

EXECUTIVE

11th May 2023

Report Title	North Northamptonshire Vision
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Lead Member	Cllr Jason Smithers – Leader of the Council

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

List of Appendices

Appendix A – North Northamptonshire Vision

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To present the rationale, thinking and work undertaken to date on creating a North Northamptonshire Vision for the future (up to 2050), working in partnership with a small number of stakeholders, to progress the work to this point.
- 1.2. To support the recommended way forward of undertaking further work including testing the priorities and refining the wider vision, developing formal and informal partnerships to deliver on the goals set, and bringing this all together through a Big 50 Conference to be held in the late Spring 2023.
- 1.3. To seek approval to bring a further report back to the Executive in late Summer/early Autumn 2023 with the outcomes of the Big 50 Conference and a commitment to deliver the Council's role within the action plan.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 North Northamptonshire Council is now into its third year as a unitary authority and can be proud of the level of delivery it has achieved, set against the vision, priorities and objectives within its own Corporate Strategy established in 2021/22.
- 2.2 The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive in early Autumn 2022 began discussions on what wider aspirations could be created for the whole place of North Northamptonshire and that could be shared and co-designed by all key stakeholders and residents in the North Northamptonshire area.
- 2.3 The Council believes it now has a great opportunity to look to the future and to imagine the place that North Northamptonshire can be in 2050. We are well positioned, having operated as a Council for the last two years, to consider the place that residents deserve to live in and refocus our energies and plans, by working with others, to make that a reality.
- 2.4 In order to move the thinking through into action, the Council recognised it would need additional support to ensure that it had access to high level skills in this area, the capacity to work at pace and a degree of objectivity. To this end, the Council commissioned an external consultant to work on this first phase of work. They were commissioned in October 2022 and have worked to a small team led by the Leader and Chief Executive.
- 2.5 Desk top research on existing strategies, local plans and partnership documents to build on existing work have been undertaken, as well as engagement with a range of partners, community representatives, elected members and staff, to set out this first proposal of what the best life in North Northamptonshire in 2050 could look like and how it can develop the key milestones along the way.
- 2.6 This work has culminated in the North Northamptonshire Vision, which is attached as **Appendix A**. The Vision covers a number of key areas including:
- What the vision is and is not
 - The key drivers of why we need a collective vision for North Northamptonshire
 - The proposed vision for North Northamptonshire
 - Three key priorities that will drive our work to achieve this vision
 - Next steps to progress the work done to date
- 2.7 The North Northamptonshire Vision now needs further refinement and wider ownership. To do this, it is proposed that an event called the “Big 50” Conference is held to bring together key stakeholders that have an important role to play in this.
- 2.8 The aim is to bring together key partners and the community in North Northamptonshire to refine the proposed vision and make the connections which are needed to start working towards it and the goals along the way. The

Conference will lead to a set of actions and outcomes we need, to make this happen.

3 Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Note and comment on the work undertaken to date on the development of the North Northamptonshire Vision (attached as **Appendix A**)
- b) Agree that the Leader and Chief Executive lead on the development of the Big 50 Conference, to be held late Spring 2023.
- c) Note that the outcomes of the Conference and the final vision document will be further considered by the Executive along with a proposed commitment to deliver the Council's role within the action plan.

3.2 Reason for Recommendations – Local councils are ideally placed to act as place shapers and enablers of change in their area. North Northamptonshire Council, in its Corporate Plan adopted in December 2021, made a clear commitment to working in partnership with a wide range of organisations from public, private and voluntary sectors to help improve the quality of life in North Northamptonshire. The work on setting out a broader, longer-term vision for North Northamptonshire represents the next natural step in the achievement of this aim. A shared vision for the future of North Northamptonshire will help focus the efforts of organisations working locally on achieving a common set of priorities and goals for the area. The recommendations ensure that progress to date on setting out a wider vision is understood and that the future activities required to manage a transparent, inclusive and engaging process are in place.

3.3 Alternative options Considered:

- i) Continue 'as is' – In practical terms, this would mean continuing to focus on the Council's own vision and leaving partner agencies to focus on theirs. There is nothing wrong with this approach. Indeed, there is already a lot of activity focused on aligning approaches and target outcomes which are embedded in the current ways of working. It does however still leave a gap in terms of a common and widely accepted vision for the area that cuts across all sectors and partners.
- ii) Develop a future vision without facilitating wider partner engagement – this is not considered a viable option. For the future vision to be effective, it needs to be jointly developed and jointly owned. In writing a future vision in isolation the Council would do little to engage partners and encourage ownership and would not be utilising its unique position as an enabler and shaper of future place.

4 Report Background

- 4.1 North Northamptonshire Council is now into its third year as a new unitary authority and can be proud of the level of delivery it has achieved, set against the vision, priorities and objectives within its own Corporate Strategy established in 2021/2022. This has included new policy development, harmonisation of services, transformational activity as well as putting in place robust governance and assurance processes across the organisation. It has also established a solid financial footing established, with two years of balanced budgets in a challenging macro-economic climate.
- 4.2 The Leader and Chief Executive in the early autumn 2022 began discussions on what wider aspirations could be created for the whole place of North Northamptonshire, and that was shared and co-designed by all key stakeholders and residents in the North Northamptonshire area. It was felt that all of us have a part to play in designing that future, in planning the actions which get us there and holding each other to account to make sure those things happen. By adopting this approach, our collective strategies, plans and actions will help form the building blocks towards the creation of a shared vision for North Northamptonshire's future.
- 4.3 This Vision is not about North Northamptonshire Council, but it's felt that the Council, through the Leader and Chief Executive, has a responsibility to begin this work. By taking the lead it is hoped will give it impetus and bring together everyone who will work together to make the best future for North Northamptonshire.
- 4.4 In order to move this initial thinking through into action, NNC recognised it would need both support, additional skills in this area, capacity to work at pace and a degree of objectivity to be provided, especially when engaging with wider stakeholders.
- 4.5 The Council commissioned consultants in October 2022 to work with the council on this initial phase of work. They are an experienced organisation that work within the local government sector and are well respected within the industry. They have worked to a small team lead by the Leader and Chief Executive, alongside the Executive Director of Place and Economy and the Assistant Chief Executive.
- 4.6 The work has involved significant desk top research on existing strategies, local plans and partnership documents, as well as engagement with a range of partners, stakeholders, community representatives, elected members and staff to set out this first proposal (attached at **Appendix A**) of what the best life in North Northamptonshire in 2050 could look like.
- 4.7 The work has provided space for thinking, supported by data, evidence and conversations to help re-focus and create a vision for the future. It has also enabled time to consider and define:
- North Northamptonshire's opportunities;

- North Northamptonshire's challenges; and
- North Northamptonshire's identity.

4.8 The North Northamptonshire Vision report is the culmination of this first phase of work and covers a number of key areas including:

- 4.8.1 What the vision is and is not
- 4.8.2 The key drivers of why we need a collective vision for North Northamptonshire
- 4.8.3 The proposed vision for North Northamptonshire
- 4.8.4 Three key priorities that will drive our work to achieve this vision
- 4.8.5 Next steps to progress the work done to date

4.9 The proposed vision is clear in that it is a proposal at this stage and an attempt to describe the best life in North Northamptonshire and begin to consider how this can be worked towards.

4.10 It is important that the vision is established through collaboration and whilst the vision has been shaped with a number of different organisations, businesses, communities and residents, it is equally important to hear from a wider audience to refine it, and to reflect their views.

4.11 Finally, the vision is a call to everyone in North Northamptonshire, the organisations and businesses who work here, as well as our communities, to ask how we can work together over time to make this place the best it can be.

4.12 Our vision for 2050 is *the best life for all in North Northamptonshire*.

4.13 Our vision is to give the best life for all because we know North Northamptonshire already gives a good life to many people. For most of the people here it is a great place to live, work, do business and spend time, but there are some who are experiencing real difficulties. By setting out the goals we can understand what the best life in North Northamptonshire is and begin to set out how to ensure that best life can be lived by everyone here.

4.14 The proposed vision for the best life in North Northamptonshire in 2050 has been based around three key priorities under which sit the suggested goals for our vision. These have been created from initial conversations, where the aims for North Northamptonshire were to ensure that: residents and businesses could prosper; it was a place for everyone to feel proud of and safe in; and there was a need to get on the front foot to ensure everything works well for residents and businesses.

4.15 It is proposed that the priorities are tested in a wider conversation to see if they are the right ones; make changes where they are needed and create an environment where everyone with a stake in North Northamptonshire works together to develop the vision of what the best life is.

4.16 The proposed priorities to achieve our vision are:

A Proud Place: A place with clear goals and a plan of how to get there, where people feel inspired and safe.

A Prosperous Place: A place full of thriving businesses and a skilled population who can achieve their ambitions.

A Proactive Place: A place which understands the issues its people face and how to address them early, so everyone can live the best life.

- 4.17 The North Northamptonshire Vision now needs further refinement and wider ownership. It is proposed the most appropriate way to do this is to initiate the Big 50 Conference to bring together everyone who has a role to play in this.
- 4.18 The aim is to bring together the partners and the communities in North Northamptonshire to refine the proposed vision and make the connections which are needed to start working towards it. The Conference will lead to a set of actions and outcomes, to make this future happen. This initial conference will be by invitation to stakeholders and partners across North Northamptonshire and following this, wider engagement will commence with residents.
- 4.19 To ensure momentum and a degree of pace, as well as ensuring a wider degree of objectivity on this next phase, it is proposed this is also led by the same consultants as a continuation of the commissioned work already in place following a procurement process last year.
- 4.20 It is expected the Big 50 Conference will be held in late Spring 2023 with a final report being considered in the Summer/early Autumn 2023. Within this report there will be a commitment from the council to deliver its role within the action plan.

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The following issues and choices have been considered when formulating the recommendations contained within this report.
- I. The Council does not have a statutory duty to pursue one common, shared, aspirational vision for North Northamptonshire. If it decides not to do so, then in practical terms, this means continuing to focus on the Council's own vision and leaving partner agencies to focus on theirs. There is nothing wrong with this approach. Indeed, there is already a lot of activity focused on aligning approaches and target outcomes which are well embedded in current ways of working. It would however still leave a gap in terms of a common and widely accepted vision for the area that cuts across all sectors and partners.
 - II. The Council could proceed with the development of a wider future vision for the area, but without facilitating partner ownership and engagement. This is not considered a viable option. For the future vision to be

effective, it needs to be jointly developed and owned. In writing a future vision in isolation the Council would do little to engage partners and encourage ownership. The Council would not be utilising its unique position as an enabler and shaper of future place to maximise advantage for the area.

III. The Council can use its unique position in the area to help kick-start a dialogue and process for setting an aspirational shared vision for North Northamptonshire; A vision that a broad range of organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector can co-produce, co-own and co-deliver. This approach is considered best practice. It is more challenging to achieve, but the potential rewards for the area over the long-term are greater. This is the preferred approach.

5.2 When considering the right approach, the wider context is important. Resources are tight across all organisations and households. Anything that can bring organisations together towards achieving a common sense of purpose has the potential to bring with it greater efficiency benefits, both in terms of reductions in costs to service providers, and better community outcomes for the local area. These two are inextricably linked and can help all organisations achieve both their own and the wider shared vision.

6 Next Steps

6.1 Subject to approval of this report, work would begin on the organisation and format for the Big 50 Conference, which is expected to be held in late Spring 2023. The outcomes of this would be brought back to the Executive in late Summer/early Autumn 2023 including any specific actions that it is proposed that the council will have responsibility for in terms of delivery.

6.2 It is anticipated that, subject to the outcomes of the Big 50 Conference, that this could then be repeated on an annual basis to discuss progress and ensure actions are being delivered.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1 The work undertaken to date has included the commissioning of consultants. This was procured following NNC's current procurement and the use of a call of contract. This initial phase of work has been met from within existing budgets.

7.1.2 The next phase of work for the conference will also be met from within existing budgets. There will be a phase 2 following the conference which is still be considered and it this could be a continuation of our commissioned work already in place following a procurement process last year. All remaining work

will be undertaken by officers within NNC. Again, this will be met from existing budgets.

7.1.3 The action plans that will evolve from the Big 50 Conference may lead to additional budget implications for NNC although these will be addressed in the next report to Executive and Council in late Summer/early Autumn 2023. Similarly, any actions may also be deemed transformational for the council but again would be reported on in the next report to Executive.

7.2 Legal and Governance

7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the decision.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1 The development of a North Northamptonshire Vision is likely to support a broad number of NNC's corporate policies and plans and will be reflected in the eventual action plan that is developed.

7.3.2 Based on the proposed three vision priorities of:

- Proud Place: A place with clear goals and a plan of how to get there, where people feel inspired and safe.
- Prosperous Place: A place full of thriving businesses and a skilled population who can achieve their ambitions.
- Proactive Place: A place which understands the issues its people face and how to address them early, so everyone can live the best life.

7.3.3 All six of NNC's Corporate Strategy priorities relate to these three headline vision priorities at this stage.

7.4 Risk

7.4.1 There are no significant risks to NNC arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4.2 There may be wider risks at the conclusion of this work for NNC which may include:

- Additional costs to the council to deliver on specific aspects of the Action Plan
- Failure to deliver on the action plan due to capacity constraints
- Diverting attention away from NNC core business to deliver on the action plan

This will need to be carefully managed and considered, although it is

expected the action plan is likely to compliment and re-enforce wider strategic activities the council wishes to undertake as part of its own Corporate Strategy.

7.5 Consultation

7.5.1 As mentioned in 2.4 of this report, engagement with a range of partners, community representatives, elected members and staff has been held, to set out this first proposal of what the best life in North Northamptonshire in 2050 could look like.

7.5.2 Stakeholders were asked three main questions:

- What does the best life in North Northamptonshire look like in 2050?
- What are the opportunities here?
- What are the barriers to the best life, now and in the future

7.5.3 There were workshops held with 12 elected members from NNC and a selection of 20 staff.

7.5.4 These were then followed up with a number of 1-1 discussions with senior representatives from the Integrated Care System (ICS), South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), the Voluntary Sector and the Chamber of Commerce. There were also further discussions on a 1-1 basis with elected members.

7.5.5 More work now needs to be undertaken to socialise and test the vision as detailed in 5.16 and 5.17 of this report. It is proposed the most appropriate way to do this is to initiate the Big 50 Conference to bring together everyone who has a role to play in this.

7.5.6 The aim is to bring together key stakeholders and the community in North Northamptonshire to refine the proposed vision and make the connections which are needed to start working towards it. The Conference will lead to a set of actions and outcomes, to make this happen. This initial conference will be by invitation to stakeholders and partners across North Northamptonshire and following this wider engagement will commence with residents.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1 This report has not been considered by any of the Executive Advisory Panels but could be part of the Forward Plan over the next 6 months as the work evolves.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 This report has not been considered by the Scrutiny Commission at this stage but could form part of its future work programme.

7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 An Equality Screening Assessment (ESA) has been completed and is available on request. As the work on the development of the North Northamptonshire Vision is evolving and won't be concluded until late Summer/early Autumn 2023, it is difficult to predict at this stage what impacts the outcomes of this work will have on protected groups, and therefore there are no positive or negative impacts highlighted within the assessment.

7.8.2 It is proposed a further ESA is completed at the conclusion of the work and attached to the follow up report that will be brought back to Executive.

7.9 Climate and Environment Impact

7.9.1 The North Northamptonshire Vision has the climate and the environment heavily referenced throughout. It is recognised that one of the key drivers that have helped shaped the vision thus far is centred on protecting the environment. The report references our wonderful countryside and waterways that need to be protected, a focus on reducing our carbon emissions as well as attracting green growth and harnessing the wide range of environmental plans and strategies held by organisations, businesses and groups working to protect our local environment and the planet.

7.9.2 The three priorities that will drive action also have a strong focus on sustainability and the wider environment, and especially in Prosperous Place and the areas of Green Growth, Tourism, Transport and Housing.

7.9.3 It is anticipated that specific actions will evolve from the Big 50 Conference and will allow the Council's own Climate Management Plan to feed into this area of focus.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 The North Northamptonshire Vision recognises that not everyone has the best chance in life yet and that there are areas of deprivation across North Northamptonshire both in urban and rural areas. The three vision priorities reflect this and there are some clear priority goals identified across all areas including Civic Leadership, A stake in society, Community Empowerment, Route Causes and Prevention, and Giving Children the best start in life.

7.10.2 As with the climate and environment, the action plan that evolves over the coming months will reflect NNC's own work in this environment, such as the Left Behind Communities Scrutiny Review and Action Plan and the evolving

Local Area Partnerships, as well as bringing further partner engagement and resource to accelerate the work across North Northamptonshire.

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 The North Northamptonshire Vision highlights, under one of its three priorities of a Proud Place, that it will be renowned for being an inspiring, safe place for all. It also highlights a specific priority goal to be developed under Safety, and specifically that people feel safe in their neighbourhoods, on the roads, using our facilities. Where issues of crime or disorder are identified we use preventative approaches and education to reduce them.

7.11.2 This will be further developed with specific actions identified amongst NNC and the wider stakeholders involved as part of the Big 50 Conference.

8 Background Papers

8.1 None specific to this report although numerous reports, strategies and action plans have helped inform the work on the North Northamptonshire Vision report