

Public Document Pack



Meeting: EAP Active Communities
Date: Friday 2nd February, 2024
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, The Cube, George St, Corby NN17 1QG

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To members of the EAP Active Communities

Councillors Helen Howell (Co-Chair), Gill Mercer (Co-Chair), Ken Harrington, John McGhee, Russell Roberts, Geoff Shacklock and Chris Smith-Haynes

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

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<p>Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer North Northamptonshire Council</p>  <p>Proper Officer 25th January 2024</p>			

This agenda has been published by Democratic Services.

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Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Active Communities

At 10.00 am on Friday 1st December, 2023 in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George St, Corby NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Helen Harrison
Councillor Paul Marks

Councillor John McGhee

Officers

Jane Bethea (Director of Public Health)
Shirley Plenderleith (Assistant Director Public Health)
Ali Gilbert (ICS Director of Place)
Samantha Fitzgerald (Assistant Director for Adult Services)
David Pope (Democratic Services)

45 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from co-Chair, Cllr Helen Howell as well as Cllrs Ken Harrington, Russell Roberts, Geoff Shacklock and Chris Smith-Haynes. It was noted the Cllr Paul Marks was acting as substitute for Cllr Smith-Haynes.

46 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations received.

47 Minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2023

RESOLVED that:-

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48 Development of the North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care Strategy

The Chair welcomed Ali Gilbert, ICS Director of Place to the meeting to provide an overview of the development of the North Northamptonshire Adult Social Care five-year strategy for adult social care provision and commissioning covering 18-year-olds to adults, including progression transition from 14 years onwards.

The meeting noted that the strategy was being co-produced with the Council's Adult Social Care workforce and service users, demonstrating solid engagement and wide ownership. It was heard that the strategy was currently in its 13th draft iteration and

was progressing through partner organisations and internal meetings for comment. Details of the five-year vision, aims and ambitions including values and behaviours had been developed based on staff practice framework outputs.

The panel heard that the strategy was designed to align with A New Sense of Place (Local Area Partnerships (LAPS) and to support North Northamptonshire Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) collaborative initiative as well as the statutory requirements of the Care Act.

It was reported that the development of the strategy had been ongoing since April 2023, with a view to implementation by March 2024, with a sub-group of the Operational Working Group currently examining the development of a co-production framework. Further governance details were provided to the meeting, with reference made to the focus on community hubs through the Moving Forward with Place sub-group.

The meeting noted that the vision for the strategy was to co-produce Adult Social Care Services in a way that was meaningful, and person centred by incorporating the core values for North Northamptonshire which included:

- **Customer Focussed:** Individuals, their families and carers, could expect person centred care, tailored to the circumstances, strengths and needs of the individual and that demonstrated their desired outcomes.
- **Respectful:** Individuals, their families and carers could expect to be always treated with dignity, having support that recognised their capability and ambitions whilst promoting independence and being treated as equals.
- **Trustworthy:** Individuals, their families and carers could expect open, honest and regular communication in a manner and frequency agreed by them that involved active listening to ensure mutual understanding and where needed, additional support to aid participation and understanding as well as increased involvement and recognition of their role as experts in their own lives.
- **Efficient:** Service users and their families could expect timely, high-quality information, advice, assessments and support to ensure that their individual needs were met, a shared understanding of what constituted high quality care and how this was demonstrated and measured.
- **Supportive:** Individuals, their families and carers would be able to make decisions about what is right for them, their quality of life was improved, and they were enabled to participate as valued members of the wider community.

The meeting noted that behaviours and cultures within the adult social care team were very important, and the draft strategy, once approved, would represent a cultural shift in the way of working following feedback from staff. Details of the future strength-based way of working were detailed as follows:

- Person-centred strength-based safe care
- Single route of access into Adult Social Care with the right allocation to community places / hubs
- Information, advice and signposting embedded in initial conversations
- Carers, friends and families involved most of the time when appropriate
- Strengths-based three conversations embedded with entire Adult Social Care workforce
- Co-production embedded

- Safeguarding culture owned by all making safeguarding personal
- Reduction of handoffs between services supported by the right technology
- Appropriate and timely housing and accommodation offers
- Needs-based population commissioning, contracting underpinned by integrated brokerage and commissioning based at Place
- Reducing demand and enabling timely reviews
- A strong market meeting the needs of the population
- Provision of quality social care services through contracting, clear accountability and regulatory compliance, with value for money and continuous improvement embedded
- Appropriate skill and competency of all staff with clear career development opportunities available to all in support of staff wellbeing, recruitment and retention
- Connected digital technology

Cllr John McGhee spoke to note a lack of reference to housing within partnerships, stating that this was a key factor for many people, especially for older people being discharged from hospital to their home and facing significant waiting times before reablement or other support visits could take place. Cllr McGhee suggested that this sort of arrangement should be sorted prior to discharge from hospital, noting that social care teams had previously been based in hospitals to assist in that regard.

The ICS Director of Place responded to note that housing was contained within the case for change within the report and referred to the developing Housing Strategy taking a place-based approach to complement and problem-solve as part of the alignment of strategies.

Cllr McGhee then made reference to the prevention agenda and it being key to healthiness, with a lot of work in this regard undertaken by the voluntary sector. Cllr McGhee queried how small a place would be included as part of a reference to place-based commissioning.

The ICS Director of Place noted that the voluntary sector worked with social care teams, however, currently this was after service demand had arrived as opposed to filtering demand before it was received. It was noted that consideration needed to be given to an alternative approach to referrals. Local Area Partnership work had a preventative element, with current commissioning based on the needs of North Northamptonshire. There was a need to understand the needs and requirements of local areas prior to local commissioning taking place. A detailed plan for place-based commissioning would commence from early 2024 during finalisation of the strategy.

Cllr McGhee stated that in relation to micro-commissioning and the voluntary sector, funding being only provided on a short-term basis prevented long-term planning and prevention work, with longer-term commissioning required to reduce workload on both the voluntary sector and the Council and to provide certainty.

The Chair responded to note that frameworks being put into place for service providers contained provision to allow for micro-businesses to be set up, especially in rural areas where home care was difficult to obtain. In relation to the voluntary sector, some of these organisations would be on existing framework with annual uplifts providing elements of certainty. There was a need, however, to provide more certainty

regarding what the Council could commit to financially, although this was also a wider national issue in terms of government funding for Councils not being long-term.

The ICS Director of Place noted the voluntary sector survived on funding, with the integrated care system seen as an opportunity, although involvement would be a challenge as it was a new culture to adapt to. The Director of Public Health spoke to state that work was ongoing with the voluntary community sector to what assistance the Council could provide in relation to their infrastructure requirement, ensuring a more sustainable sector.

Cllr McGhee noted that the voluntary sector needed to be given time to transition their way of working, with support offered to enable them to do this. Staff on the front line need to be onboard with changes outlined as they were the ones delivering the services, and it was positive to hear that their voices were being listened to.

Cllr McGhee noted that feedback from service users indicated a desire to have a streamlined process with reduced numbers of contacts and dates of service provision. In response, it was heard that currently a variety of interdisciplinary conversations took place but these were not sufficiently joined up, one possibility was having a key person in place to help service users navigate through the future model.

The Chair noted that staff engagement and ownership of the strategy was vital, and the team was commended for the genuine engagement undertaken enabling staff to be the basis for developing the new strategy. In addition, it was vital that service users and their families were kept engaged and provided with an understanding of the Adult Social Care processes they were involved with.

Cllr McGhee noted the financial and time implications inherent in any transition process, and questioned the financial cost involved in the changes outlined and whether this still affordable given government announcements in relation to social care. In addition, Cllr McGhee queried whether a recent report regarding social care placements that had been through the Council's scrutiny function was related to the strategy before members.

The ICS Director of Place noted that in terms of finance, Adult Social Care was a demand-led service but there was need for collective ownership of the right demand coming into the service, which was why Place was also involved in the development process.

The Assistant Director for Adults Services stated that service demand was growing, but the Adult Social Care Strategy was fundamentally the right thing to do and would not necessarily cost more money. If the most effective connections with the voluntary sector could be made, demand could be managed, realising time and interaction efficiencies that offered a real benefit.

The Chair stated that if processes were correct from the outset, financial and other efficiencies could be realised.

Cllr McGhee raised an issued with data sharing challenges between organisations. The Assistant Director for Adults Services stated that data sharing had historically been a challenge, a significant amount of work undertaken to improve this position, with the advent of the iCAN system referenced. An example of real-time information

provision at Kettering General Hospital was provided to the meeting, as well as a partner organisation data sharing warehouse that was an active workstream.

Cllr Paul Marks queried procedures for dealing with people who needed care assistance but would not accept it. The Assistant Director for Adults Services stated that engagement was always attempted with vulnerable people, with reference made to key legislation in this regard. Details of the Adult Risk Management process were provided in an attempt to reduce the risk faced by an individual.

The Chair concluded debate by stating that salient points raised during the meeting would be reflected back in the Forward Plan feedback loop. It was agreed that the strategy would be submitted to a future meeting of the panel prior to being formalised.

49 Service Presentation - Adult Services

The Chair invited Samantha Fitzgerald, Assistant Director for Adults Services to provide a service presentation for Adult Services.

The meeting was provided with an outline of the staff that comprised the team, noting their diverse backgrounds and that the Chief Principal Social Worker worked across all portfolios. The Assistant Director for Adults Services stated that there was a desire to invest in the workforce, to allow for sustainability moving forward and to produce staff in-house, noting that work was underway to build this culture within the Council and answer some of the challenges faced in both recruitment and retention.

Details of the service objectives were provided, with the meeting noting that the ultimate role of the team was to undertake the statutory assessments of need in line with the Care Act 2014 by focussing on a strengths-based practice to deliver that outcome.

The meeting heard that the team supported Adult Social Care Services through a 'Three Conversation Model' offering a person-centred and outcome-focused service. The service worked in partnership with those requiring support to help individuals live more independently and achieve the right outcomes for them. It was noted that this could be through their own resources, their family and friends, community networks, or formal support through a variety of locations and teams as detailed below:

- Community Hubs (4)
- Inclusion Hubs (4)
- Learning Disability Hubs (2)
- Dedicated Adult Social Care Hospital team
- Continuing Health Care Team
- Care Home Review Team
- Reablement North

It was heard that within all the teams and services work was undertaken alongside partner agencies putting service users at the centre of activity to produce consistently better outcomes for people. As the place project continued work would be undertaken to ensure hubs were as accessible as possible.

The meeting was advised that the service operated a strengths-based approach working with adults over the age of 18 and supporting adults with mental health, physical health, vulnerabilities, age-related issues and learning disabilities. A significant amount of work had been undertaken with staff to assist in the understanding of this approach.

The “three-conversation” model for service users saw initial contact to connect and listen to the outcomes people wished to achieve from the service. Conversation two would consist of intensive work with the person seeking support, with conversation three providing longer-term formalised care and support.

Details of the service road map of the journey through Adult Services was provided to the meeting. Cllr John McGhee queried the timescales involved between interventions for service users and noted in response that they were specific to the individual and dependent on their needs.

The meeting received details regarding Community Hubs as being the “front door” for the service, managing all new referrals coming through Adult Social Care, with the exception of those with learning disabilities. Referrals were then progressed through the ‘three-conversation’ model focusing on early intervention and outcome-focused services. Community teams also provided long-term social care support to people over 65 years of age, including re-assessment and reviews as well as working closely with all key partners to ensure an integrated support system as offered to people approaching Adult Social Care. It was noted that the current system did present issues with hand-offs of service users, however there was an aim to bring together a larger, more resilient team offering efficiencies around core functions and resulting in a more seamless service.

Details were provided of the Council’s Inclusion and Learning Disability Teams, with service users for the latter preferring a single place of service access to connect with the support network. Looking to the future, there were opportunities for service integration and additional work with health partners with an aim of achieving a reduction in hospital admissions, an increase in people being able to reside in their own homes for longer and being able to access employment opportunities.

The panel was provided with key figures relating to the service, noting current staff levels of approximately 300, with around 30 vacancies, primarily frontline social workers and assessment workers with these positions actively being recruited, offering a clear career pathway whilst minimising use of agency staff. The net budget for the service was £99.2m, with 4598 service users currently receiving support from Adult Services, 2862 being over the age of 65. Those receiving care in their own homes were the largest volume of service users, with those in residential care second.

Risk and challenges faced by the service were outlined to the meeting, that noted a significant increased demand for Adult Social Care; an increase of 25% for older persons and 15% for young adults across the last financial year. It was therefore vital that the model for the service allowed as much to be dealt with at initial contact stage to ensure demand was met in the correct manner.

Other areas of risk included availability of social care provision, specifically nursing care and residential for older persons, difficulty in recruiting to key roles, hospital pressures and volumes of provider failure. Waiting lists for assessment and reviews also remained a concern.

The meeting received details of the Hospital Team that provided support for all adults who had been identified by hospital staff as being in need of reablement, and/or long-term care and support needs, to facilitate their discharge from hospital. Key performance details for the team were provided, including details of the percentage of patients discharged to their home as well as residential care outcome figures.

The meeting received details of the activities of the Reablement Team North as well as performance data for the team. The Chair queried how reablement service users were identified as needing help, with a response noting that the majority came through the transfer of care hub as well as primary care referrals.

Cllr McGhee stated that the priority was to get service users back to their homes, and that getting necessary adaptations completed and support provided in timely fashion was absolutely essential in achieving this. The Assistant Director for Adults Services provided figures for the reablement service to indicate current timescales involved.

The panel then received performance details for the Thackley Green Specialist Care Centre in Corby, noting that the site was integral to supporting hospital discharge demands, offering rehab and reablement plus additional resources. Details of referral totals and timescales for length of stay were provided.

Cllr McGhee queried how many of those receiving care were around the average length of stay and how many exceeded that timeframe and questioned how the service assisted those that had been in the care centre for long periods. The Assistant Director for Adults Services noted that those in the care centre long-term had good reasons for being there, usually relating to aids and adaptations and that there were currently only two long-term patients in Thackley Green.

Cllr McGhee queried how the service prioritised aids and adaptations and how timescales involved could be reduced. In response it was noted that the service worked closely with the Housing Team and was examining how the Disabled Facilities Grant could be best utilised to reduce wait times.

Cllr McGhee asked whether the Council had sufficient Occupational Therapists to support current demand and heard that there was suitable capacity, however delays in service progression could impact that capacity.

Data was provided to the meeting that detailed Adult Social Care discharge by pathway, from patients returning home, into short-term care or residential care. It was noted that demand had exceeded levels anticipated.

The meeting then received details of areas for service focus across the next 12-month period, while noting that the service faced unprecedented demand. The Chair queried whether this demand was likely to continue at such levels and could continue to be met by the service. It was noted that regionally and nationally increased demand figures were similar, although North Northants was facing higher demand levels than the regional average. Work was underway across the service and partner organisations to understand the reasons behind this and to look at ways of reducing demand on services.

Cllr McGhee noted the service backlog and the need for a big change in the way social care operated nationally to improve the situation. Reference was made to day

care centres and the positive impact these had had on people's lives. In response it was noted that such centres did still operate and offered people meaningful occupation.

Cllr McGhee concluded debate by noting that whilst the service faced a difficult set of operating circumstances, efforts of the team to maintain services were appreciated, with the success of the Adult Social Care strategy anticipated.

50 Executive Forward Plan

The Executive Forward Plan for December 2023 to March 2024 was noted.

51 Forward List of Items for the EAP

The forward list of items for the EAP was considered.

52 Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 12.01 pm



Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel 2nd February 2024

Report Title	Communities Strategy and strategic investment into the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector
Report Author	Kerry Purnell, Assistant Director Communities and Leisure Kerry.Punell@northnorthants.gov.uk
Contributors/ Approvers	Jane Bethea, Director Public Health and Wellbeing Hazel Webb, Strategic Lead Communities and Wellbeing Gill Chapman, Principle Community Support Manager

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Draft North Northamptonshire Council Communities Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report introduces the Council's Communities Strategy. It has been co-produced with representatives from across the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.
- 1.2. The report also sets out the proposed new VCSE strategic grants framework for period of three years from 1st April 2024, which replaces the previous strategic grant arrangements which North Northamptonshire Council inherited from the former sovereign councils.
- 1.3. It also details the proposed new VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements which will be tendered and contracted for three years from 1st September 2024.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector provides valuable support to people across North Northamptonshire. The range and geographical coverage of organisations in the sector is comprehensive. There are currently 168 VCSE member organisations connected to the VCSE locality-based networks in Kettering and Corby and 200 across Wellingborough and East Northants, many of whom operate successfully without funding from the Council. They range from small volunteer-run community groups to larger charities, some of which provide very specialised work such as debt casework,

mental health counselling, support to victims of domestic abuse, and drug treatment and recovery.

- 2.2. The purpose of this strategy is to emphasise and strengthen the role the VCSE, residents and communities have in delivering the North Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan and the Northamptonshire Integrated Care System's Live Your Best Life Strategy, particularly within the context of the new Place-based delivery models.
- 2.3. The Communities Strategy is a North Northamptonshire Council strategy, but it also brings together the key themes which underpin a number of national and local agendas into a co-ordinated framework for effective partnership working with the VCSE. This will be achieved through mutually beneficial relationships between all Directorates within the Council, with the VCSE and Town and Parish Councils, but can also support positive relationships across all organisations, across sectors and with residents and their communities, which will drive innovation, collaboration and meaningful co-production.
- 2.4. The Strategy has five principal aims, for 2024 to 2027, which are to:
 - Emphasise and strengthen the role the VCSE sector, residents and communities have in delivering the Council's corporate objectives, and within the context of the countywide Live Your Best Life Strategy for the Integrated Care System, particularly within the context of the new Place-based delivery models;
 - Develop a co-ordinated vision and framework for effective partnership working on equal terms, and, wherever possible, co-production with VCSE organisations and groups, along with Town and Parish Councils;
 - Set out the Council's approach to financial investment into the VCSE, which promotes sustainability, through access to a range of funding sources, including strategic and small grant giving by the Council; and future infrastructure support into the sector;
 - Strengthen the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver services and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting volunteering, supporting people in the most vulnerable situations, and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities;
 - Provide a framework to support innovative approaches which facilitate necessary change, given the shifting needs of local communities in the wake of the pandemic and the current economic climate.
- 2.5. The Strategy introduces eight key themes, six* of which will form a significant part of the ask the Council will make of the future providers of the VCSE Infrastructure support contract, which will be tendered for delivery. The remaining two themes will be co-ordinated and delivered by Council officers.

The themes are:

- Capacity Building and back-office support for the VCSE*;
- Funding Support for the VCSE*;
- Co-ordination of VCSE involvement and leadership for the Integrated Care System and the Place Programme*;
- Developing mutually beneficial relationships*;
- Co-ordination and promotion of best practice across the VCSE*;
- Volunteering support, promotion and best practice*;
- Supporting communities to take on assets and services where appropriate to do so;
- Delivery of the VCSE grants programme.

2.6. It is proposed that the new VCSE strategic grants framework for 2024-2027 focuses on the following themes:

- Core cost support to the Community Centres which were supported by the former sovereign Councils;
- Financial Inclusion;
- Community Transport;
- Prevention of Social Isolation for Older People;
- Community Mental Health and Wellbeing;
- Increasing resilience in the VCSE to provide support for vulnerable residents, as identified through the new Support North Northants (SNN) service;
- Promotion and Advocacy for Equalities.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Executive Advisory Panel:

- a) Consider the draft Communities Strategy and provides comment and feedback;
- b) Notes the proposed VCSE Strategic grants framework and the proposed VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements for the period 2024-2027.

3.2. Reasons for Recommendations:

- The previous strategic VCSE grant arrangements inherited from sovereign Councils end on 31st March 2024 (some have been in place since 2017, pre-Covid and pre-North Northamptonshire Council) and new arrangements are required;
- The previous arrangements for VCSE infrastructure support also come to an end on 31st March 2024 and new, more robust, arrangements are required;
- There has been a huge shift in the strategic context within which the Council and the VCSE are now working, largely due to the

development of the Integrated Care System (ICS) and the new Place-based delivery models, including the Council's Levelling Up agendas for its 'left behind' neighbourhoods, all of which have already resulted in a strengthened collaboration and governance for the VCSE;

- The Place-based delivery models have also brought about emerging priorities from the new Community Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), and the emergence of the new VCSE-led, whole-system, early intervention service, Support North Northants (SNN), which is providing evidence of need on the ground in communities;
- The work undertaken by the Northamptonshire County Association for Local Councils (NCALC) between 2021 and 2023 which reported on the relationship between Principal and Local Councils, and included approaches to devolution of assets and services.
- In summary a Communities Strategy is required to set out the Council's approach to working with and investing in the VCSE within the context of these strategic contexts.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered:

3.3.1 The alternative option would be to not have a Communities Strategy. However, this would not be a recommended approach as the Strategy sets out how the Council wishes to work with the VCSE, as equal partners, recognising the valuable role the sector plays in supporting the communities of North Northamptonshire.

3.3.2 It also identifies the key themes for the new VCSE Infrastructure contract and lays the foundation for the Council's new VCSE strategic grants programme, both of which are needed to replace legacy arrangements inherited by the Council in 2021. Without the Strategy the VCSE would not have reassurance about future funding opportunities, nor about the critical support it has stated it requires moving forward, to help the sector to grow, become more sustainable and to attract more inward investment into North Northamptonshire, for the benefit of our communities.

3.3.3 A number of options were considered as part of the Council's budget setting for 2024-25, in relation to the future funding envelope for the VCSE Strategic grants from 1st April 2024. This included removing all funding and ceasing the programme, to a variety of proposals which might result in the funding being reduced to a greater or lesser extent. Ultimately the Council's Executive are committed to retaining the funding at the same levels as before, £671,771, whilst recognising that new grant arrangements would be required to replace those that are expiring on 31st March 2024.

3.3.4 In summary, not having a Communities Strategy could result in missed opportunities for VCSE organisations to collaborate effectively with one another to share knowledge, expertise and resource, and for the Council to work in effective strategic and operational partnerships with the

hundreds of VCSE organisations which operate locally and add so much economic and social value to the North Northamptonshire economy and social fabric.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The VCSE provides valuable support to people across Northamptonshire. The range and geographical coverage of organisations in the sector is comprehensive. There are currently 168 VCSE member organisations connected to the VCSE locality-based networks in Kettering and Corby and 200 across Wellingborough and East Northants, many of whom operate successfully without funding from the Council. They range from small volunteer-run community groups to larger charities, some of which provide very specialised work such as debt advocacy and casework, mental health counselling, support to victims of domestic abuse, and drug treatment and recovery.
- 4.2. Over the last 18 months the VCSE across North Northamptonshire has become stronger, largely due to the emergence of the ICS Place Programme. This has seen the VCSE strengthen its collaboration within the sector, and work closely with statutory partners to influence the development of the Place Programme including leadership and co-ordination of the four new Community Wellbeing Forums (CWFs) and seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs). A new governance for the VCSE has been embedded as part of the ICS, with a strategic Oversight Group reporting into the Place Delivery Board, the four VCSE CWF chairs sitting on the North Health and Wellbeing Board and a wider VCSE Operational Engagement group being established to complement the four locality VCSE networks that already existed.
- 4.3. It has been the ambition of the Communities and Leisure Directorate to develop a Communities Strategy for the Council since Vesting Day. This direction of travel was presented to the Council Executive in a report in March 2022 which outlined the intention to develop a Strategy which would include:
 - Adoption of a corporate commitment to working in equal partnership through co-production;
 - Strengthening the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver projects and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting people in the most vulnerable situations and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities; and
 - VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements to improve sustainability and increase growth in the VCSE sector, developing fit for purpose, sustainable organisations able to deliver high quality projects with diversified income streams and less reliance on grants, with a more commercial focus and which are flexible and adaptable to change.

- 4.4. The Executive report dated 17th March 2022 secured approval to extend the VCSE strategic grants inherited from the former councils for a further 2 years until 31st March 2024. These grants included funding the former councils committed to VCSE infrastructure support.
- 4.5. The delay in developing this Communities Strategy, whilst not planned, has been fortuitous, as there have been some significant changes during the intervening period, to the strategic context within which the Council and the VCSE are operating.
- 4.6. Not only has the Council adopted its Corporate Plan, it has begun to develop its Vision50 for 2050. The VCSE has an important role to play in helping the Council to deliver almost all of its strategic objectives as they relate to outcomes for our people and places, and also align with the raison d'etre for many of our VCSE organisations.
- 4.7. However it is important to ensure that where the Council is grant funding VCSE delivery, the investment is demonstrably contributing to its strategic priorities.
- 4.8. Over the last 18 months the county as a 'system' of partners from across the public and VCSE sectors, has also developed its approach to integrated health and care through Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN). A new 10 year Live Your Best Life Strategy was adopted in late 2022, The ambition of this strategy is for residents to 'live their best life' in all aspects: health and wellbeing, education, housing and employment.
- 4.9. The ICS Strategy sets out a collaborative direction of travel for the people of Northamptonshire to achieve a shared vision over the next 10 years to deliver better outcomes for residents throughout their lifetime; from pregnancy to early years, to improved education and employment opportunities, to social connection and better access to health and care services. It also recognises that, like many areas, North Northamptonshire faces a number of challenges which continue to place pressure on the Council and on health and care services. North Northamptonshire faces significant demand from a growing older population and working age adults, as well as the children population. These are happening at a time when operating cost pressures are high, with utility costs rising and people feeling the impact of the rising cost-of-living. It is clear that organisations, and their services, must adapt to ensure that they meet the challenges ahead. Through shared working and VCSE and community involvement, we have the best opportunity to respond to these challenges.
- 4.10. During the latter half of 2022 the ICS Place Programme was developed as part of the county-wide ICS Operating Framework. The ICS approach to delivery is all about connecting strategic decision making, from the Integrated Care Board and the county-wide thematic strategic collaboratives, through to place, utilising the new CWFs and LAPs; and putting communities at the heart of what we do.
- 4.11. The seven LAPs in North Northamptonshire have used LAP profiles, based on a range of Public Health and other data, alongside of local intelligence that LAP members have brought to the table, to identify a number of priorities. The first round of priorities was identified following a series of community events held in

the spring of 2023 and the second round was identified in the autumn of 2023. These priorities and the subsequent action plans that have been developed have helped inform some of the new themes for the VCSE Strategic grants programme proposed in this report.

- 4.12. In addition, as part of the ICS Place Programme, the VCSE in North Northamptonshire have introduced a new VCSE-led whole-system, early intervention service, Support North Northants (SNN). Mobilised in the second half of 2023, as a test and learn programme, SNN currently has 12 months seed funding from three different funding partners across the ICS to help the VCSE prove the concept.
- 4.13. SNN is a system-wide collaborative service model with the VCSE, statutory and other agencies to provide co-ordinated earlier intervention and prevention of escalation of issues for adults over 18 and their families. It aims to guide people to the right services, pathways and support networks quickly, and to build greater levels of community resilience by increasing capacity in the VCSE to provide wrap-around support. The key principles are:
- Don't give up on people' and catch people early;
 - Person-centred and strengths-based support, based on holistic assessments;
 - Builds personal and community resilience, invests in and builds capacity within VCSE services to meet identified local needs;
 - Help people to help themselves;
 - Effective use of public and community assets, skills, talents, resources through effective case co-ordination.
- 4.14. A small SNN team of 11 staff has been recruited, hosted across three VCSE organisations, and additional investment has been made into other VCSE organisations to provide key support services which have been identified as gaps early on, such as benefits checks for all SNN service-users, home repairs and safety modifications where needed. SNN is a practical, emerging example of the collaboration within the VCSE and across the sectors, which this Strategy seeks to foster. It is also identifying barriers which prevent residents from Living Their Best Life, which have also informed the new priorities for the VCSE strategic grants programme.
- 4.15. In 2021-22 a cross party Scrutiny Panel was established by the Council to review and understand the underlying data related to the three neighbourhood areas in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough highlighted as 'left behind'. Engagement activity was undertaken with residents in those neighbourhoods to understand the challenges and opportunities and also to explore the views of partner agencies, including the VCSE organisations, working in those communities. Learning was also considered from programmes already delivered in those areas.
- 4.16. Recommendations were made and a Levelling Up Action Plan has been developed, to both set out the Council's strategic intent to level up these neighbourhoods and so that progress against those recommendations can be demonstrated and tracked. Many of the recommendations relate to how the

Council engages and communicates with, funds and problem solves with the VCSE in those neighbourhoods and are therefore relevant to the Communities Strategy.

- 4.17. In 2021 NCALC received Community Renewal Funding to deliver a project aimed to be an investment in communities and place. Along with mapping all assets, functions, services and facilities within each parish, it aimed to start the work towards developing a devolution framework and enhancing the confidence, knowledge and skills of Parish and Town Councils to generate effective business cases to achieve successful bids through the Community Right to Bid process for community assets.
- 4.18. The work towards developing a devolution framework resulted in Local Councils across North Northamptonshire being better informed about and prepared for any future transfer of assets and services. Some of the “nuts and bolts” of devolution were put in place, but the Council through its Statement of Intent was and remains clear that it has no intention to undertake any wholesale devolution of assets and services in the near future. The Statement from North Northamptonshire Council states:
- NNC “understands that the appetite for and capacity of towns and parishes to take on increased roles in local service delivery and place-shaping varies significantly between individual local councils”. NNC “wants to support communities when they wish to take on additional responsibilities; but the Council is not looking to force assets onto towns & parishes. The Community Asset Transfer Policy is there to enable NNC to respond if / when town or parish councils want to explore taking on an asset or service. **The transfer of assets or services is an opportunity and there will be a place-led approach which responds to local demand or aspirations from communities.***
- 4.19. “Listening Events” which were held with Council officers and Councillors went some way to establishing a meaningful dialogue between the Council and the Local Councils in its area.
- 4.20. There is further work to do to ensure that if there are any further transfer of assets and services, the process is well-managed, thoughtful, and fair. This will therefore form a theme for this strategy.
- 4.21. In preparing this strategy, the current VCSE Infrastructure organisations (SERVE and Groundwork Northamptonshire) have engaged with organisations across the VCSE locality networks, and the first North Northamptonshire sector-wide engagement event was held in person at the end of September 2023, where over 100 VCSE organisations were represented. These sessions highlighted the vital role the sector plays in delivering commissioned, grant-funded and voluntary services, often to people in the most vulnerable situations. The sector is seen as innovative, dynamic, flexible and responsive, making it a key partner in delivering effective and efficient services.
- 4.22. At the engagement event the sector was asked to consider the following questions, the feedback from which has informed this Strategy:

- What are the biggest challenges facing the VCSE locally currently?
 - What are the opportunities?
 - What support do you think should be offered under future VCSE infrastructure arrangements?
 - If NNC could only invest in a few strategic priorities for the sector, what would they be?
- 4.23. The North VCSE Oversight Group leaders from the sector have proactively helped to shape this Strategy, by engaging with the VCSE through their networks, specifically to influence the focus for the new VCSE Infrastructure offer. They have offered constructive comment on the initial drafts of the Strategy.
- 4.24. A series of co-production meetings have also been held with VCSE partners who deliver against the emerging themes identified as priorities for future investment through the VCSE strategic grant funding the Council distributes. These meetings have been open, frank and transparent to inform what needs to be funded and why, what is currently working and why and the challenges and opportunities for VCSE partners to collaborate even more effectively, to ensure the Council can maximise the reach and impact of its financial investment.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The current strategic VCSE grant arrangements total £671,771 per annum. It should also be noted that the strategic grant arrangements are not the only grant funding NNC provides to the VCSE. Currently, during 2023-2024 also NNC invests in the VCSE through:
- **Discretionary (Small) grants**, up to £5,000 per grant – £120,000 p.a.
 - **Shared Prosperity Funding** – £255,000 in 2023-24 and £400,00 in 2024-25 with a focus on projects which support young people in left behind areas and supporting community/VCSE sector with bid writing and funding support; community mental health & wellbeing; connecting communities to services & services to communities and volunteering in all areas.
 - **Shared Prosperity Funding for Rural Communities** £72,000 for 2023-24 and £218,000 for 2024-25.
 - **Member Empowerment Fund**- £156,000 p.a.
 - **Household Support Fund 4** for 2023-24, £570,00 with a focus on supporting all Vulnerable Households in Financial Hardship through Home Improvements, Food Poverty, Tenancy Support, Benefit Advice and Budget Management.
 - **£250,000 COMF funding** in 2023-24 to support the test and learn phase for Support North Northants
 - **£129,000 Well Northants Programme** community grants in the three left behind neighbourhoods.

- **Multiply funding** (commissioned by Adult Learning Service), supporting residents with numeracy skills, £273,500 for 23-24.
 - There will also be other commissioned contracts from NNC services into the VCSE.
- 5.2. The investment detailed above, including the current strategic grant agreements totals £1.82m for 2023-2024.
- 5.3. Part of the current VCSE strategic grant arrangements relate to Infrastructure support to the VCSE by certain VCSE partners. Infrastructure arrangements, normally funded by Local Authorities and delivered through contractual arrangements, include functions such as:
- Capacity building in the sector to ensure back-office functions and governance arrangements are robust and organisations are commissioning-ready should they wish to bid for grants and contracts;
 - Improving sustainability and increasing growth in the VCSE sector, developing fit for purpose, sustainable organisations able to deliver high quality projects with diversified income streams and less reliance on grants, with a more commercial focus and which are flexible and adaptable to change;
 - Funding and bid-writing support;
 - Volunteering best practice;
 - Supporting networking, collaboration and co-ordination across the sector and with statutory partners to ensure the VCSE has a voice in strategic and operational decision making through genuine co-production;
 - Supporting the sector to promote and enable social and community action; and
 - Supporting the sector to demonstrate impact and return on investment and contribute to the social value agendas.
- 5.4. However, the infrastructure arrangements inherited by the Council from the former sovereign councils are relatively light touch and constitute a total investment of only £58,000 across North Northamptonshire, through two providers, SERVE for Wellingborough and Groundwork Northamptonshire across Corby and Kettering. East Northants currently has no funded Infrastructure support.
- 5.5. Under the former councils the arrangements were delivered through annual grant agreements. For a Unitary Authority with a population the size of North Northants these legacy infrastructure arrangements are not sufficient nor robust enough to build capacity in the sector as set out above, under the ambitions set out in this Community Strategy.
- 5.6. National best practice is for Councils to formally tender VCSE Infrastructure contracts, to run for at least 3 years, to ensure these contracts deliver against strategic priorities for the Council, as well as meeting the needs of the sector, and to embed collaboration across and strong leadership of the sector into these contractual requirements. It is intended that for the Council that the new

Infrastructure contract will have a significant role in delivering the Communities Strategy, with and on behalf of the Council, and with the sector and wider partners.

- 5.7. This assessment of the current situation was evidenced at the engagement session with over 100 representatives from the VCSE where future Infrastructure requirements were discussed at length. There is a huge appetite for collaboration across the sector in North Northamptonshire, but VCSE organisations said they would benefit from additional support for such issues as bid writing support, shared back-office functions such as training and professional development, HR, finance, procurement, legal, insurance and transport, communications and marketing, safeguarding, risk management, volunteer management, sharing resources and best practice, workforce recruitment, development and retention, governance and policy, commerciality and financial sustainability.
- 5.8. The sector also discussed the benefit of an annual state of the North Northamptonshire VCSE report and sharing expertise in demonstrating return on investment, all to help show the impact the VCSE has locally on services and outcomes for communities.
- 5.9. The Council does not have a statutory duty to fund the voluntary sector or commission projects from organisations within it. However, in recent years, financial cuts both nationally and locally have put significant pressure on the organisations within the sector. In some cases, organisations have been forced to use their reserves to continue operating, which of course is not sustainable in the long-term.
- 5.10. It is proposed to tender a new VCSE Infrastructure contract with an annual value of £200,00 for three years from September 2024 at the latest, to significantly support the delivery of this strategy. This, in turn will provide the support to the VCSE that is both needed and has been requested, to enable the sector to continue grow in reach, depth and resilience, to become less dependent on grant funding from the Council in the future and to continue to deliver positive outcomes for our residents and communities.
- 5.11. The Infrastructure contract will be funded from the VCSE strategic grants allocation within the Council's MTFP.
- 5.12. The current strategic grant funding arrangements with VCSE organisations were inherited from the former sovereign councils and involve a mixture of grants, service level agreements and contracts. Some of those arrangements have been in place for some considerable time, since 2017 in some cases.
- 5.13. The current funding arrangements with VCSE organisations created by the sovereign councils were subject to an application process and were awarded accordingly. Whilst, overall, the current arrangements are performing well, and grant agreements are monitored, they are out of date, offer a somewhat scattergun approach to what services are funded, and where, and as such do not provide the consistency and transparency to which the Council might now aspire. In addition, they do not necessarily reflect the Council's corporate

priorities, and are not aligned with other system-wide ambitions for the area such as the 10 Live Your Best Life Strategy ambitions and the emerging local priorities being determined by the Local Area Partnerships.

- 5.14. In early 2022 a review was undertaken of the funding the Council provides to support some of the core costs of some of its devolved community centres, as inherited from the sovereign councils as part of the former VCSE Strategic Grant arrangements. This is in recognition that there is a range of arrangements in place across the Council area in relation to the ownership, management and funding arrangements for community centres.
- 5.15. All centres in the East Northants locality are devolved to either Town or Parish Councils or other community organisations. The former East Northamptonshire Council did not award community grants to any organisations running community buildings.
- 5.16. In Wellingborough all community centres are devolved or have never been owned by the Council. Hemmingwell Community and Skills Centre has recently been formally asset-transferred to Greatwell Homes as it is located on their land. There is a long-term lease in place with a community organisation which runs the centre. Hemmingwell Community Centre receives £10,000 p.a. from the Council towards core costs. Two other centres, Glamis Hall and the Victoria Centre also receive core funding of £10,000 and £11,326 p.a. respectively.
- 5.17. The three devolved centres in the Kettering area, (Crescents Community Centre, Burton Latimer Community Centre and Highfields) do not receive Council funding for core costs. However, there are seven which are still operated in-house by the Communities and Wellbeing service:
 - Ise Valley Pavilion
 - Melton Street Community Centre
 - North Park Pavilion
 - Northampton Road Pavilion
 - Rockingham Pleasure Park Pavilion
 - Rothwell Community Centre
 - Counties Community Centre
- 5.18. They are used by a number of regular hirers as well as one-off bookings, such as for parties or celebrations. Most are regularly hired, however, due to the condition of some of the buildings, usage is limited in some, two of which (Rockingham and Northampton Road Pavilions) are being considered as part of the emerging Leisure Facilities Strategy.
- 5.19. Staffing for the Kettering area centres is covered by the Communities and Wellbeing service via a Community Services Assistant who oversees the repairs and maintenance of these centres, along with 2 part-time Site Assistants who open/close for hirers and maintain the centres.
- 5.20. The Council continues to look at opportunities to devolve the remaining in-house centres, for example the Counties Community Centre is being proposed for 2024-25. It was previously devolved but brought back in-house

when the Community Association folded. A new Community Association is now interested in taking on the running of the centre. There are challenges with further devolution as some centres need significant capital investment in order to bring them up to a standard where they can be transferred to communities, but the Council will continue to explore these opportunities as appropriate.

- 5.21. In 2012 the former Corby Borough Council devolved 12 Council-owned community facilities to community groups, to run on behalf of the council. Leases were agreed at a peppercorn rent and grants were awarded towards the core utility and running costs previously met in house.
- 5.22. These grants were awarded annually and ten of the centres currently receive grant funding support from North Northamptonshire Council as part of the legacy grant agreements taken on by the new authority in 2021. Two of them are sports facilities not community centres*. The Autumn Centre, which receives specific council funding for providing day care services for older people and people with dementia, does not receive a separate grant towards core running costs.
- 5.23. The currently funded devolved community facilities which receive funding towards core costs from the Council VCSE strategic grants allocation are:

Devolved Community Facility	Amount Council Funded per annum
Kingswood Community Centre (Corby)	£17,200
Danesholme Communicare Centre (Corby)	£11,660
Beanfield Community Centre (Corby)	£11,660
Stephenson Way Community Centre (Corby)	£8,660
Ennerdale Community Centre (Corby)	£8,660
Oakley Vale Community Centre (Corby)	£8,330
Arran Community Centre (Corby)	£5,000
Woodsend Bowls Club* (Corby)	£3,240
Corby Olympic Boxing Club* (Corby)	£1,170
Hemmingwell Community Centre (Wellingborough)	£10,000
Glamis Hall (Wellingborough)	£10,000
The Victoria Centre (Wellingborough)	£11,326
Total	£106,906

- 5.24. Service Level agreements are in place which contain agreed services for each centre which receives a grant towards core costs to deliver, such as:
- Managing the Property for the benefit of all residents within the area;
 - Providing access to groups and individuals who wish to hire the property;
 - Actively promoting the facilities available at the property to the community;
 - The Board should be actively involved in contributing to local community events;
 - The Board should foster good relationships with partners, resident groups and the community;
 - Maintaining an activity programme and actively encourage new activities to increase the services delivered for all ages and abilities at the Property.
- 5.25. The Council, as landlord, is still responsible mainly for external repairs and maintenance, as well as fixtures such as heating systems, for which there is a revenue budget of £53,160. The budget is predominantly spent on monthly maintenance checks, minor repairs, fire equipment testing and when required, replacements, gas testing and labour costs. The budget is under pressure most years.
- 5.26. The community organisations, as leaseholders, are mainly responsible for internal repairs and décor of the buildings.
- 5.27. Across the Council area, Corby is distinct in that a larger number of community organisations running council owned community facilities have the benefit of a peppercorn rent, as well as an annual grant to contribute to core costs. There are no similar arrangements in either the Kettering or East Northants localities.
- 5.28. As part of the review into the VCSE strategic grant arrangements the Council has considered harmonising its approach across geographic areas and in line with strategic context outlined in priorities as outlined in section 4 above. This applies equally to investment in community centres as it does to other grant themes.
- 5.29. There is disparity between the devolved centres where core grants are provided and those in other parts of the Council area which are not funded in the same way. If allowed to continue this could lead to the question of parity of grant funding across the Council, arising to claims from organisations in other geographic areas of the Council and potentially an increased demand for annual revenue expenditure.
- 5.30. If the Council continues to fund the community centres as it currently does, and Council funding is expected year on year, there is limited incentive for the community associations to improve their business model or to seek other external funding streams. The funding is given for core costs and not against a specific service area or project outcomes, thus paradoxically limiting the council's influence over service delivery. If the Council does not harmonise the

funding of community centres, it could lead to a long-term drain on the Council's revenue budget, leading to adverse consequences for other services.

5.31. The proposal to harmonise investment into community centres by removing the core grants to the devolved centres was aired as part of the Council's budget setting processes during late 2022 and early 2023. It was not progressed at this time, but a consultation, by way of a survey and face to face discussions, was undertaken to ascertain feedback on any effect that a cessation or reduction of the grant arrangements would have on the organisations running the affected community centres. Specifically, they were asked:

- What effect, if any, the proposal is likely to have on operating times and services offered at the centre?
- How any likely effects could be mitigated e.g. cost savings, income generation, other external funding opportunities, tapered support etc?
- The level of unrestricted reserves of the organisation e.g. 3 months?
- Whether there are any other unique factors the council should be considering?

5.32. The overall feedback was that a short notice, total withdrawal of grants from the centres would have a detrimental effect, with several voluntary management groups stated that without time to mitigate the potential impact, they may have no option but to cease functioning and hand the keys back to the council. The main factors cited were:

- Low level of reserves and where reserves have been built up, this has taken several years of sustained effort;
- High utility bills, especially where just coming off fixed tariffs;
- Heavy reliance on volunteers, with a potential over reliance on a small number of people;
- Some responsibility for ongoing repairs and maintenance;
- High insurance costs, especially where potential vandalism is a factor;
- Where the only cost reduction is staffing, this is often caretaking staff, without whom there would be a reduction in access to the building and therefore services, and everyday health and safety checks on buildings and appliances;
- Inability to raise prices to cover the extra income needed due to the economics of the area, and the potential of losing trade patronage through overpricing;
- Difficulty of raising external income through lack of resource, not being in a priority area or, where applications are made, the competition for funds within the sector means not many bids are successful or sustained;
- All the centres highlighted the 'social' value of their venues and added value of a range of services within the community, often in deprived areas, offering a safe space for people across a range of ages and cultural backgrounds to meet. The impact of loss of local services and access points would be amplified in an already deprived areas;
- In many cases, the centres host or co-ordinate initiatives as a partner to the Council for example,. warm spaces, local forum meetings, public

health initiatives and are working towards building community capacity and resilience which the Council is trying to promote;

- Organisations pointed out that they act as custodians and users of council buildings that would otherwise be a larger liability to the council beyond any loss of community services and goodwill.

5.33. Having a place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality-of-life is paramount to the vision of North Northamptonshire. Well run and active community centres contribute to the corporate plan by hosting activities which help people live healthier, more active, independent and fulfilled lives; as well as providing efficient, effective and affordable services that make a real difference to the local community and further afield. This was taken into account when considering the option to withdraw or reduce the funding which contributes to the core costs of these devolved community centres, especially as they are largely situated in 'left behind' or deprived neighbourhoods.

5.34. It is proposed by the Executive at this time, that the funding which contributes to the core costs of these devolved community centres is maintained for 2024-2025 and is reviewed on an annual basis.

5.35. A review of current grant allocations to cluster them against themes and assess them against the Council's Corporate priorities, the 10 Live Your Best Life ambitions, the intelligence emerging from the new Local Area Partnerships and engagement with the VCSE networks has identified a small number of key themes. In addition to the increased investment into VCSE Infrastructure support the following themes are proposed for funding by the Council from the VCSE strategic grants allocation:

- **Financial Inclusion** (benefits checks and advice, debt and money management advice and education, intensive case work for Debt Recovery Orders, IVAs, tribunal support and advocacy);
- **Community Transport** (to contribute to community-led transport offers across all localities for medical appointments and other social and employment purposes)
- **Prevention of Social Isolation for older people** (Support for over 60s to remain independent at home and to be an active part of the local community through practical support to access local groups and activities, Volunteer recruitment and support and outreach services)
- **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing** (co-ordination and use of Community wellbeing champions to support residents struggling with anxiety and low-level mental health challenges to manage day to day activities and access services which are there to support them)
- **Increasing resilience through specific commissions to the VCSE** to provide support for vulnerable residents, as identified through the Support North Northants (SNN) service;
- **Promotion and Advocacy for Equalities** (outreach and promotion campaigns about residents' rights, advice, guidance and casework related to discrimination).

- 5.36. New project specifications are being co-produced with VCSE providers and expressions of interest will be sought from the sector. New grant agreements will be established to run for three years from 1st April 2024, in recognition that short term funding does not support the sector to efficiently mobilise, then embed projects and develop exit strategies for sustainable delivery.
- 5.37. Organisations which receive funding will be required to ensure there is delivery across the NNC area, to prevent the postcode lottery which is currently in place. They will potentially be delivered through a lead provider model whereby the Council tenders a project brief and awards a Grant Agreement to one VCSE organisation to deliver against the funding criteria, but that organisation collaborates with others to ensure efficient service delivery across all four North Northamptonshire localities. This will further foster the ethos of collaboration and leadership across the VCSE.
- 5.38. Rationalisation and streamlining of the current strategic grant programme will allow for more robust oversight of future agreements and therefore service delivery, to ensure NNC is securing best value, impact and outcomes for its investment.
- 5.39. As part of the Council's Budget Setting process for 2024-25 a series of options in relation to the £671,771 budget for VCSE Strategic Grants were carefully considered by the Council's Executive Members.
- 5.40. Following review of a variety of options the funding envelope for the VCSE Strategic grants will remain at £671,771 and will be used to:
- Increase investment into VCSE Infrastructure support;
 - Harmonise strategic grants into 6 key themes
 - Retain funding to all currently funded devolved community centres.
- 5.41. This is in recognition of the Council's continued commitment to valuing and supporting the VCSE, but new grant arrangements will be put in place for April 2024 for the proposed new grant themes.
- 5.42. The aims for the Communities Strategy are:
- Emphasise and strengthen the role the VCSE sector, residents and communities have in delivering the Council's corporate objectives, and within the context of the countywide Live Your Best Life Strategy for the ICS;
 - Develop a co-ordinated vision and framework for effective partnership working on equal terms, and, wherever possible, co-production with the VCSE groups and Town and Parish Councils;
 - Set out the Council's approach to financial investment into the VCSE, which promotes sustainability, through access to a range of funding sources, including strategic and small grant giving by NNC; and future infrastructure support into the sector;
 - Strengthen the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver services and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting volunteering, supporting people in the most

vulnerable situations, and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities;

- Provide a framework to support innovative approaches which facilitate necessary change, given the shifting needs of local communities in the wake of the pandemic and the current economic climate.

5.43. The outcomes for the Strategy are:

- Improve sustainability and increase growth in the VCSE sector, developing fit for purpose, sustainable organisations able to deliver high quality services with diversified income streams and less reliance on grants, with a more social enterprise focus and which are flexible and adaptable to change;
- Strengthen the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver services and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting people in the most vulnerable situations and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities;
- Encourage mutually beneficial relationships across sectors and communities that use smarter ways of working and collaboration to achieve what we cannot alone;
- Provide clarity about the role of sectors in building strong communities;
- Align key themes underpinning current strategic thinking, including place-based working, asset-based community development, devolution of assets and services to communities, shifting the focus to early help and prevention; and shaping demand to reduce costs in statutory services.

5.44. The aims will be delivered through 8 strategic themes:

5.44.1. **Theme 1**

Building quality and capacity within the VCSE sector and providing back-office support to enable sustainable growth, demonstrate return on investment and social impact, maximise resources across the sector, all to achieve positive outcomes for our communities

5.44.2. **Themes 2 and 3**

Building mutually beneficial relationships across sectors, with commissioners of services, and with communities by creating equal partnerships by promoting co-production and asset-based community development best practice, sharing information, skills, assets and resources, creating spaces to come together, utilising evidence and celebrating success.

5.44.3. **Theme 4**

Innovative income generation and investment into VCSE to ensure financial sustainability in a mixed model and enterprise culture,

encompassing commissioning, maximising national and regional opportunities.

5.44.4. **Theme 5**

Developing our people assets, by increasing resident action and taking a strategic approach to volunteering, providing a platform for opportunities, brokerage, data collection and impact monitoring.

5.44.5. **Theme 6**

Developing our physical assets and services through Town and Parish Councils and community involvement and through supporting communities to take on assets and services asset transfer.

5.44.6. **Theme 7**

Co-ordination of the North Northamptonshire VCSE to embed the sector in the ICS and the Place programme, through ongoing leadership and support to Community Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships and representation at Executive Board level.

5.44.7. **Theme 8**

Co-ordination of investment into the VCSE through the delivery of a range of strategic and smaller grant programmes into the VCSE, based on robust and transparent policies, procedures and governance to include:

- New VCSE Infrastructure contract arrangements, at a £200,000 investment per annum for 3 years, which will play a key role in supporting the delivery of this strategy
- Small (Discretionary grants) grants up to £25,000 per award (£120,000 per annum for 2024-2027)
- Member Empowerment Fund (£156,000 p.a)
- Shared Prosperity Funds (£618,00 2024-2025 only)
- New VCSE Strategic grant arrangements (£471,771 p.a. for 2024-2027) to cover key strategic themes of community transport, financial inclusion, equalities, older peoples' social isolation, low Level mental health support within communities, building VCSE capacity and community resilience as well as continued contribution to core costs of some devolved community centres.

5.45. This Strategy runs from 2024 to 2027 and there are a number of key Council services, partners projects that will drive delivery of the themes, and the elements within themes. For example, the Council will facilitate the VCSE grant programmes under Theme 8 but the VCSE organisations deliver against the grant agreements. Town and Parish Councils will play a lead role, along with NCALC, to help the Council to deliver against Theme 6.

5.46. There is a crucial role for the VCSE organisations as future Infrastructure contract holder/s, to lead delivery of specific themes, namely Themes 1, 2, 3,

4, 5 and 7. These include capacity building, funding support, volunteering and co-ordination of the VCSE role within the ICS, to name a few. The details and scale of this contract will be explored and delivered through a robust procurement process.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. To present the Strategy to Executive for adoption.
- 6.2. To finalise the project briefs for the new strategic grant arrangements and to circulate to the VCSE for Expressions of Interest to be submitted.
- 6.3. To work with legal and procurement to prepare the VCSE Infrastructure contract for tender.
- 6.4. To establish a relevant forum with representatives from Town and Parish Councils.

**North
Northamptonshire
Council
Communities
Strategy
2024-2027**

Foreword – Councillor Mark Rowley - Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up

North Northamptonshire's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE) is vital to the life of our area. Our voluntary and community organisations, and local groups help to connect communities, support individuals, deliver services and bring people together. The sector is innovative, dynamic and resourceful. It does not just fill the gaps in between public services; it's more often the first port of call for people, where they go for friendship, support and to give something back to their local area. Which is why it's so diverse.

What does the phrase VCSE really mean? Voluntary and community groups of every shape and size, and now joined by an emerging social enterprise sector. They have seen huge changes over the last few years, positives and negatives. The pandemic, financial challenges and the cost-of-living crisis have prompted a re-focus within the sector, a fresh look at what is being delivered and achieved, what is needed and what the aspirations are. Quality and sustainability are essential not just for survival, but to thrive. Relationships have changed, but those that have emerged are stronger than ever, with more collaboration, within and across sectors, and greater recognition and valuing of voluntary and community groups.

What makes our voluntary and community groups in North Northamptonshire so special are people. An army of volunteers, staff, friends and neighbours working tirelessly to build their local community and help the most vulnerable, at risk and in need.

And we have never needed them more. Ongoing public sector austerity, the huge impact of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, economic, demographic and social pressures are unprecedented. Voluntary and community groups are best placed to deal with these challenges, and best placed to respond, in the right place at the right time, at the heart of our communities.

But they cannot do this alone, and nor should they simply be given money to respond. As a new and developing Council, we want to foster and enable a new spirit and culture of working together across sectors and communities, a strengths and asset-based approach where we all have a contribution to make, and resources and skills are invested collaboratively, equally and transparently.

Our new Place Development Programme, as part of the Integrated Care System (ICS), seeks to drive this way of working, bringing public services, residents and voluntary and community groups and local businesses together through the four Community Wellbeing Forums and seven Local Area Partnerships, to make positive change happen. And the Sector can play a significant role in helping to shape, influence and deliver our Vision 50 ambitions for North Northamptonshire.

The challenges we face present fresh opportunities, but we need to be brave enough to change how we work, break down our silos and sector barriers and build mutually beneficial relationships.

That is why we have produced this strategy. It's not one just for the 'VCSE', it's a vision for us all to achieve our common goals. I am delighted that North Northamptonshire Council are continuing to invest in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector, not only maintaining the levels of funding from recent years, but enhancing the

offer through new funding streams such as the creation of the Member Empowerment Fund and the allocation of external investment from the Shared Prosperity Fund as well as short term funding such as the Household Support Fund. I am also pleased that through this Strategy we will be significantly increasing investment in VCSE infrastructure support, so that we can continue to raise the profile of the sector by supporting hundreds of groups and organisations to do new activities, deliver services, support volunteers and become more financially sustainable.

Finally, thank you for taking the time to read this strategy and for your continuing support in our vision for to build strong communities in North Northamptonshire, 'a place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life'.

Cllr Mark Rowley

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1. About this Strategy

This purpose of this strategy is to emphasise and strengthen the role the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE), residents and communities have in delivering the North Northamptonshire Council’s Corporate Plan and the Northamptonshire Integrated Care System’s Live Your Best Live Strategy.

It is a North Northamptonshire Council Strategy but it also brings together the key themes which underpin a number of national and local agendas into a co-ordinated vision for effective partnership working with the VCSE.

This will be achieved through mutually beneficial relationships between all directorates within the Council, with the VCSE but also can support positive relationships across all organisations, across sectors and with residents and communities, which will drive innovation, collaboration and meaningful co-production.

2. Strategic and Operational Context

2.1. North Northamptonshire’s VCSE

The VCSE provides valuable support to people across North Northamptonshire. The range and geographical coverage of organisations in the sector is comprehensive. There are currently 168 VCSE member organisations connected to the VCSE Locality based networks in Kettering and Corby and 200 across Wellingborough and East Northants, many of whom operate successfully without funding from the Council. They range from small volunteer-run community groups to larger charities, some of which provide very specialised work such as debt casework, mental health counselling, support to victims of Domestic Abuse, and drug treatment and recovery.

2.2. NNC’s Strategic Priorities

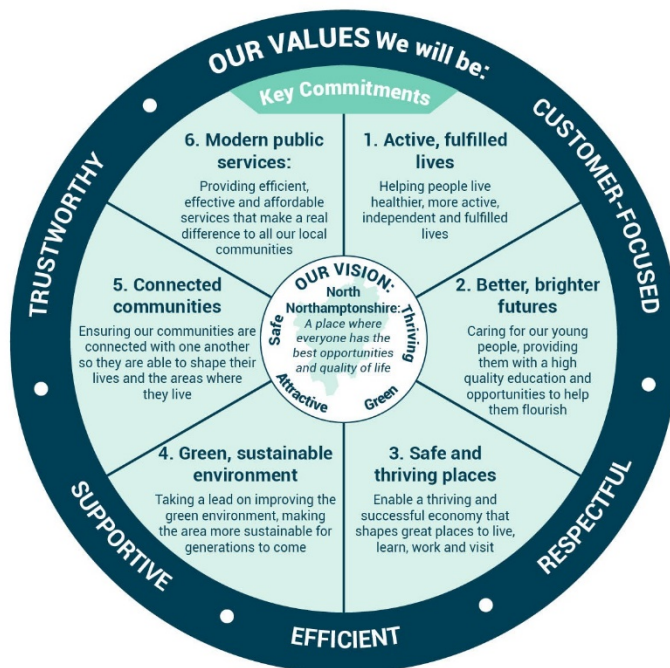


Figure 1 - NNC Corporate Plan 2021-2025

As a new Council vested in 2021, North Northamptonshire Council developed and adopted its first Corporate Plan in late 2021. The main focus for the Council is to ensure North Northamptonshire is, **‘a place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life’**.

During 2023 the Council has also been developing with its key partners, including the VCSE, its Big50 Future Vision which sets out the vision for 2050 for North Northamptonshire as an area, with the draft priorities for North Northamptonshire being:

- A proud place
- A prosperous place
- A proactive place

The VCSE has a role to work alongside the Council in delivering almost all of its strategic objectives as they relate to outcomes for our people and places, and align with the raison d’etre for many of our VCSE organisations. However it is important to ensure that where the Council is grant funding VCSE delivery, the investment is demonstrably contributing to its strategic priorities.

2.3. The Integrated Care System

Over the last 18 months the county as a ‘system’ of partners from across the Public and VCSE sectors, has also developed its approach to integrated health and care through Integrated Care Northamptonshire (ICN). A new 10 year Live Your Best Life Strategy was adopted in late 2022, the ambition of this strategy is for residents to ‘live their best life’ in all aspects: health and wellbeing, education, housing and employment.

It sets out a collaborative direction of travel for the people of Northamptonshire to achieve our shared vision over the next 10 years to deliver better outcomes for residents throughout their lifetime; from pregnancy to early years, to improved education and employment opportunities, to social connection and better access to health and care services.

It also recognises that, like many areas, North Northamptonshire faces a number of challenges that continue to place pressure on the Council and on health and care services. We face significant demand from our growing older population and working age adults, as well as our children population. These are happening at a time when operating cost pressures are high, with utility costs rising and people feeling the impact of the rising cost of living. It is clear that organisations, and their services, must adapt to ensure that they meet the challenges ahead. We know that through shared working and VCSE and community involvement, we have the best opportunity to respond to these challenges.

The Live Your Best Life strategic objectives are summarised below:

Ambition	Outcome
The best start in life	<p>Women are healthy and well during and after pregnancy.</p> <p>All children grow and develop well so they are ready and equipped to start school.</p>
Access to the best available education and learning	<p>Education settings are good and inclusive and children and young people, including those with special needs perform well.</p> <p>Adults have access to learning opportunities which support them with work and life skills.</p>
Opportunity to be fit, well and independent	<p>Children and adults are healthy and active and enjoy good mental health.</p> <p>People experience less ill-health and disability due to lung and heart diseases.</p>
Employment that keeps them and their families out of poverty	<p>More adults are employed and receive a 'living wage'.</p> <p>Adults and families take up benefits they are entitled to.</p>
Good housing in places which are clean and green	<p>Good access to affordable, safe, quality accommodation and security of tenure.</p> <p>The local environment is clean and green with lower carbon emissions.</p>
To feel safe in their homes and when out and about	<p>People are safe in their homes, on public transport and in public places.</p> <p>Children and young people are safe and protected from harm.</p>
Connected to their families and friends	<p>People feel well connected to family, friends and their community.</p> <p>Connections are helped by public transport and technology.</p>
The chance for a fresh start, when things go wrong	<p>Ex-offenders and homeless people are helped back into society.</p> <p>People have good access to support for addictive behaviour and take it up.</p>

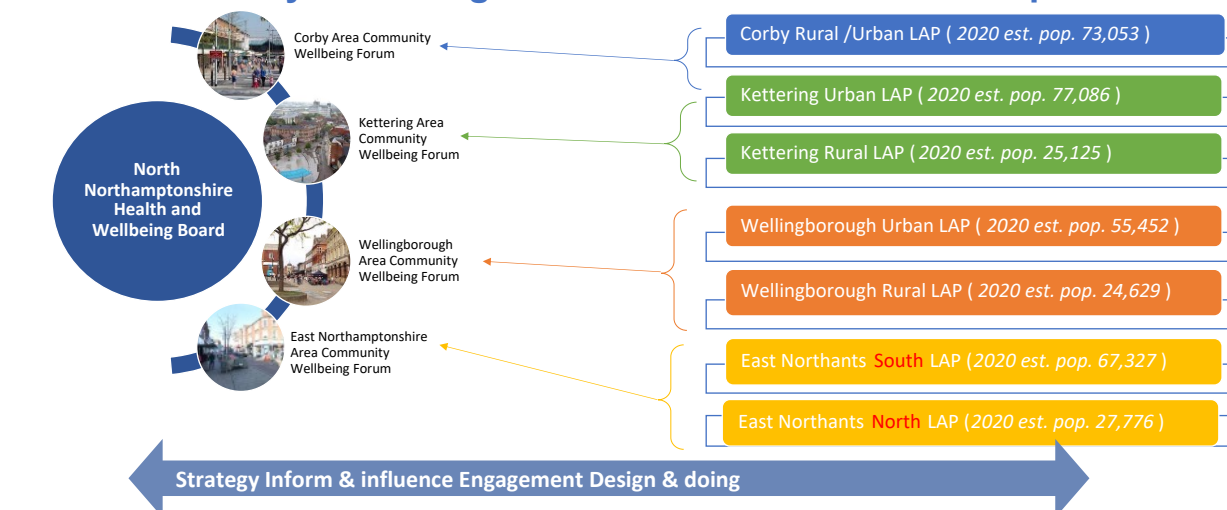
2.4. Community Wellbeing Forums

- Enable local statutory and VCSE partners to work together in a place to share organisational priorities and initiatives to improve health and wellbeing of local people through engagement and strengthened relationships with each other and communities.
- Influence and inform the North Northamptonshire health and wellbeing ambitions.
- Review evidence on local health needs, social and economic determinant of health and wellbeing and identify issues that need addressing.
- Provide partnership action to unblock challenges that LAPs feel unable to tackle and where 'at scale' solutions are needed, including joint commissioning / pooled budget arrangements.
- Provide oversight and conduit for effective community engagement.
- Enable local leaders influence policy to access the right resource and capabilities to deliver their functions.

2.5. Local Area Partnerships

- Represent local areas and give a voice to residents, translating strategy into local action.
- Build a local relationship with communities and support them to live their best lives.
- Put community involvement & engagement at the heart of improving health and wellbeing.
- Contribute to system-wide priorities by utilising strong evidence-based information and deep local insight from frontline services and communities.
- Grasp opportunities together to work together on locally identified priorities and projects to improve areas people lives to meet local needs.
- Enable local community design and doing through improved understanding of communities.

Area Community Wellbeing Forums Local Area Partnerships



The LAPs have used newly developed LAP profiles, based on a range of Public Health and other data, alongside of local intelligence that LAP members have brought to the table, to identify a number of priorities.

The first round of priorities were identified following a series of community events held in the spring of 2023 and the second round were identified in the autumn of 2023. Partnership task and finish groups have been convened to work on these priorities and actions plans have been developed for each.

Summary of LAP priorities 2023:

LAP	Priority One (Spring 2023)	Priority Two (Autumn 2023)
Corby	Community Transport (lack of medical transport offer)	Support for Cost of Living & wellbeing. Expanding education & training around mental health & wellbeing.
Kettering Urban	Improving engagement with young people who require more targeted support for mental health & wellbeing.	Public and professional awareness of available services.
Kettering Rural	Access to services in rural villages.	Support for anxiety which is a barrier to accessing services.
Wellingborough West	Young People engagement to ensure voice is heard & awareness of local services.	Access to affordable household essentials.
Wellingborough East	Young People engagement to ensure voice is heard & awareness of local services.	Navigating support for substance misuse.

LAP	Priority One (Spring 2023)	Priority Two (Autumn 2023)
East Northants North	Community Transport expansion through volunteer recruitment.	Rural Isolation & awareness of wellbeing support.
East Northants South	Community Transport expansion through volunteer recruitment.	Support for Parents & Carers of Under 18s.

LAPs have also undertaken an asset mapping programme to identify the broad range of physical assets and services across North Northamptonshire, which have been mapped using interactive GIS software.

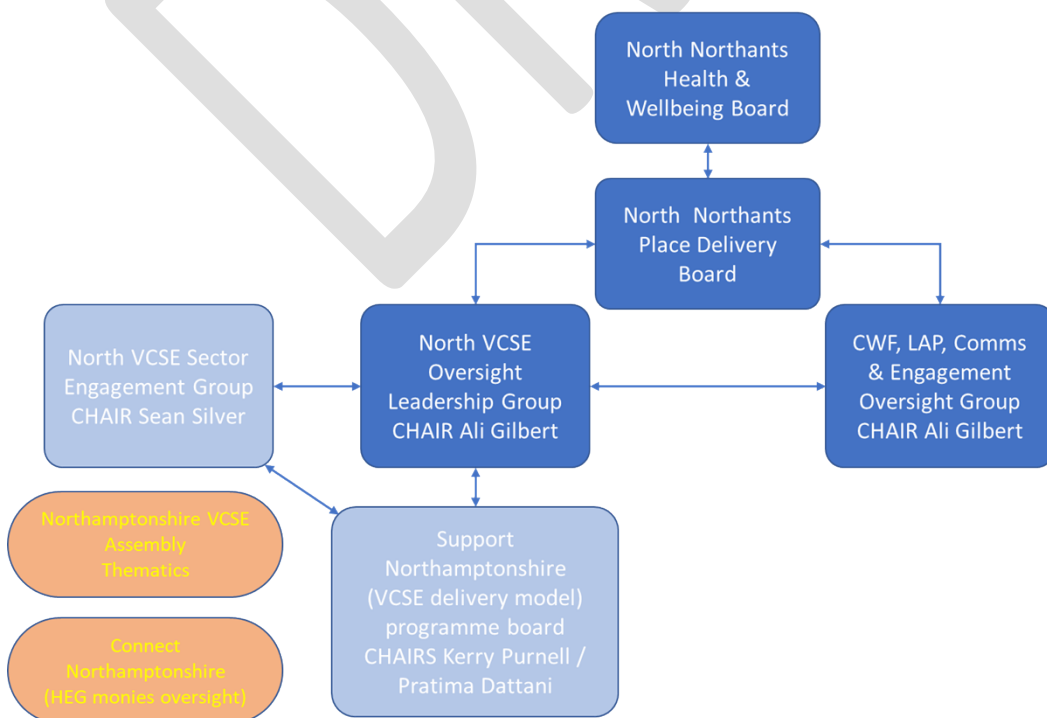
In response to the development of ICN the VCSE across North Northamptonshire has become stronger, largely due to the emergence of the Integrated Care System (ICS) Place Programme.

The advent of the ICS Place Programme has seen the sector strengthen its collaboration within and across the sector, and work closely with statutory partners to influence the development of the programme including leadership and co-ordination of the new four CWFs and seven LAPs.

A new governance arrangement for the VCSE has been embedded as part of the ICS, with a strategic Oversight Group reporting into the Place Delivery Board, the four VCSE chairs of the Community Wellbeing Forums sitting on the North Health and Wellbeing Board and a wider North ICS VCSE operational Engagement Group being established to complement the locality VCSE networks that already existed.

Figure 3 - VCSE Place Programme Governance

North Place Development Programme Governance



2.6. Shaping Demand - the role of prevention and early intervention

To reduce demand on services we must make substantial cultural changes, placing residents, communities and the VCSE sector at the heart of improving community resilience. A variety of techniques for understanding and managing demand are now emerging across a range of public services, including:

- Customer insight, using tools such as service user panels, customer journey mapping, analysis of multi-agency data sets, risk stratification, to build a clearer picture of how and why people engage with public services.
- Changing the relationship between citizen and state, empowering and enabling residents and communities to take action, devolving services and assets to Local Councils and community groups and encouraging greater community cohesion and resilience.
- Investing in prevention and early intervention, for example through social prescribing, an approach that links patients in primary care and residents with non-clinical sources of support within the community. In North Northamptonshire this includes Primary Care link workers based in GP Practices, Activity on Referral Schemes and SPRING Social Prescribing, a Health and Public Health funded outcomes focussed model delivered by a collaboration of organisations to provide interventions for residents with one or more long term health condition.
- Designing and integrating services around the user by involving users in the design and delivery of services, improving integration of delivery, co-production, increasing self-management, peer-to-peer and community support.

2.7. Support North Northants (SNN)

A new VCSE-led whole-system, early intervention service, Support North Northants (SNN), has been mobilised in the second half of 2023, as a test and learn programme. It has 12 months seed funding from three different funding partners across the System to help the VCSE prove the concept.

SNN is a system-wide collaborative service model with the VCSE, statutory and other agencies to provide earlier intervention and prevention of escalation of issues for adults over 18 and their families. It aims to guide people to the right services, pathways and support networks quickly, and to build greater levels of community resilience by increasing capacity in the VCSE to provide wrap-around support. The key principles are:

- Don't give up on people' and catch people early.
- Person-centred and strengths-based support, based on holistic assessments.
- Build personal and community resilience, invests in and builds capacity within VCSE services to meet identified local needs.
- Help people to help themselves.

- Effective use of public and community assets, skills, talents, resources through effective case co-ordination.

A small SNN team of 11 staff has been recruited, hosted across three VCSE organisations, and additional investment has been made into other VCSE organisations to provide key support services which have been identified as gaps early on, such as benefits checks for all SNN service-users and home repairs and safety where needed. SNN is a practical emerging example of the collaboration within the VCSE and across the sectors, which this strategy seeks to foster.

2.8. Levelling Up in Our ‘Left Behind’ Neighbourhoods

In 2021-22 a cross party Scrutiny Panel was established by the Council to review and understand the underlying data related to the three neighbourhood areas in Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough highlighted as ‘*left behind*’.

Engagement activity was undertaken with residents in those neighbourhoods to understand the challenges and opportunities and also to explore the views of partner agencies, including the VCSE organisations, working in those communities. Learning was also considered from programmes already delivered in those areas. Recommendations were made and a Levelling Up Action Plan has been developed, to both set out the Council’s strategic intent to level up these neighbourhoods and so that progress against those recommendations can be demonstrated.

2.9. Northamptonshire County Association for Local Councils (NCALC) Community Asset Mapping project 2021-23

NCALC received Community Renewal Funding to deliver a project aimed to be an investment in communities and place. It included:

- developing a robust devolution framework in partnership with the two new Unitary Authorities, Parish and Town Councils across Northamptonshire and NCALC;
- building capacity within the Parish and Town Council sector across Northamptonshire through capacity funding to enable them to map all assets, services, functions and facilities within their parish;
- generating a comprehensive register of all assets, services, functions and facilities owned and managed by both the Unitary Authorities and the Parish and Town Councils across Northamptonshire;
- enhancing the confidence, knowledge and skills of Parish and Town Councils to generate effective business cases to achieve successful bids through the Community Right to Bid process for community assets.

The project resulted in Local Councils across North Northamptonshire being better informed about and prepared for and future devolution of assets and services. Some of the “*nuts and bolts*” of devolution were put in place, such as the Statement of Intent from North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) which states:

- NNC “understands that the appetite for and capacity of towns and parishes to take on increased roles in local service delivery and place-shaping varies significantly between individual local councils.”

- NNC “wants to support communities when they wish to take on additional responsibilities; but the Council is not looking to force assets onto towns & parishes.”
- “The Community Asset Transfer Policy is there to enable NNC to respond if / when town or parish councils want to explore taking on an asset or service.”
- **The transfer of assets or services is an opportunity and there will be a place-led approach which responds to local demand or aspirations from communities.**

The policies on Asset Transfer and Assets of Community Value have been adopted by the Council. “Listening Events” which were held with NNC Officers and Councillors went some way to establishing a meaningful dialogue between NNC and the Local Councils in its area. There is further work to do to ensure that if there are any devolution of assets and services, the process is well-managed, thoughtful, and fair. This will therefore form a theme for this strategy.

Whilst all these strategic and operational approaches contribute to building strong communities, there is a broader recognition of what makes a strong community, beyond a specific service or theme. All people who live and work in the community can contribute, in particular the VCSE sector and residents.

This new Communities Strategy seeks to promote the whole view of what builds strong communities, and the roles different organisations, sectors and residents can play in achieving this.

3. Roles of the VCSE and Communities

3.1. VCSE

The changing financial, social and demographic environment places increasing emphasis on collaboration with and delivery by the VCSE sector to achieve the strategic goals of the Council and its strategic partners. We must continue to recognise the importance of this sector, and work with its members to ensure there is sufficient capacity and sustainability within it.

In preparing this strategy, the current VCSE Infrastructure Organisations have engaged with organisations across the VCSE locality networks, and the first sector-wide engagement event was held in person at the end of September 2023, where over 100 VCSE organisations were represented. These sessions highlighted the vital role the sector plays in delivering commissioned, grant-funded and voluntary services, often to people in the most vulnerable situations. The sector is seen as innovative, dynamic, flexible and responsive, making it a key partner in delivering effective and efficient services.

At the engagement event the sector was asked to consider the following questions:

- What are the biggest challenges facing the VCSE locally currently?
- What are the opportunities?
- What support do you think should be offered under future VCSE infrastructure arrangements?

- If NNC could only invest in a few strategic priorities for the sector, what would they be?

The feedback is summarised in the table below:

Challenges	Opportunities	Infrastructure	Investment Priorities
Funding support: longer term funding; more streamlined applications & monitoring; too short notice for bids	Libraries & other assets as core community hubs	Shared back-office functions - HR, recruitment, training, finance, admin, legal, procurement, insurance, Equality Impact Assessments, comms, marketing, PR, GIS, safeguarding, health & safety, DBS, risk management and Business Continuity	Youth Offer
Complexity of clients & struggle to get referrals to other agencies met	Collaboration across VCSE	Funding support, bid writing, funding fairs and collaborative applications	Social Isolation for older people
Sustainable workforce	Asset mapping to increase awareness of local offers	Promoting best practice	Financial Inclusion (cost of living)
Cost of back-office functions	Quality multi-purpose hubs in each town centre	Networking & information sharing	Life and employability skills. ESOL training
Increase in core costs to run	Use SNN & Social Prescribing to identify service gaps	Commercial upskilling	Family / Community hubs
Lack of commercial skills	Collate better data on sector to show impact	Leadership & co-ordination - CEO network & leadership development	Physical activity
Communication across sector & with partners	Make use of collective experience	Volunteering best practice, database, portal	Low level mental health / wellbeing
Fragmented sector, overlap and duplication of services	Release public assets to sector	More engagement events for sector and with NNC and other statutory partners / commissioners	Community Transport
Current infrastructure support not agile enough	VCSE knowledge 'hub' for local areas	Ensuring VCSE voice is heard locally & nationally	Social & affordable housing & homelessness prevention
VCSE is picking up some statutory work due to overstretched services	Customer /person-centred (empowering customers to help themselves)	Shared values, treat sector as equal partner	Equalities and Prevention/Tackling Discrimination

Getting residents voice into decision making	Confidence of sector is increasing	Policy frameworks	
Too much jargon		Governance support	
		Providing or contributing to an annual state of the VCSE report in North Northants	

The engagement also identified the important role the sector plays in enabling engagement with the people of North Northamptonshire, often acting as broker between public services and communities. Through its proximity to local people, the sector can build more trusting, open and strong relationships.

Relationships are regarded as relatively strong between the VCSE and public sector agencies, but the need to strengthen partnership working and to provide more clarity on organisational aims and priorities, given the Council and the ICS are still relatively new, was identified.

However, relationships between the VCSE and private sector are not perceived to be as strong, nor is there as much investment in the VCSE from businesses as might be possible. To date there has not been much reach by the Local Area Partnerships into local business communities and greater problem solving with businesses is one of the recommendations made in the Levelling Up Scrutiny report. This all reinforces the need for this to remain as an area of focus for the new strategy.

Overall, Council officers and VCSE partners identified the need to work more collaboratively, building better relationships and making better use of assets, funding and resources, better understanding of expertise and mapping of services, alongside increasing volunteering, developing social enterprise and improving communication.

The North VCSE Oversight Group leaders from the sector have proactively helped to shape this strategy, by engaging with the VCSE through their networks, specifically to influence the focus for the new VCSE Infrastructure offer. They have offered constructive comment on the initial drafts of the Strategy.

In addition, a series of co-production meetings have been held with VCSE partners delivering across the emerging themes identified as priorities for future investment through the VCSE Strategic grant funding the Council distributes. These meetings have been open, frank and transparent to inform what needs to be funded and why, what is currently working and why and challenges and opportunities for VCSE partners to collaborate even more effectively, to ensure the Council can maximise the reach and impact of its financial investment.

3.2. Role of Communities

There is a joint role for public services, the private sector and the VCSE, alongside individual residents and other local stakeholders, in building strong communities. When we refer to community, we see this as everyone who lives and works in that place, regardless of 'sector' or as a collective group of individuals with commonality i.e. the BAME community or refugee

Strong communities are ones where individuals and families have opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing, achieve their aspirations through education and employment, feel safe, can enjoy their environment and can play an active part in their local community.

Local people are often best placed to support each other and take positive action to improve their area. Individual residents can take action that has a huge impact on their family, friends and neighbours, from volunteering with a local group, improving their own health and wellbeing, or just by being neighbourly.

We have a strong network of VCSE groups working with all ages, in all areas, on a wide range of issues. They offer the activity, advice, information and support that help individuals and families stay strong, recover from crisis, and thrive. Communities, in the broadest sense, provide the first response to challenges, often long before statutory agencies are asked for or are required to help.

In recognising that community resilience delivers strategic outcomes, the Council's role is to encourage and enable residents and communities to take action, in addition to delivering core services. It makes people safer, healthier and wealthier and as such reduces demand on public services enabling them to focus on those most in need.

The private sector also benefits from a strong community, in terms of access to an educated, skilled and healthy workforce, a safe and attractive environment surrounding its premises and a stronger consumer base, and as such has a role in supporting local community action. We see this through the increasing use of Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Value, employee volunteering and business engagement.

Again, mutually beneficial relationships across organisations and sectors and with communities will be vital to success. Strong communities cannot be achieved by working alone or in silos.

4. Aims and Outcomes of the Strategy

4.1. Aims

- Emphasise and strengthen the role the VCSE sector, residents and communities have in delivering the Council's corporate objectives, and within the context of the countywide Live Your Best Life Strategy for the ICS;
- Develop a co-ordinated vision and framework for effective partnership working on equal terms, and, wherever possible, co-production with the VCSE groups and Town and Parish Councils;
- Set out the Council's approach to financial investment into the VCSE, which promotes sustainability, through access to a range of funding sources, including strategic and small grant giving by NNC; and future infrastructure support into the sector;
- Strengthen the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver services and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting volunteering, supporting people in the most vulnerable situations, and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities; *and*

- Provide a framework to support innovative approaches which facilitate necessary change, given the shifting needs of local communities in the wake of the pandemic and the current economic climate.

4.2. Outcomes

- Improve sustainability and increase growth in the VCSE sector, developing fit for purpose, sustainable organisations able to deliver high quality services with diversified income streams and less reliance on grants, with a more social enterprise focus and which are flexible and adaptable to change;
- Strengthen the ability of the VCSE sector to deliver services and connect communities through engaging residents, leading community action, supporting people in the most vulnerable situations and brokering relationships between statutory bodies and communities;
- Encourage mutually beneficial relationships across sectors and communities that use smarter ways of working and collaboration to achieve what we cannot alone:
- Provide clarity about the role of sectors in building strong communities; *and*
- Align key themes underpinning current strategic thinking, including place-based working, asset-based community development, devolution of assets and services to communities, shifting the focus to early help and prevention; and shaping demand to reduce costs in statutory services.

4.3. What Will Success Look Like:

- All organisations, businesses, voluntary, community and social enterprise groups and individual residents see themselves as having a valued role in maximising community assets, taking positive action within communities and providing solutions to local challenges, creating and maintaining strong communities;
- North Northamptonshire has a thriving voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, with a significant role in achieving strategic priorities by delivering services and connecting communities; and
- There are strong relationships between people across sectors and communities, based on equality, trust and effective collaboration, not defined by sector or service, which ensure we are working together in partnership for the benefit of North Northamptonshire and all its residents.

5. Current VCSE Infrastructure Arrangements and Grant Programme

5.1. Current VCSE Infrastructure Arrangements

Part of the current VCSE strategic grant arrangements relate to infrastructure support to the VCSE by certain VCSE partners. Infrastructure arrangements, normally funded

by Local Authorities and delivered through contractual arrangements, include functions such as:

- Capacity building in the sector to ensure back-office functions and governance arrangements are robust and organisations are commissioning-ready should they wish to bid for grants and contracts;
- Improving sustainability and increasing growth in the VCSE sector, developing fit for purpose, sustainable organisations able to deliver high quality projects with diversified income streams and less reliance on grants, with a more commercial focus and which are flexible and adaptable to change;
- Funding and bid-writing support;
- Volunteering best practice;
- Supporting networking, collaboration and co-ordination across the sector and with statutory partners to ensure the VCSE has a voice in strategic and operational decision making through genuine co-production;
- Supporting the sector to promote and enable social and community action; *and*
- Supporting the sector to demonstrate impact and return on investment and contribute to the social value agendas.

However, the infrastructure arrangements inherited by NNC from the former sovereign councils are relatively light touch and constitute a total investment of only £58,000 across North Northamptonshire, through two providers, SERVE for Wellingborough and Groundworks across Corby and Kettering. East Northants currently has no funded infrastructure support.

Under the former Councils the arrangements were delivered through annual grant agreements. For a Unitary Authority with a population the size of North Northants these legacy infrastructure arrangements are not sufficient nor robust enough to build capacity in the sector as set out above, under the proposed ambitions of this Community Strategy.

National best practice is for Councils to formally tender VCSE Infrastructure contracts, to run for at least three years, to ensure these contracts deliver against strategic priorities for the Council, as well as meeting the needs of the sector, and to embed collaboration across and strong leadership of the sector into these contractual requirements. It is intended that for NNC, that the new Infrastructure contract will have a significant role in delivering the Communities Strategy, with and on behalf of the Council, and with the sector and wider partners.

5.2. Current VCSE Grant Programmes

The Council does not have a statutory duty to fund the voluntary sector or commission projects from organisations within it. However, in recent years, financial cuts both nationally and locally have put significant pressure on the organisations within the sector. In some cases, organisations have been forced to use their reserves to continue operating, which of course is not sustainable in the long-term.

The current strategic grant funding arrangements with VCSE organisations were inherited from the former District and Borough Councils and involve a mixture of grants, service level agreements and contracts. Some of those arrangements have been in place for some considerable time (since 2017 in some cases) and most have extensions to the original agreement periods to support their transfer into NNC from 1 April 2021.

In March 2022, the Council's Executive agreed to extend the grants inherited from the former sovereign councils for a further two years until 31st March 2024, when the current arrangements come to an end.

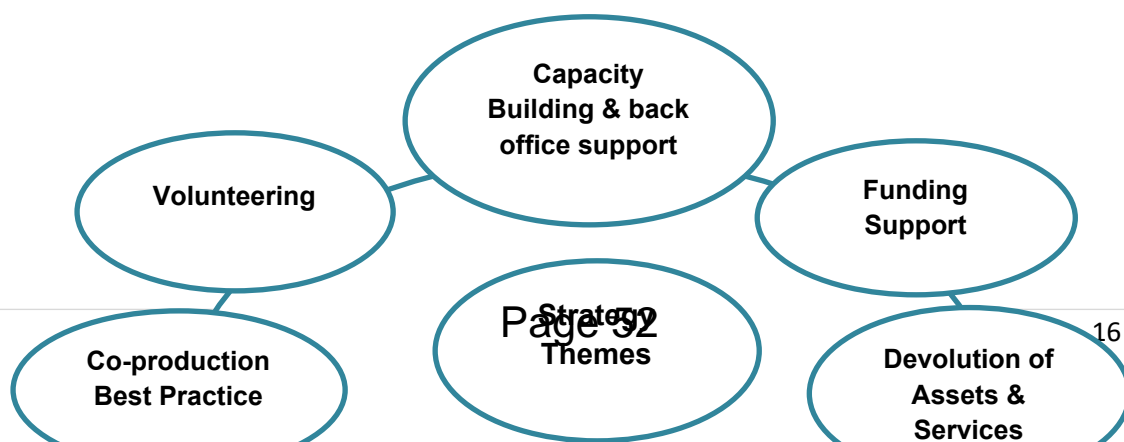
The current funding arrangements with VCSE organisations created by the sovereign councils were subject to an application process and were awarded accordingly. Whilst, overall, the current arrangements are performing well, and grant agreements are monitored, they are out of date, offer a somewhat scattergun approach to what services are funded, and where, and as such do not provide the consistency and transparency to which the Council might now aspire. In addition, they do not necessarily reflect the Council's corporate priorities, and are not aligned with other system-wide ambitions for the area such as the 10 Live Your Best Life Strategy ambitions and the emerging local priorities being determined by the Local Area Partnerships.

The current strategic VCSE grant arrangements total £671,771 per annum. It should also be noted that the strategic grant arrangements are not the only grant funding NNC provides to the VCSE. Currently also NNC invests in the VCSE through programmes such as Discretionary Small grants, Shared Prosperity grants, the Member Empowerment Fund, Household Support Fund, Multiply and the Well Northants programme, The Council's investment into the VCSE during 2023-2024 will be circa £1.82m.

The funding envelope for the VCSE Strategic grants will remain at £671,772 in recognitions of the Council's continued commitment to valuing and supporting the VCSE, but new grant arrangements will be put in place for April 2024.

6. Communities Strategy Themes

To achieve our vision of strong communities, through a thriving and sustainable VCSE sector, improved partnership working across sectors, and empowered and active residents, we have identified eight key themes:



6.1. Theme 1

Building quality and capacity within the VCSE sector and providing back-office support to enable sustainable growth, demonstrate return on investment and social impact, maximise resources across the sector, all to achieve positive outcomes for our communities.

Outcomes

- Increased sustainability, skills, quality, governance and capacity within the VCSE sector to meet community needs;
- A VCSE sector which can demonstrate its impact on residents and communities in North Northamptonshire and is valued by other sectors and stakeholders;
- Increased understanding of the size and scale of the sector, creating a vision for growth and optimising collaborative networking, communications and marketing across a range of media;
- A robust governance within the sector at appropriate levels, to build strength, consistency, trust and confidence; A co-ordinated approach to business continuity planning in preparation to support the Council's Emergency Planning;
- An established VCSE CEO Network and improved support for Trustee recruitment and retention (introducing and encouraging wider breadth of experience and diversity); *and*
- The VCSE are able to evidence Social Return on Investment (SROI).

6.2. Themes 2 & 3

Building mutually beneficial relationships across sectors, with commissioners of services, and with communities by creating equal partnerships by promoting co-production and asset-based community development best practice, sharing information, skills, assets and resources, creating spaces to come together, utilising evidence and celebrating success.

Outcomes

- Improved understanding of local needs and assets, opportunities and challenges, and ways to address them;

- Provision of an annual State of the VCSE report for North Northamptonshire to inform gaps in support and barriers to excellence across all parts of the sector, so that this strategy and delivery plans can remain agile and fit for purpose;
- Reduced barriers to engagement and participation by residents, businesses and organisations;
- Infrastructure support provided to the Sector is inclusive, and demonstrably covers all localities and all-inclusive communities across North Northamptonshire;
- Robust projects that bring together a range of organisations and people from across sectors and communities and deliver long term outcomes for North Northamptonshire;
- Information and resources are shared across the North Northamptonshire VCSE and wider System;
- Delivery of a clear vision, inclusive culture, and inspiring messages, through effective structures for communication;
- Ensuring statutory partners understand the structures, routes to engage, work with and support the VCSE;
- VCSE organisations state they are treated as equal partners;
- Strategic priorities are aligned with local communities to deliver joint action; *and*
- Local people have the tools and support to take action.

6.3. Theme 4

Innovative income generation and investment into VCSE to ensure financial sustainability in a mixed model and enterprise culture, encompassing commissioning, maximising national and regional opportunities.

Outcomes

- Effective, and where appropriate collaborative, bid writing and project development which levers in new funding into North Northamptonshire and delivers innovative solutions to local issues;
- Innovative and creative responses to opportunities and challenges are embraced and encouraged;
- The grants, funding and commissioning delivered by NNC addresses inequalities and ensures that all our inclusive communities are served, and that when VCSE organisations are funded or commissioned that they meet equality outcomes and can evidence this;
- Increased involvement of the private sector in supporting local communities and the VCSE sector and in delivering against North Northamptonshire's strategic and local area priorities;
- Increased inward investment into the Council area from external sources;
- Increased number of collaborative applications for funding;
- A VCSE sector that is responsive to outsourcing of public services, personalisation, co-production, integration and has an enterprise culture;

- Increased partnership, co-ordination and collaborative working within the VCSE sector to maximise value, efficiency, resources and skills;
- Reduction in the number of organisations that face financial difficulty which puts residents and communities at risk;
- Increased third sector growth in terms of mutuals, cooperatives and social enterprises; *and*
- Strong connectivity between the VCSE and public sector commissioners, co-design and production of services, to ensure that services, which are developed and delivered, focus on improving outcomes for individuals and communities, not organisational structures.

6.4. Theme 5

Developing our people assets, by increasing resident action and taking a strategic approach to volunteering, providing a platform for opportunities, brokerage, data collection and impact monitoring.

Outcomes

- Increased numbers of VCSE organisations and residents participating in local decision making and co-production of services and evidence of their involvement making a clear impact;
- A co-ordinated best practice support offer for volunteering, which meets the needs of volunteers, organisations and businesses across the Council area;
- Increased amount and quality of volunteering and social capital within our communities;
- Establishment of employee volunteering schemes across public and private sector organisations; *and*
- Improved range of positive activities and vocational opportunities which support personal & vocational development.

6.5. Theme 6

Developing our physical assets and services through Town and Parish Councils and community involvement and through asset transfer.

Outcomes

- An established working group with Town and Parishes Council representatives, NCALC and NNC officers to discuss opportunities, challenges, risks and dependencies relating to the transfer of assets and services and challenges relating to devolution and town twinning;
- A co-produced process map which details the necessary steps to be taken for the transfer of assets and services to Town or Parish Councils, should there be a wish in the future for devolution to take place.
- Improved awareness and valuing of community ownership and resilience; *and*
- Increased numbers of community groups managing community assets, where appropriate.

6.6. Theme 7

Co-ordination of the North Northamptonshire VCSE to embed the sector in the ICS and the Place programme, through ongoing leadership and support to Community Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships and representation at Executive Board level.

Outcomes

- A strong network of VCSE engagement with the ICS, through attendance at LAPs and active contribution to LAP projects, events and activities, creating a new way of working into the future;
- CWF's and LAP's remain with VCSE at the heart, advocate, trouble shoot and motivate a continued engagement; *and*
- Increased representation in ICS structures where VCSE contribution is beneficial.

6.7. Theme 8

Co-ordination of investment into the VCSE through the delivery of a range of strategic and smaller grant programmes into the VCSE, based on robust and transparent policies, procedures and governance to include:

- New VCSE Infrastructure contract arrangements, at a £200,000 investment per annum for 3 years, which will play a key role in supporting the delivery of this strategy;
- Small (Discretionary grants) grants up to £25,000 per award (£120,000 per annum for 2024-2027);
- Member Empowerment Fund (£156,000 per annum);
- Shared Prosperity Funds (£618,00 2024-2025 only); *and*
- New VCSE Strategic grant arrangements (£671,771 per annum for 2024-2027) to cover emerging strategic themes such as community transport, financial inclusion, race equality, older peoples' social isolation, low level mental health support within communities, building VCSE capacity and community resilience.

Outcomes for this investment (outside of Infrastructure which is covered in this strategy) will be set out in the relevant Grant Application processes and/or project briefs to be funded and will be monitored through robust Grant Agreements.

7. Delivering the Strategy

There are a number of key NNC services, partners projects that will drive delivery of the themes, and elements within themes. For example, NNC facilitates the VCSE grant programmes under Theme 8 but the VCSE organisations deliver against the grant agreements. Town and Parish Councils will play a lead role, along with NCALC to help NCC deliver against Theme 6.

There is a crucial role for the VCSE organisations as future Infrastructure contract holder/s, to lead delivery of specific themes, namely Themes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. These include capacity building, funding support, volunteering and co-ordination of

the VCSE role within the ICS, to name a few. The details and scale of this contract will be explored and delivered through a robust procurement process.

8. Governance

Governance of the strategy will primarily sit with the Council, but from a partnership viewpoint.

The new VCSE Infrastructure contract and VCSE grant arrangements will be robustly monitored. Annual Delivery Plans will be produced, with milestones, outputs and outcomes tracked by the Communities and Wellbeing team at the Council.

Practical delivery of collaborative projects within communities will be delivered through the Local Area Partnerships, and informed and supported by the partners at the Community Wellbeing Forums. This work is governed by the North Place Delivery Board as part of the ICS Operating Framework.

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North
Northamptonshire
Council

North Northamptonshire Council

1 FEBRUARY 2024 TO 31 MAY 2024

Published by: Democratic Services

Leader of North Northamptonshire Council: Councillor Jason Smithers

INTRODUCTION

This is the North Northamptonshire Council's Forward Plan. It is published pursuant to The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. Its purpose is to provide the required 28 days' notice of the Council's intention to take 'key decisions' and to hold meetings or parts of meetings in private. It gives advance notice of all the "key decisions" and "exempt decisions" which the Executive or another body or officer so authorised are likely to take over a four-month period. The Plan is updated on a rolling monthly basis.

The Members of the Executive are:	
Councillor Jason Smithers	Leader of North Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Helen Howell	Deputy Leader of North Northamptonshire Council Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism
VACANT	Adults, Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Scott Edwards	Children, Families, Education and Skills
Councillor Harriet Pentland	Climate and Green Environment
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Finance and Transformation
Councillor David Brackenbury	Growth and Regeneration
Councillor Matt Binley	Highways, Travel and Assets
Councillor Mark Rowley	Housing, Communities and Levelling-Up
Councillor David Howes	Rural Communities and Localism

The concept of a "key decision" is intended to capture the most important or significant decisions. "Key decisions" will normally be made at meetings open to the press and public. The press and public will only be excluded from such meetings as and when the Council's Monitoring Officer considers that this is necessary in order to avoid the public disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

The authority has decided that a Key Decision is one which is likely:-

- (a) to result in the authority incurring expenditure of which is, or the making of savings which are, significant; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral wards in the area of the authority."

The Council has decided that significant expenditure or savings are those amounting to above £500,000.

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes North Northamptonshire Council will also have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000.

At times it may be necessary for the North Northamptonshire Council to give consideration to items where the public may be excluded from the meeting. Members of the public are excluded from meetings whenever it is likely that, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed. This includes exclusion from access to any pertinent documents. Details of the exemption categories can be found in the 'Access to Information Procedure Rules' section in the Council's [Constitution](#). This plan provides advance notice of any items which may be held in private.

Paragraph 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 provides for members of the public to make representations to the Council on why an exempt item should be considered in public, rather than in private. Persons wishing to make such representations and/or obtain further details in respect of any issues referred to in the Plan should contact the undermentioned officer.

The Monitoring Officer may also include in the Forward Plan references to such other decisions, which are to be taken by the Council or any of its Committees or Sub-Committee or officers as they consider appropriate. These will be those decisions that are considered to be significant or sufficiently important and/or sensitive so that it is reasonable for a member of the public to expect it to be recorded and published.

All general questions or queries about the contents of this Forward Plan or about the arrangements for taking key decisions should be raised with David Pope, Democratic Services.

Please email: democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk

February 2024

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author and Executive Lead Member
General Fund Final Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Page 62	To recommend to Council the General Fund Final Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Executive	Yes	No		8 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Programme 2024-2028	To recommend for approval to Council the Capital Programme 2024-2028.	Executive	Yes	No		8 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Final Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan	To recommended for approval to Council the HRA Final Budget 2024-25 and Medium-Term	Executive	Yes	No		8 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive

	Financial Plan.						Director - Finance & Performance
Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 9	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Programme Update 2023/24	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Outturn Report 2023/24 at P9	To report on the Capital Budget on a quarterly basis	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Options Appraisal for Recommissioning Public Health Services	To consider in-house or external provision of: • 0-19 Health	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Adults, Health and Wellbeing

	Visiting and school nursing service • NISHH- Northamptonshire Integrated Sexual Health Service and HIV service • Strong Start Service • REACH Young People's Counselling Service • Oral Health Service						Director of Public Health
Determination of admission arrangements for local authority maintained (community and voluntary controlled) schools in North Northamptonshire for the 2025 intakes.	Executive is asked to determine admission arrangements of schools where the local authority is the admission authority.	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Children, Families, Education and Skills Executive Director - Children's Services
Department for Transport Funding Allocations	To note the allocation of capital funding by the Department for Transport for 2024/25 and to agree how the funding should be	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel and Assets Executive Director - Place and Economy

	spent.						
Communities Strategy	To approve the Communities Strategy	Executive	Yes	No	VCSE North Northants networks	15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Housing, Communities and Levelling Up Director of Public Health
Surplus Asset Disposal	To approval the disposal of specific assets	Executive	Yes	Part exempt		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel and Assets Executive Director - Place and Economy
Corby Business Academy SEND Provision	To consider and approve the capital project for Corby Business Academy SEND Provision	Executive	Yes	No		15 th February 2024	Executive Member - Children, Families, Education and Skills Executive Director - Children's Services

March 2024

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author and Executive Lead Member
Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 10 Page 66	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Programme Update 2023/24	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Disposal of Land off Rothwell Road, South Desborough	To approve disposal of the land	Executive	Yes	Yes – paragraph 3	Public notification carried out under s.123(2A) of the Local	14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel and Assets Executive

					Government Act 1972		Director - Place and Economy
Annual Inflationary Uplifts Contracted Adult Social Care Providers	To approve the annual uplifts	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Adults, Health and Wellbeing Executive Director - Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS)
Asset Acquisition Policy Page 67	To consider adopting an NNC policy.	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel and Assets Executive Director - Place and Economy
Kettering Leisure Village Business Case	To consider and approve the proposed Business Case regarding the future of KLV	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Deputy Leader & Sports, Leisure, Culture and Tourism Director of Public Health
Post 16 Policy for Home to school transport	Approval of policy document	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel

							and Assets Executive Director - Place and Economy
Adult Social Care (ASC) Strategic Framework	To approve the framework	Executive	Yes	No	No formal but informal within NNC and with appropriate partners.	14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Adults, Health and Wellbeing Assistant Director Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services
Children's Services Case Management System (CapitaOne) Contract Extension	To approve the contract extension	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Children, Families, Education and Skills Executive Director - Children's Services
Workspace Transformation & Stock Condition Capital Investment	Request to move £3.25m from the Capital Development Pool to the Capital Programme to allow works to be	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Highways, Travel and Assets Executive Director - Place

	delivered to improve NNC's office accommodation and to undertake improvements to some of the council's properties as identified in recent stock condition surveys						and Economy
North Northamptonshire Street Naming & Numbering Policy Page 69	This is a new policy that combines and updates the policies/guidance of the previous four sovereign authorities	Executive	Yes	No		14 th March 2024	Executive Member - Growth and Regeneration Executive Director - Place and Economy

April 2024

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author and Executive Lead Member
Budget Forecast 2023-24 - Period 11 Page 70	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		18 th April 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Programme Update 2023-24	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		18 th April 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Council-Owned Company Governance Arrangements	To approve governance arrangements relating to Council-owned companies	Executive	Yes	No		18 th April 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive

							Director - Finance & Performance
<p>NNC Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2028</p> <p>Page 71</p>	To seek the Executive's approval to adopt the proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy following statutory consultation and subsequent amendments	Executive	Yes	No	Initial consultation event 21/9/22 attended by approx. 120 stakeholders. Feedback utilised to develop the draft strategy. The draft document will undergo a 6-week formal statutory consultation and additional proactive consultation with service users is planned	18 th April 2024	<p>Executive Member - Housing, Communities and Levelling Up</p> <p>Assistant Director Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services</p>

May 2024

Subject of the Decision:	Purpose of Report	Decision Maker	Is it a key decision?	Will it contain exempt information? /Reasons for exemption, if any	Consultation undertaken	Anticipated Date of Decision:	Report Author and Executive Lead Member
Budget Forecast 2023-24 - Period 12 Page 72	To report any adjustments to the in-year budget	Executive	Yes	No		16 th May 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Programme Update 2023-24	To report any adjustments to the in-year programme	Executive	Yes	No		16 th May 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation Executive Director - Finance & Performance
Capital Outturn Report 2023/24 at Period 12	To report on the Capital Budget on a quarterly basis	Executive	Yes	No		16 th May 2024	Executive Member - Finance and Transformation

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Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel



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Proposed areas to explore by the EAP

Proposed attendance by service area experts

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Profile on a page: Sam Fitzgerald – Assistant Director Adult Services

Profile on a page: Matthew Jenkins – Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance

Profile on a page: Ali Gilbert – Director of Place - Integrated Care - Placed based arrangements

Profile on a page: Evonne Coleman – Thomas – Assistant Director Strategic Housing, Development & Property Services

Profile on a page: Kerry Purnell – Assistant Director Communities and Leisure

Profile on a page: Shirley Plenderleith – Assistant Director Public Health

Profile on a page: Abdu Mohiddin - Locum Consultant in Public Health, Children, Oral, Maternity & Sexual Health

Profile on a page: Mike Bridges – Consultant in Public Health

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**North
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Council**

Proposed areas to explore

Area	Exec Member	Director	Assistant Director
Social Care for Adults	Cllr G Mercer	ED – A, HP & H	AD Adult Services, AD Commissioning & Performance, AD Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Provider
Services for Older People	Cllr G Mercer	ED – A, HP & H	
Health Inequalities	Cllr G Mercer	DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Inclusion	Cllr G Mercer/Cllr M Rowley	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	
Leisure and Sport	Cllr H Howell	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Libraries and Theatres	Cllr H Howell	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Culture	Cllr H Howell	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Confusion	Cllr G Mercer/Cllr M Rowley	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Mental Health and Wellbeing	Cllr G Mercer/Cllr M Rowley	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD C&L,
Domestic Violence	Cllr G Mercer/Cllr M Rowley	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure
Tourism	Cllr H Howell	ED – A, HP & H / DPH	AD Communities and Leisure

In relation to PH – areas to explore are Health Protection, CYP, and other aspects of adults – sexual health, lifestyles, etc.

Forward Plan agreed items

Assistant Director/Lead	Who	Proposed EAP Date
<p>Item 1: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy</p>	<p>Evonne Coleman-Thomas - Suzanne Jackson/Carly Hohn Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Suzanne Jackson</p>	<p>Friday, 02 February 2024</p>
<p>Item 2. Service presentation - Commissioning and Performances (to inform forward plan) (1 hr)</p>	<p>Matthew Jenkins - Assistant Director Commissioning and Performance</p>	
<p>Item 3: Draft Communities Strategy</p>	<p>Kerry Purnell</p>	
<p>Item 1: TBC Item 2. Service presentation – Tackling Homelessness</p>	<p>TBC Evonne Coleman–Thomas - Assistant Director Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services</p>	<p>Thursday, 04 April 2024</p>



Zakia Loughead

Assistant Director
Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Provider Services

Summary of Service Area

- Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Provider Services encompasses Safeguarding, Provider Services (Day Opps, Specialist Support for Younger Adults, Respite for Younger Adults, Shared Lives, Learning Independence Volunteering Employment service, and Employment And Disability Service), the Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) team, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) team, the Community Therapy team, and the Assistive Technology and Visual Impairment teams.
- Leading the development of the Transformation of Provider Services

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Delivery of Transforming NNC Adult Social Care Provider Services
- Social Care Reform including local authority self-assessment. Introducing co-production across Adult Social Care.
- Liberty Protection Safeguarding
- Adults Emergency Duty Team (Emergency Provision – Out Of Hours)
- Supporting replacement to Adult Social Care System
- Support to NNC Prevent Strategic Delivery Plan, and Combating Drugs partnership, MAPPA Steering Strategic Management Board

Transformation and change being considered

- Transforming Adult Social Care Provider Services Phase 1 and 2
- Emergency Duty Team and Out of Hours Service
- Disaggregation of Assistive Technology, Visual Impairment Service and AMHP service
- Supporting delivery of NSAB Safeguarding Priorities for NNC
- Embedding strengths-based practice across all service areas (Principal Social Worker led activity)



Sam Fitzgerald
Assistant Director
Adult Services

Summary of Service Area

- Responsible for Learning Disability teams, with a leading role in the LDA partnership
- Acute Hospital Adult Social Care, including Acute partnerships and Winter planning
- Community hubs and front door social care; Continuing Healthcare, and Care Home review functions
- Inclusion services
- Transitions (16-18) into adulthood
- Reablement and admission avoidance.
- Council appointed, non executive director for the Children's Trust

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Adult Social Care Strategy
- Better Care Fund (BCF) Lead including the production of the Narrative plan and monitoring and reporting progress against the KPIs.
- Directorate Operating Model (Moving Forwards with Place – How the Adults, Health Partnerships, and Housing directorate works within a place-based setting).

Transformation and change being considered

- Service improvement transformation to ensure robust, resilient, teams that are equipped to handle the demand and complexity being faced in the community
- Urgent and Emergency Care Transformation Including Pathway 1 and Pathway 2 redesign
- Sustainable recruitment and retention of Adult Social Care workforce including Carers Pathways and progression.



Matt Jenkins

Assistant Director
Commissioning and Performance

Summary of Service Area

- Strategic market management of independent social care providers including commissioning, quality monitoring, contract management and payments to independent care providers.
- Brokering of care and support for people with eligible care needs.
- Leadership of Financial Operations including: financial assessments for contributions towards care and support, Personal Budget Support Service, Direct Payment support and appointee service.

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Quality framework to provide assurance of quality of contracted care providers and to support improvement in the overall ratings profile and quality of independent care providers in North Northamptonshire.
- Market Position Statement to outline the current position of the independent care market along with the services that will be required to meet the needs of people in the future across North Northamptonshire.
- Actions to ensure we have a sustainable market of high quality services for people to draw on.

Transformation and change being considered

- Creation of forums for co-production ensuring people with lived experience can influence all aspects of Adult Social Care.
- The development of an integrated brokerage team driving joint working with Health partners and improving pathways of brokering care and support for people in North Northamptonshire.
- Procurement of our Social Care case management systems to support strengths based working and more efficient processes across Adult Social Care.



Ali Gilbert

North Northamptonshire Director of Place
Integrated Care

Summary of Service Area

- Integrated Care Stem North Place Development Director responsible for leading the design, development and implementation of the North Place model
- Lead for the development of the Live Your Best Life strategy
- Lead for the development of the Adult Social Care Strategy
- Supportive leadership for the development of the North Health and Wellbeing strategy

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Live Your Best Life strategy for the county forms the framework to align all strategies, as only together will we achieve the ten ambitions
- The North place model is integral to the Live Your Best Life Strategy
- The development of the North Health and Wellbeing strategy, to be aligned with the Live Your Best Life Strategy
- The role of North Place in the NNC strategy under development
- The Adult Social Care Strategy development, with place integral to this

Transformation and change being considered

- North Place - Functional implementation of the Local Area Partnerships (LAPS) and ensuring communities are central to improving outcomes outlined in the Live Your Best Life Strategy focusing on the wider determinants of health.
- Role and function of the Community Wellbeing Forums as a function of the North Place model.
- Adult Social Care strategy – evolving function of the strengths- based model of care , with co-production integral to this with our workforce and North Northamptonshire people.
- Support North Northamptonshire VCSE model of care, linked to North place development and the evolution of the adult social care strengths- based model.



Evonne Coleman – Thomas
Assistant Director
Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services

Summary of Service Area

- Responsible for all strategic Housing services, including Housing and Tenancy Services, and Homelessness.
- Responsible for all housing development activity, including acquisitions, new build and redevelopments
- Strategic Lead for all council housing repairs, responsive and capital programmes.

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Housing Strategy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Development Strategy
- Resident Engagement Strategy

Transformation and change being considered

- Harmonisation of the Housing Revenue Account – to deliver one HRA rather than the current separate Corby and Kettering Neighbourhood Accounts.
- Review of interim structures across the housing service, to ensure we remain agile and fit for purpose.
- Consideration as to management of our own temporary accommodation stock



Kerry Purnell

Assistant Director
Communities and Leisure

Summary of Service Area

- Culture, Tourism and Heritage, including Chester House Estate, Cornerstone, Discover Northamptonshire Tourism Hub at Rushden Lakes, Corby Heritage Centre, The Greenway, NN events
- Leisure and Active Communities, in-house and commissioned providers across the Leisure estate and active communities, sports, physical activity and play development
- Community Safety, including DA and Sexual Violence
- Communities and Wellbeing, including the A New Sense of Place programme, grant giving, community development, and Refugee Resettlement
- Library Services

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- County-wide Tourism (Discover Northamptonshire) Strategy, at stakeholder engagement stage
- Leisure Strategic Framework – Active Communities Strategy, Leisure Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies and future delivery model options- work recently commissioned
- DA and Sexual Violence Commissioning Framework
- Greenway Strategy and locality plans

Transformation and change being considered

- CCTV transformation programme (at early scoping stage) Short description of areas responsible for (12 font)
- Future governance options for Chester House Estate
- Full disaggregation of the library service
- *Would the A New Sense of Place programme come to this EAP?*



Shirley Plenderleith

Assistant Director
Public Health

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Summary of Service Area

- Transition and Project support to strategic activity including strategic links across NNC
- Research & Evaluation activity
- Strategic/ transformation projects - providing system leadership on areas of PH importance.
- Business operations –governance, forward planning, finance and workforce development

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Research & Evaluation
- ICS Prevention activity
- PH Communication Planning linking to research activity

Transformation and change being considered

- Links to UoN and ICS Research & Innovation work
- Governance planning including financial framework
- Range of project support activities across PH to – eg Eastern European Community research project, Combating Drugs partnership (governance), health improvement eg Trauma Informed Practice project set up, Place based work



Abdu Mohiddin

Consultant in Public Health
[Children, Oral, Maternity & Sexual Health]

Summary of Service Area

- Children and young people
- Oral health (all ages)
- Maternity
- Sexual Health
- Adult Learning

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- The completion of CYP, Sexual Health, SEND JSNAs underway to inform future strategy
- Youth offer/strategy development (inc serious violence)
- Healthy schools reset/improvement and future working

Transformation and change being considered

- 0-19 CYP including early years commissioning options inc FNP, F/Hubs, Strong Start
- Sexual Health commissioning options
- Oral health commissioning options and strategy



Mike Bridges

Consultant in Public Health

Summary of Service Area

- Health Protection
 - NNC Health Protection / CIPC / Covid Response
 - Emergency Planning, Climate, Healthy urban, Transport, Planning
- Wider Health Protection
 - Serious Violence Prevention, Criminal Justice / Prisons, Community Falls Prevention
- Addictions
 - Substance Misuse, Tobacco Control, Smoking
- Research (Shared)
 - Links with UoN, ICS, EM

Possible areas for EAP to consider

Policies and strategies in development

- Tobacco Control Strategy (includes vaping)
- Gambling Strategy / Policy
- Commercial determinates of health strategy / policy

Transformation and change being considered

- The development of a prevention, treatment and recovery service model for drug and alcohol services for NNC
- Health Protection JSNA and emerging priorities to inform strategy
- Development of a public health approach to violence reduction serious violence duty / strategy

EAP Feedback Loop: 28 April 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update
Drug and Alcohol Services in Northamptonshire		
Service Showcase		This approach was built into the forward plan with respective assistant directors programmed in to showcase their areas to support EAP members to identify areas of work they may wish to explore in greater detail at EAP, with public health due to attend and present at the next EAP in June 2023

EAP Feedback Loop: 09 June 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update
<p>Tourism Strategy</p> <p>Page 89</p>	<p>Members felt that there was the ability to put in place good infrastructure to encourage visitors to stay in the area for longer but that this would require working with the relevant business' and as suggested the Local Authority could do more to encourage planners to engage with those submitting applications for camping, glamping, and hotels.</p> <p>Ideas such as Historic Churchyard Maps were suggested for those trying to track down ancestors, information providing places to visit in a local area that could be visited over several days making travelling easier. Northants had a history of Shoe Making, promote it, Corby has a Heritage Centre, could be open longer.</p> <p>Promoting accessibility for the disabled, helping farmers to diversify,, younger people attracted by music, crafts etc. there was a need to look at funding, if packaged properly we can access funding.</p> <p>A full Member session would be helpful to bring in more ideas.</p> <p>Explore crossing borders (promote the area elsewhere e.g. transport, trains from the north, golf courses, fishing etc. the Green Festival was not internally promoted.</p>	
<p>Service Showcase - Public Health</p>		

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update
<p>Sports and Leisure Strategy</p> <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 90</p>	<p>Educational facilities and “left-behind” areas should be encouraged to engage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Affordability and ease of access to facilities needed consideration · Working in strategic partnership would help maximise offer and budgets · Consideration needed to be given to activities that were not “pitch-based” including dance and theatre · Maximising the use of green space assets across North Northamptonshire · Improving physical activity among Council staff to offer healthy benefits for the workforce · Consideration of the requirements of differing demographics and those with existing health and wellbeing risks · Improving inequalities by making paid leisure services more affordable and utilising open spaces effectively · Early engagement with children to offer a lifetime approach · Promotion of use of sustainable transport, including walking and cycling · Utilise the expertise of both the voluntary sector and private sector · Understanding of existing facilities and leisure offer in North Northamptonshire and how this could be improved · Involving local health services, including GP surgeries in the Active Community Strategy to help target those in need and promote the local offer · An opportunity to work with Family Hubs to embed activity into family life · Linking strategies with other elements of partnership joint working 	

EAP Feedback Loop: 04 August 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Page 91	<p>In terms of priority areas for consideration, the following points were raised by members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accessing GPs, dental and mental health services · Emergency care access · A holistic approach to strategies would be beneficial · Avoidance of work duplication in relation to other strategies · Good examples of JH&W Strategies being circulated where disproportionate positive benefits had been achieved. · A vibrant employment market was beneficial to health and wellbeing · Consideration of early years (childminders, nurseries etc) driving behaviours · Working with non-Council social landlords to understand issues that exist in that area · Getting vaccination and screening at the forefront of health and wellbeing, picking up problems earlier and preventing illness · That the strategy be owned across all directorates at the Council, not just Public Health · Housing considerations to improve health and wellbeing, including green spaces for residents 	
Service presentation regarding the Communities and Leisure Service		

[Agenda for EAP Active Communities on Friday 4th August, 2023, 10.00 am - North Northamptonshire Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

EAP Feedback Loop: 06 October 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update
Service Presentation - Safeguarding and Wellbeing Provider Services		
Draft Adult Social Care Strategy	Deferred until December 2023 meeting	
Greenway Strategy. Page 92	Councillors asked questions in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The public consultation process• Road safety to encourage cycling and walking• Connectivity with towns to employment/leisure/housing• Links between Kettering and Corby; including Boughton House and Wicksteed Park• Prioritisation of routes once funding was obtained• Promotion of the public consultation• Lighting of routes• Whether the Greenway would go through Irchester County Park• Whether S106 monies could be utilised for routes outside of the four prioritised routes if the opportunity arose• Consultation details to be circulated to members• Tempering expectations in relation to timescales in development of the Greenway	

[Agenda for EAP Active Communities on Friday 6th October, 2023, 10.00 am - North Northamptonshire Council \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

EAP Feedback Loop:

01 December 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update

EAP Feedback Loop:

01 December 2023 meeting

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update

Item	Feedback given by panel	Exec Member update