fed its findings back to the Board in the same month. The LGA took the role of ‘critical friend’ and met with many of the members and officers who attend Board. The diagnostic considered the following themes:

- Governance and Board effectiveness.
- Appreciation of impact, including data and performance.
- The voice and influence of care-experienced children and young people.
- Ownership by the councils and the Trust.
- Health and wellbeing of children in care and care leavers.
- Aspiration and achievement.
- Quality, planning stability and permanence (sufficiency).

Additionally, the team considered the effectiveness of the current Board arrangements in improving outcomes for children and young people, and how best to deliver the Board’s functions in the future. The Trust’s Young Inspectors team was heavily involved, and interviewed the lead members and service managers in the corporate parenting service. In their feedback, they said they would like more young people on the Board, and a stronger method by which the Board hears and understands the voices of young children. Members should be more experienced at working with children, the Young Inspectors said, and the celebration of young people’s achievements should be expanded. They also felt that documents for Board should be more accessible.

What follows are highlights from the LGA team’s feedback to the board.

Strengths

Trust officers demonstrated a strong commitment to an effective Board, and aspirations for children and young people. Both lead members were similarly committed, and other members had shown a desire to challenge the Trust for the benefit of children and young people. There existed a strong partnership with health colleagues and a commitment to make improvements in that area, and as a general point, the Virtual School was highlighted as a strength. Documents presented to the Board were of good quality and the Terms of Reference were clear. The team welcomed the celebration of young people’s successes at every Board meeting, although this could include more of the ‘small steps’ type of progress that are very important to children.

Areas for consideration and opportunities

The diagnostic concluded that the diverging ambitions of the west and north councils was an issue to be resolved. The team also could not firmly evidence that all members of the board had a sound understanding of the meaning of being an effective corporate parent. Mirroring the view of the

Young Inspectors, the team noted room for much greater participation and engagement with children and young people themselves, as well as foster carers and third-party organisations. Opportunities to learn from organisations such as the LGA should be taken. Similarly, there was the opportunity for closer links with other board structures, such as the Joint Commissioning Board.

Risks

A desire for structural changes could, the team concluded, take energy away from focussing on children's outcomes; while bringing benefits, separate boards could increase the resource burden on Trust officers and other partner members. As young people themselves have noted, the two councils have increasingly divergent offers for care-experienced young people, for example in housing and council tax. Some members have demonstrated a lack of commitment to the Board through their poor attendance of meetings.

What next?

The LGA team suggested that the Board would benefit from its members being united in terms of their understanding of corporate parenting. LGA workshops could help in this regard, as could an understanding of how to use data effectively. The overall governance of the Board needed to be strengthened; regional groups and other authorities' boards could prove instructive. Notably, the LGA suggested that members should actively engage with children and young people outside of the meeting arena, to better understand their journey and experiences.

The Board welcomed the findings of the diagnostic, and agreed it was a valuable exercise. As noted earlier, both councils have since agreed to set up their own individual boards, to be facilitated by their respective democratic services teams.

5. NCT's Improvement Plan: Progress

Northamptonshire Children's Services had its standard Ofsted ILACS inspection in September and October 2022 and are now rated as 'Requires Improvement to be Good'. The journey to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Northamptonshire is captured in the ongoing Improvement Plan. The following highlights some developments, as of May 2023, most relevant to children in care, under the headings of the Plan's six overarching priorities. Details of 'what good looks like' is listed under each priority.

1. Excellent leadership

Children's experiences and outcomes are improved as a result of consistently good quality management oversight and supervision. Sufficient resources are allocated and managed to enable effective delivery of NCT services.

Performance clinics within the corporate parenting service now have a much greater focus on quality assurance, supervision and oversight. In the last quarter of 2022-23, IROs noted improvements in the management oversight within care plans, case recording and assessments. A new model of performance clinics and quality assurance for Independent Fostering Agencies is now in place. Unregistered foster placements for children in care are now reviewed on a weekly basis by senior managers. Budget forecasts for placements have been reviewed, to reflect local and national pressures. The Trust has also contributed to the DfE consultation around the social care workforce.

2. Recruit, retain and develop an awesome workforce

Children are supported by consistent practitioners who have the capacity and skills to develop effective relationships and undertake good quality work with them. Children and families receive an appropriate response in an emergency out of hours.

Social worker vacancies across the Trust have reduced from 17.1% in 2022 to 16.4% in March 2023. 12 Newly Qualified Social Workers started with the Trust in May 2023, with 13 due to start in September. A case management system for the Trust's fostering service is in the procurement stage. Through the annual social work health check, practitioners have reported that their workload is manageable and that they are well supported.

3. Strong relationship-based practice

Children and families receive the right specialist and timely response that meets their needs and improves their outcomes. Children are well cared for in a permanent and safe home at the earliest opportunity. Care leavers have access to support that meets their needs and improves their outcomes.

With a number of other authorities, the Trust joined the Valuing Care project, supported by Impower. This commenced in February 2023, and seeks to help the Trust get the right resources to children in care who need them. This will promote the Trust's ability to show how we are improving children's life chances, particularly in terms of making sure they have a permanent home and avoid entering care where alternative options are viable. As of May 2023, 78% of Valuing Care assessments had been completed for the identified cohort of children.

As detailed elsewhere in this report, processes around health assessments have been strengthened, with a resulting increase in the number of children receiving a timely assessment. The quality of assessments remains high according to quality assurance checks. Pathways around Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) are being reviewed and strengthened.

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meetings have now been embedded in Leaving Care, Children in Care and Disabled Children's Teams, leading to better collaborative working between professionals.

Across the Trust, good and outstanding practice is more routinely seen, shared and celebrated.

The Trust aims to reduce the number of children entering care unnecessarily. To this end, weekly review meetings are taking place with the police regarding children being police-protected, with alternative options being explored. A new Strategic Manager now oversees case progression for children at risk of entering care, and family network meetings are being undertaken more routinely. The average length of court proceedings for children reduced from 67 weeks in June 2022, to 47 in January 2023 and the Valuing Care project identified 27 children who could potentially return to their families' care.

The Trust's Permanence Tracking Panel takes place twice a month (once for each council). On a case-by-case basis, it considers how best to remove barriers to children achieving permanence, whether that means returning to their family, a long-term foster placement or other arrangement. Children in care often need help understanding their past and present, in order to thrive in the future. Their wishes and feelings are expected to be integral to all assessments and ongoing work, and a dynamic model for life story work is being embedded.

As mentioned earlier, exciting developments to the Local Offer to Care Leavers are underway, with increased apprenticeship opportunities, social activities and mentoring. The new Accommodation and Transitions panel operates in close partnership with housing services in each council, adult social services, and Prospects. It considers how best to help young people make a successful transition to independence, while also achieving best value for the Trust. Russell House in Northampton remains a valuable drop-in service for care leavers, and hosts clinics with partner organisations, such as Prospects. There is a need for a similar resource in the north of the county.

4. Insightful quality assurance and learning

Children's outcomes and experiences are improved as a result of improving practice.

IROs are using a thematic approach to escalating concerns around practice. By the latest measure, 50% of their escalations are resolved within one working day, 70% within five working days. Ten children in care teams had no escalations raised in the last quarter of 2022-23. 72% of children who had a statutory looked after child review in March 2023 had a care plan completed within 3 working days prior to the review taking place. This compares to 62% completed when a similar exercise was undertaken in June 2022.

5. Healthy Partnerships that improve outcomes for children

Risks for children who are experiencing contextual vulnerabilities are effectively managed and the impact on them is minimised. Children and Families in need of additional help receive the right support at the right time which makes a difference to their lives. Children with additional and complex needs receive the right support at the right time which makes a difference to their lives. Children in care and care leavers reach their potential in terms of educational attainment.

Better early help for families means better outcomes for children, and a reduced likelihood of entering the care system. A new Early Help Strategy is in development, with a focus on partnerships and practice. North Northamptonshire is in the process of commissioning the Early Parenting Pilot, through localised family hubs.

A number of developments are underway to help children in care and care leavers achieve their educational potential. The Virtual School continues to quality assure every Personal Education Plan, and meets quarterly with strategic leads in education and social care. A new tracking system to monitor children's educational progress has been developed.

As of May, 64.4% of Northamptonshire care leavers are in some form of educational, employment or training. While the Trust aims to drive this figure further upward, it is already consistently above the national care leaver average. Two paid work experience positions have been secured through the Valuing Care project, and a host of similar opportunities have opened up through the engagement event with local businesses, hosted by the Trust. Care-experience is not a 'protected characteristic'

under UK equality law (there is an argument that it should be), but regardless, the Trust and the two councils now have a ring-fenced interview process in place for care leavers applying for jobs.

6. Effective use of resources

NCT commissioning and performance management has the best possible impact on outcomes for children. Children in care are cared for in a home which meets their needs and improves their outcomes. Older teenagers receive the right support and accommodation to meet their needs and help transition into adulthood.

Recommendations from an external review of the Trust's commissioning, quality assurance, performance management and assurance arrangements are being considered. This will be critical in improving outcomes for children and young people, as well as value for money for the Trust.

The Sufficiency Strategy and Action Plan is helping to improve short term placement stability, measured by determining the proportion of children three or more placement moves in a rolling twelve-month period; this figure decreased from 11.9% in October 2022, to 11% in January 2023. Unregistered placements are closely monitored and have reduced from 27 in September 2022 to 22 in April 2023.

New processes are in place to promote the retention of our foster carers, with retention meetings taking place at the earliest opportunity when foster carers raise concerns, and the continued promotion of the resilience carer scheme. Through the Circle to Success project, engagement work is taking place with external Independent Foster Agencies and providers of Independent Supported Accommodation and residential provision. This remains in its early stages but has led to new recruitment initiatives for foster places for children with disabilities.

A new residential home for children with complex needs has partially opened, with another due to open soon. Similarly to our provision at Belinda Ferrison House in Northampton, a new YMCA-run suite of training flats is due to open in summer 2023.

As detailed elsewhere in this report, the new Accommodation and Transitions Panel is helping professionals to coordinate support for young people moving towards independence. An action plan for 16 and 17-year-olds at risk of homelessness is now in place.

Appendix 1: Four Priorities

The NCT Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-25 sets out four key priorities. This appendix sets out progress against the specific criteria under each priority.

Priority 1: Live safe, be safe

Key service areas and strategies : Sufficiency Strategy, Fostering and Adoption Recruitment Strategy, Commissioning Strategy

How we achieve this	Key Success Criteria	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will work with communities, businesses and partner agencies to recruit more foster placements to meet the needs of the looked after children cohort and increase placement choices. • If a child or young person has to move from where they are living, we will involve them in the decision making as much as possible and give them an information profile of the placement they are moving to. • If possible, we will keep our children who are looked after with their brother and sisters when they come into care. • Families and friends are always considered in the planning process and our children are placed with family and friends in instances where it is safe to do so. • We will improve choice and quality of accommodation and support for older young people in care and care leavers. • We will offer support to care leavers moving to independence to maintain tenancies. • We will continue to develop clear service pathways for children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) supported by a multi-agency process. • We will continue to ensure that all children and young people who go missing receive return interviews, a completed risk assessment and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase sufficiency of local placements to increase choice for children in care. • Increase in the number of children in foster placements who turn 18 and stay put in their placement. • Reduction in the number of children in care with 3+ placement moves. • Reduction in the number of children returning to care within one year of previous period of care. • Increase in the number of children in care in longterm placements (fostering). • Percentage of children in care during the year who were placed within 12m of the decision (adoption). • Reduction in number of missing episodes for looked after children and increase in number of independent return home interviews. • Reduction in number of looked after children who are first time entrants to criminal justice system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term placement stability improved from 11.9% (Oct 2022) to 11% (March 2023). • New emergency / complex needs children’s home partially opened, another due to open June 2023. • 32 young people live in Staying Put arrangements as of June 2023; a new, clearer staying put agreement has been launched. • Between March 2022 and March 2023, the percentage of children with 3 or more placement moves in 12 months dropped from 12.7% to 11%. It dropped further to 10.6% in June 2023. • The proportion of children who enter care within 12 months of a previous care episode dropped from 10% to 6% between March 2022 and March 2023. • For 2022-23, 70.3% of children for whom the agency decision was adoption, were placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision. This is a slight decrease from 72% the previous year, however the latest quarterly figure for this metric is 77.8%. • For children who go missing, 99% of return interviews were completed, although children’s participation in these has reduced from 71% to 62% over the year. • Between January 2021 and June 2022 15% of first entrants to the criminal justice system were children in care. For the period 1st

<p>timely management of identified risks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will further develop a multiagency response to serious youth violence enabling early identification of young people. 		<p>April to 15th November 2022, this proportion fell to 11.3%.</p>
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Priority 2: Fulfil potential

Key service areas and strategies: Virtual School, SEND Strategy and Transformation Programme, Care Leavers Strategy.

How we achieve this	Key Success Criteria	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational needs or requirements of the child will be considered at the outset of any placement. • We will support our children with education, training and employment options to help them achieve the best they can. • Children who need to change schools will be allocated a new school place without delay. • Children with additional needs will be supported to have appropriate provision so they can achieve their potential. • All children will have a Personal Education Plan (PEP). • Young people leaving care will be encouraged and supported with accessing further and higher education and training opportunities including apprenticeships. • We will increase apprenticeships, work experience and training opportunities across the councils, partners and the private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All looked after children will have an up-to-date PEP supported by daily monitoring calls to each school where a child attends to ensure attendance. • Improvement in educational attainment of children. • Increase in proportion of care leavers in education, employment and training. • Reduction in number of children without a school place. • Increase in care leavers undertaking apprenticeships and other opportunities in the Trust and councils. • EHC Plans for children are reviewed annually and quality assurance demonstrates plans are of good quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every PEP is quality assured by the Virtual School, with a compliance figure of around 97% to 98% for the two council areas. 79% were rated Good for the secondary school cohort for 2021-22. • At Key Stage 1 in academic year 2021/22, 23% of NNC children care achieved the expected levels in reading, writing and maths. This figure was 10% for WNC children in care. • The Progress 8 score for Key Stage 4 for NNC was -1.41 (-0.11 difference to national figure). For WNC, the figure was -0.78 (+0.52 difference with national figure). • Meaningful year-on-year comparative data around educational attainment are unavailable due to the pandemic. • Around a quarter of the school age children in care have an EHC Plan, and all their PEPs are quality assured by the Virtual School. • Virtual School continues to work closely with schools to reduce exclusions. • Any children not on school roll are supported by the VS to access the right provision for them, including tutoring. • There have been 6 apprenticeships in the Trust over the last 2 years, including our Care-Experienced Apprentice Champions. • The proportion of care leavers in

		<p>education, employment or training remains stable at around 62%, and above national averages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospects NEET service holds weekly drop-in sessions for care leavers. • Local Offer event with businesses and partners has led to increased opportunities for care leavers in terms of education, employment and training, including apprenticeships
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Priority 3: Develop resilience

Key service areas and strategies: Reunification Policy, Workforce Development Strategy, Joint Housing Protocol, Participation Strategy.

How we achieve this	Key Success Criteria	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will help our children to learn about who they are as well as the important events in their lives. • We will make sure all necessary information and paperwork is obtained in a timely way such as passport, birth certificate and national insurance number. • We will promote family time between children, young people and their families in a way that enables them to have positive relationships with the people who are important to them where this is safe. • We will support children to reconnect with family and other trusted adults in a safe and to learn about their family history. • We will work with children and families to ensure there is effective support in place to support and maintain a return home. • We will continue to build positive relationships with our children and never give up on them. • We will ensure children have a variety of means to express any concerns they may have and that these are acted on promptly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in children moving out of care and number of children returning home. • Proportion of visits to children in timescale. • Increase in percentage of permanent social workers in the corporate parenting service. • Increased number of children engaging in Children in Care Council and participation events. • Feedback from children and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between March 22 and March 23, the proportion of children leaving care due to permanence fell slightly from 22% to 19%. However, the permanence tracking panel is now driving permanence for children at the earliest possible stage. Also note that for some children residential care is the best option until adulthood, and these are not reflected in permanence figures. • Around 84% of children receive a visit within 6 weeks, a dip from 91% the previous year. • Between March and May 2023, social work vacancy figures in the service fell from 16.7% to 15%. • Several hundred children received nominations and awards at large scale celebration events in 2022 and 2023. Feedback from 2022 was used to inform the 2023 event. • 139 children took part in Virtual School holiday activities. • Participation number for the Children in Care Council has remained stable at around 16; the group contributed a great deal to the celebration events. • New feedback mechanisms for children are in place and being developed, including the Mind of My Own app, development of the Trust's websites, a child-friendly complaints process, and the Young Inspectors group. • The Voice of the Child working group regularly feeds back to senior managers and boards.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will aim to keep changes for our children to a minimum. • We will make certain that we have a robust and active Children in Care Council who are able to influence and shape services. • We will offer support to care leavers moving to independence to maintain tenancies. 	<p>young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of June 2023, the Mind of My Own app is being relaunched with new features, including the ability for workers to respond to children directly through the app. • Care leavers continue to receive support in maintaining tenancies via the joint protocol with housing services, which includes regular meetings with housing services, and the Accommodation and Transitions Panel.
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Priority 4: Enjoy good health and wellbeing

Key service areas and strategies: Integrated Care System, CCG Health of Looked After Children

Strategy

How we achieve this	Key Success Criteria	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children receive appropriate, dedicated services within agreed timescales including access to health assessments, dental appointments and emotional health and wellbeing services. • We will give access to appropriate emotional and mental health support for looked after children when they need it. • We will support care leavers to achieve positive mental wellbeing and emotional resilience. • Children with complex needs and disabilities will have access to integrated services. • We will make sure our children who are looked after can access their health records and history. • We will develop support offers to foster carers including access to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). • We will help our children do the things that are important to them in terms of culture and religion. • Children will enjoy a smooth transition between children's services and adult social care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people identify themselves as health and happy. • % of children in care with Strengths and Difficulties (SDQ) scores. • Proportion of care leavers provided with a health passport. • Reduction of care-experienced young people who are street homeless or involved in offending behaviour. • Increased placement stability performance. • Number of children referred to MIAP aged 16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level oversight and scrutiny continues in respect of Health Assessments. Figures for initial assessments continue to fluctuate; 87% in December 2022, falling to 43% in March 2023. Review assessment figures remain stable around 67%, a rise from the 2021/22 average of 62%. • There have been challenges with the SDQ pathway in Northamptonshire and work has been undertaken with key partners to develop a new pathway and improve the SDQ process. • All children are provided a health passport at their final statutory review. They are also directed to the NHS mobile app. • Between June 2022 and January 2023, the proportion of YOS cases who were care-experienced rose from 15% to 16.3%. The proportion of first-time offenders who were care-experienced had fallen, due in part to the relatively new multi-agency Protocol for Reducing the Criminalisation of Children in Care and Care Leavers. • All young people at risk of homelessness are closely scrutinised at senior manager level. For a snapshot of June 29th 2023, there was one young person classified as No Fixed Abode, with 10 sofa surfing. • Between March 2022 and March 2023, the percentage of children with 3 or more placement moves in 12 months dropped from 12.7% to 11%. It dropped further to 10.6% in June 2023. • The Leaving Care Service now has a dedicated mental health specialist working in the team.

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COUNCIL 26 October 2023

Report Title	Revenue Budget Update 2023/24
Executive Member	Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation
Report Author	Janice Gotts, Executive Director of Finance and Performance Janice.gotts@northnorthants.gov.uk

Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1974	

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval for:

- the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund one-off revenue implementation costs of the Development and Regulatory Services Case Management Systems and the inclusion of ongoing annual revenue savings of the system into the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

1.2 Approval of the funding will allow the schemes to move forward to procurement and delivery. The Executive considered these items at its meeting on 12th October and recommended that Full Council grant approval for the funding request as outlined in this report.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report contains details of revenue projects which have been submitted by officers to Executive as part of the Council's Revenue Approval Process. Each scheme must complete a business case setting out the changes requested to

the Revenue Budget Programme, including the purpose of the spend, the expected outcomes and the financial implications together with funding routes.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that Council:

a) Approve the funding for the following changes to the revenue budget:

- i) Development and Regulatory Case Management System (CMS) – approve a revenue budget of £600k in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new CMS funded through use of the Transformation Reserve and approve the inclusion of ongoing revenue savings of £40.4k in 2024/25 onwards over the 5 years of the contract.

3.2 Reasons for Recommendations: These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as:

- i) Expiry of incumbent contracts by 31st March 2024
- ii) Benefits from a single CMS, service delivery improvements and process efficiencies.

3.3 Alternative Options Considered:

- i) Alternative options considered for the CMS can be summarised as follows:-
 - o Do nothing.
 - o Do Minimal – replacement solution for Kettering.
 - o New supplier single solution.
- ii) More detail in relation to alternative options considered by the Executive in respect of the three schemes are set out in the report presented on 12th October 2023, as referenced in Section 8 of this report.

4. Report Background

4.1 This report covers the request for approval for the use of reserves in relation to the CMS which are revenue costs and therefore seeks to update the revenue budget for 2023/24 as included within the Medium-Term Financial Plan, as adopted by the Council in February 2023, and requests the proposed changes are approved and reflected within the revenue budget.

5. Issues and Choices – Further Detail on the Recommendations and Updates to the Revenue Budget for 2023/24

5.1 Revenue budget approval is being sought in 2023/24 for £600k in 2023/24 for the procurement and one-off implementation costs of a new CMS funded

through use of the Transformation Reserve, alongside approval of the inclusion of ongoing revenue savings of £40.4k in 2024/25 ongoing into the MTFP. The current CMS is coming to the end of its contract on 31st March 2024, and therefore a procurement exercise needs to be undertaken to replace the existing CMS. The system is essential to the delivery of an effective and efficient service.

- 5.2 Further information on this scheme is available from the separate report to Executive on 12th October 2023.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 The procurement of a single CMS is expected to be completed by April 2024, with phased implementation commencing thereafter. Key milestones are detailed within the report to Executive, as referenced in section 8 below.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources, Finance and Transformation

- 7.1.1 The additional budget requirements in this report are funded from the use of reserves. The funding source for the scheme is set out in the recommendations in section 3 of this report and within the scheme details as set out within section 5 of this report.

7.2 Legal and Governance

The Council must utilise funding and deliver schemes in line with the restrictions and requirements as set out in the agreements linked to that funding and the requirements as set out in the Council's Constitution, in particular the budget setting and policy framework and the financial regulations.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 The schemes provide a strategic fit with the Council's priorities as set out within the corporate plan.

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 The deliverability of the revenue budget is monitored by Service Managers and Assistant Directors across the Council. There is further review throughout the year reported through to Executive.

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 The 2023/24 Revenue Budget as part of the MTFP, was subject to consultation prior to approval by North Northamptonshire Council in February 2023. The budget was approved by Council at its meeting on 23rd February 2023 and was

subject to consultation from 22nd December 2022 to 27th January 2023. These proposed changes are in addition to the approved budget.

7.6 Consideration by the Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1 Not applicable.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 The scheme recommended in this report has not been considered by Scrutiny. However, monitoring against the budget is considered regularly by Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 Nothing specific within this report.

7.9 Climate and Environmental Impact

7.9.1 The climate and environmental impact of each capital project will be considered and managed within the relevant scheme.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 These proposals can be considered to have a positive impact on the community as the revenue budget delivers a range of schemes to support and connect communities.

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 Nothing specific within this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1 The following background papers should be considered in relation to this report.

[General Fund Budget 2023/24](#) – Full Council, 23rd February 2023

[Development and Regulatory Services Case Management System Procurement and Implementation Business Case](#) – Executive, 12th October 2023