

## EXECUTIVE 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan 2024-2025</b>
<b>Executive Director</b>	Jane Bethea, Director of Public Health and Wellbeing
<b>Report Author</b>	Jack Pishhorn, Head of Culture, Tourism and Heritage, Communities and Leisure
<b>Lead Member</b>	Cllr Helen Howell – Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism

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

### List of Appendices

#### **Appendix A: Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan.**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. This report presents the new unified Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Business Plan for 2024/25. Developed collaboratively by the Service leads, department heads and our valued partners within the culture, tourism and heritage industry, education, and commercial partners. The report sets out a strategic blueprint for the future of the service.
- 1.2. The Plan articulates a clear vision. It outlines the future strategic direction and highlights significant achievements to date. The operational model is detailed along with a strategic framework for sustainable growth. This plan also anticipates future challenges and presents ambitious infrastructure projects to improve the future North Northamptonshire Culture, Tourism and Heritage offer.
- 1.3. The Executive is asked to approve the new Business Plan.

## 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report introduces the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan for 2024/2025. In September 2022, North Northamptonshire Council took a significant stride in reorganising this service, creating the Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Service. This strategic approach streamlined various departments under the Communities and Leisure Directorate, including the Chester House Estate, Corby Heritage Centre, Cornerstone, The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre, the North Northamptonshire Greenway Project, Discover Northamptonshire and theatre and land-based contracts. Managed under a new unified business plan, this approach optimises revenue generation, expenditure control, and efficient resource sharing across departments.
- 2.2 The Plan sets out the vision for the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service:
- “North Northamptonshire will develop a sustainable, operationally efficient, and immersive Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service for both residents and visitors. We are resolutely focused on illuminating the unique cultural treasures within North Northamptonshire while preserving these valuable legacies for the benefit of future generations. Our collaborative efforts with partners are geared towards revitalising the tourism economy through infrastructure enhancement and innovative marketing strategies, with the overarching goal of attracting investment and visitors.”*
- 2.3 The financial targets for the fiscal year 2024/25 reflect a robust approach, with a revised baseline budget of £760,000 (now £855,890 following the recent 2023 pay award). In 2022/23 this baseline budget was reduced by £172,000 (originally £932,000). This reduction results from anticipated savings and a comprehensive reorganisation of resources. Income generation goals are set to counterbalance a decrease in council contributions in future years, taking a prudent financial outlook considering the UK economic climate.
- 2.4 Over the past two years, the service has already achieved much public and stakeholder engagement and education/learning successes, this Plan explores how we can build sustainably on these. This includes schemes such as the Creating Tomorrow Trust Partnership, the University of Leicester Field School, the mobilisation and development of the Northamptonshire Archive, the learning outreach programme from Cornerstone and the newly developed Discover Northamptonshire Tourism Hub.
- 2.5 In addition to ongoing initiatives, the Business Plan explores opportunities for various capital projects. These include the Kettering Library Roof replacement and Art Gallery roof repairs, Chester House Estate Greenhouse restoration, Kettering Museum project development, the relocation of the Corby archive, repairs to the Chester House Garden wall, the Corby Priors Hall archaeology project, and the Discover Northamptonshire high street interactive screens. The proposed projects reflect a commitment to enhancing facilities, supporting education, preserving historical landmarks, and fostering community engagement. Capital funding, or external funding has been or will be sourced to fund these initiatives, to ensure future investment contributes to continuous

development, with which the service anticipates sustained growth and innovation.

- 2.6 The business plan delves into a transformative vision for North Northamptonshire's heritage, culture, and tourism assets. Through strategic utilisation of the Heritage Fund Resilience Grant, we aim to establish new governance models, including charitable trusts and community-led organizations for key landmarks such as Chester House, Corby Heritage Centre, and the Cornerstone. This forward-looking approach is underscored by careful examination of short-term investments, exemplified by the relocation and expansion plans for the Corby Heritage Centre. Moreover, the report highlights our commitment to enhancing the governance of the tourism sector through collaboration with the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Ultimately, this multifaceted strategy not only seeks to reduce subsidies significantly, but also ensures the continued prosperity and positive impact of these cultural assets for the residents of North Northamptonshire in the years to come.

### **3. Recommendations**

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3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:

- a) Approve and adopt the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan for the 2024/2025 financial year.
- b) Delegate authority to the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing to take the actions necessary to ensure successful delivery of the Business Plan.

3.2. Reasons for Recommendations:

- 3.2.1. Approval of the Business Plan will facilitate the integration of the new Plan into the service, marking a significant milestone as we enter the 24/25 financial year, a period poised for continued achievement, growth, and sustained success.
- 3.2.2. The Business Plan outlines a clear and strategic vision for the Culture, Tourism, and Heritage departments, providing a roadmap for their development and growth. It ensures that the council has a well-defined direction to safeguard, promote, and celebrate the cultural heritage and tourism assets of North Northamptonshire.
- 3.2.3. The Plan consolidates various departments under a unified approach, fostering operational efficiency through streamlined processes and resource sharing. Adopting this plan enhances collaboration, leading to cost savings and optimised service delivery.

3.2.4. The Plan focuses on creating a seamless and immersive experience for both residents and visitors. By integrating educational programs, cultural events, and tourism promotion, the plan enhances the overall visitor experience, contributing to the attractiveness of North Northamptonshire as a destination.

### 3.3. Alternatives Options Considered:

3.3.1 The primary alternative considered was to forego the development of a new single Business Plan for Culture, Tourism, and Heritage, opting to run the departments individually. However, this approach is not recommended due to significant cost and performance implications. Operating the departments independently would likely result in increased expenses, reduced operational efficiency, and a lack of cohesive strategic direction. By consolidating efforts, resources, and strategies under a cohesive plan, North Northamptonshire Council and the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service is better positioned to achieve its goals. It will make best use of resources to optimise income and provide a seamless and integrated experience for both residents and visitors.

## 4. Report Background

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- 4.1. The Chester House Estate and the Northamptonshire Archaeological Archive heritage regeneration project was initially conceived by the former County Council and taken forward by North Northamptonshire Council at a cost of £17.5 million. There was also an investment in excess of £10m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project reached completion in October 2021. The site has attracted 500,000 visitors over the past two years, (based on ticket sales and that during the first 6 months car parking spaces had to be booked for planning purposes to monitor vehicular access) and has had a successful first two years of operation. It has met income targets and has won numerous awards, including the 'Best Northamptonshire Visitor Attraction' at the Northants Life 2022 awards. The site has also experienced ongoing development and expansion to its offer.
- 4.2. Formerly known as GLAM, the Cornerstone project received funding of £4.5 million from the Government's Get Building Fund via SEMLEP. Completed in the autumn of 2022, it encompasses improvements to the Alfred East Art Gallery, including a new state of the art store for the collection, a new café, multi-functional conference and community facilities, offices, a new Business and Intellectual Property Centre supported by the British Library to support new and small businesses, and enhanced public accessibility. The mobilisation of the Cornerstone project has been delayed due to the Library Roof Replacement project.
- 4.3. Established in 2008 by the former Corby Borough Council, the Corby Heritage Centre, located in the heart of the Old Village and supported by a Heritage Fund grant of £480,500, currently attracts an estimated 600 visitors annually.
- 4.4. Launched in March 2023 with the support of the Shared Prosperity Fund, the Discover Northamptonshire Hub operates seven days a week from 10 am to 5 pm. Serving as a dedicated space for residents and visitors, the Tourism

Information Centre showcases the cultural offerings and attractions of Northamptonshire through interactive tools, exhibits and events.

- 4.5. Initiated by the former East Northamptonshire Council, the East Northamptonshire Greenway programme which focused on green infrastructure development along the Nene Valley, has seen strategic developments. The Greenway Programme Board and North Northamptonshire Council approved a new strategy in September 2023, outlining long-term objectives and individual dynamic plans for the network.
- 4.6. North Northamptonshire Council also inherited two further destination sites from the former East Northamptonshire Council. Both are owned by North Northamptonshire Council but are operated through long term leases by independent operators. Stanwick Lakes is run by Rockingham Forest Trust and Twywell Hills and Dales by the Land Trust. The service manages the contractual and funding relationships with these organisations on behalf of the Council.
- 4.7. In September 2022, North Northamptonshire Council established the Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Service. The service has undergone a recent staffing restructure, which has streamlined various departments under the Communities and Leisure Directorate. This includes the Chester House Estate, Corby Heritage Centre, Cornerstone, The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre, the North Northamptonshire Greenway Project, Discover Northamptonshire and theatre and land-based contracts. It has resulted in the development of this new Business Plan.

## **5. Issues and Choices**

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- 5.1. The Business Plan outlines, in detail, the strategic vision and operational delivery of the newly established Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Service for North Northamptonshire Council. This entails a thorough exploration of key elements of the service:
  - A detailed delineation of the new service areas, outlining the departments and providing insight into recent achievements, developments and future plans for each.
  - An in-depth examination of the current operational status of the Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), showcasing recent accomplishments. Additionally, the plan introduces progressive strategies for the ARC, outlining forthcoming engagement initiatives and interpretative enhancements.
  - Presentation of the existing and future education and learning programmes for the Chester House Estate, including the successful collaborative partnership with the Creating Tomorrow College.

- Highlights the ongoing and prospective collaborations with universities, featuring upcoming events, collaborative ventures, and potential funding opportunities.
  - A comprehensive explanation of the commercial offers at the Chester House Estate, covering its events program, catering services, weddings, volunteer programs, conferencing and other space rentals.
  - Details on the operational aspects of Discover Northamptonshire, encompassing the new Tourism Hub at Rushden Lakes, upcoming Council run events, the envisioned Local Visitor Economy Partnership, and a broad outline of the evolving long-term tourism strategy. The Tourism Strategy will be presented to the executive early in 2024.
  - A concise overview of the current functions of the Corby Heritage Centre and future aspirations for the venue.
  - Details future governance models for departments to support the reduction of council funding moving forwards.
  - An explanation of the Cornerstone project, including its current mobilisation plan, associated challenges, and future aspirations.
  - Unveiling the framework for the new shared business operations for the service.
  - A presentation of forthcoming development projects and opportunities.
  - A summary of the financial projections for the entire service.
- 5.2. Education and learning programs are woven into the Business Plan, ensuring accessibility for schools, colleges, and lifelong learners. The service actively engages with the community, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the cultural assets of the area.
- 5.3. Through careful planning for museums, archaeological stewardship, and heritage sites, the Plan ensures the preservation of North Northamptonshire's rich cultural heritage. Investments in repairs, maintenance, and future strategic projects contribute to the long-term conservation of valuable artifacts and historical records.
- 5.4. The Plan actively promotes the revitalisation of the tourism economy through infrastructure enhancement, marketing strategies, and collaborations with local businesses. A unified approach ensures a coordinated effort to attract investment and visitors, contributing to the economic growth of North Northamptonshire and beyond.
- 5.5. Our flexible event spaces, year-round cultural engagement, and diverse offerings cater to a wide range of events and audiences. This adaptability

ensures the service remains dynamic and responsive to the changing needs of residents and visitors.

5.6. The Plan will align with a future heritage masterplan for North Northamptonshire, considering and actively exploring funding opportunities for capital projects such as the Kettering Museum, Northamptonshire Greenway Chester House Estate Greenhouse and others.

5.7. **The Chester House Estate Achievements and Financial Performance:** At the forefront of the service's financial performance is the Chester House Estate, as it contributes significantly to both income and expenditure.

5.7.1. In the fiscal year 2023-2024, the comprehensive portfolio, encompassing core and commercial elements, is poised to generate a total revenue of £1,727,658. This includes a Council baseline budget of £298,244 and an income of £1,727,658, offset by an expenditure of £1,992,147.

5.7.2. The total council contribution of £289,224 set in 2021-22 for the operation of the estate for its opening 5 years, will no longer be needed from the 27/28 financial year, as the site is projected to be financially self-sufficient.

5.7.3. Starting from the financial year 2023/2024, the proposed budgets for the Chester House Estate have been divided into two distinct cost departments – 'Core' and 'Commercial'.

5.7.4. The 'Core' department is dedicated to the operation and advancement of the onsite learning programs, university partnerships, and the Archaeological Resource Centre. Projections indicate a targeted income of £118,800 for this area, derived from sources such as school visits, box depositions, talks and lectures, and the Inter Authority Agreement with West Northamptonshire Council. The 'Core' department will operate within an expenditure budget of £295,311, which includes salaries and associated costs for five positions (3 full-time and 2 part-time).

5.7.5. The 'Commercial' department oversees the operation and development of the broader estate, including the artisan shopping village, accommodation, retail offerings, food and beverage services, events, conferencing, other space rentals, and weddings. Anticipated revenue aligns with the successful performance observed in 2021/2022, totalling £1,418,627. The commercial department's operating budget is set at £1,313,687, covering repairs and maintenance, salaries for 15 full-time positions, and up to 50 casual and part-time roles, as well as stock purchases and ongoing development projects.

5.7.6. A snapshot of the bustling and demanding 8 weeks spring and early summer 2023 period at the Chester House Estate includes:

- Excavating the site for 3 weeks with our partners at the University of Leicester. The excavations produced five complete pots, 14 burials and a whole host of other archaeological finds including coins, broaches and an unexpected Neolithic arrowhead. 88 volunteers contributed 1841 hours of their time uncovering the history of Roman Irchester. In total over 7000 people engaged with our excavation this year.
- Welcoming more than 1800 primary and secondary school students to engage in our archaeological dig and explore the Archaeological Resource Centre.
- Washed thousands of archaeological objects with over 40 volunteers contributing their time.
- Hosting a two-day Roman Festival that saw over 4000 attendees, allowing them to immerse themselves in an encounter with the Romans. This was over double the number of visitors we had for the event last year.
- Facilitating the creation of 540 Roman helmets by families participating in the Kids Festival.
- Undertaking 12 comprehensive bee surveys as an integral facet of our Geography learning initiative.
- Receiving 72 heart-warming letters from local school children who greatly enjoyed their visits to the estate.
- Welcomed 3695 visitors to the ARC or who engaged with our finds handling stalls at various events to discover more about Northamptonshire's Archaeology.
- Received over 300 boxes of archives in the ARC from sites in Brackley, Brixworth, Daventry and Harpole.
- Hosting our first two ARC work experience students ever to get an insight into what a career in archaeological curation is like.
- Providing 600 hours of invaluable food and beverage work experience to students from the Creating Tomorrow College, within our café.
- Guiding 18 students through their placement year at the estate, a testament to our ongoing partnership with the Creating Tomorrow College.
- Celebrating 6 weddings within the Threshing Barn and securing reservations for an additional 23 wedding bookings for the remainder of this year and next.



- Hosting a momentous corporate event, The Northants Life Awards, right in our main courtyard, where we expertly catered (in-house) for an impressive gathering of over 300 attendees. This was followed by being the host for the Northamptonshire Business Network Summer party the next week.
- Revelling in the rain during sold-out Abba and Queen tribute nights, with ticket sales surging by over 50% compared to the previous year.
- Achieving a new milestone in attendance with our largest-ever audience on a single day at Kids Fest 2023.
- Hosting over 2000 people at the Air Ambulance Day in support of this important charity.
- The Farmhouse café achieved an income of over £71,000 in July alone, compared to £34,500 in 2022.

5.7.7. The 2022/23 outturn and the forecast for 2023/34 are shown here:

<b>Chester House</b>	<b>2022-2023 Actual</b>	<b>2023-2024 Forecast</b>
<b>Council Contribution</b>	£ (298,224)	£ (298,244)
<b>Income</b>	£ (1,022,026)	£ (1,727,658)
<b>Expenditure</b>	£ 1,292,906	£ 1,992,147
<b>Total Cost</b>	£ (27,344)	£ (33,755)

5.7.8. Whilst the Estate has experienced substantial income growth between 21/22 and 22/23, we approach the future with a prudent outlook. The Business Plan forecasts reflect a conservative estimation, prioritising stability to ensure the sustainability of our income and expenditure for the years ahead, especially with the current UK economic climate.

## **6. Next Steps**

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- 6.1. To implement the Business Plan for 2024-2025 and to continue to monitor progress against the new business plan fortnightly.
  - 6.2. A refreshed Plan will be brought to Executive once a clear timeline and plan for the opening and mobilisation of Cornerstone is known, with updated financial projections.
  - 6.3. Whilst many benefits are set out in the business plan around how the wider offer benefits local communities, future updates will set out the benefits specifically seen by harder to reach communities, including those that experience greater levels of deprivation.
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## 7. Implications (including financial implications)

### 7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

7.1.1. The financial targets for the fiscal year 2024/2025 are based on our past accomplishments and the future strategies outlined in the Business Plan.

7.1.2. In 2024/2025 the baseline budget will be £855,890, in line with 2023/2024 and including the recent 2023 staff pay awards. This is a decrease from the £932,667 allocated in 2022/2023. This reduction was identified when we initiated the new Culture, Tourism and Heritage service, resulting in anticipated savings of £172,171 (before the pay award uplift was added). This has been achieved through a comprehensive reorganisation of resources, including a restructuring of service staffing to ensure the right roles for financial sustainability. This included introducing additional income generation roles and establishing the new shared Business Operations Team. Financial projections by department are shown below.

Dept	Income £	Staff Costs £	Utilities £	Operating Costs £	Repairs & Maintenance £	Invest- ment £	Dept Cost £
CTH Service	(855,890)	(84,780)	-	-	-	-	(771,110)
Chester House Commercial	(1,418,627)	799,034	97,992	341,500	92,385	28,000	(59,711)
Chester House Core	(118,786)	174,190	18,000	86,980	6,000	20,000	186,385
Business Operations	-	228,362	-	62,040	-	-	290,402
Corby Heritage Centre	(600)	37,932	2,400	6,000	2,400	3,600	51,732
Cornerstone	-	218,773	27,000	1,200	-	48,000	294,973
Discover Northamp- tonshire	(185,100)	147,669	24,744	17,016	3,000	-	7,329
	(2,579,003)	1,690,745	170,136	514,736	103,785	99,600	(00)

7.1.3. In the current financial year, both the Chester House Estate and Discover Northamptonshire are projected to generate an income of £59,711 for the broader service. This funding will be allocated to support departments that are anticipated to operate at a loss during the financial year, such as Cornerstone and Corby Heritage Centre. With the £855,890 base budget contribution from the Council, the service is expected to cover all its costs.

7.1.4. The business plan designates 35% of costs as controllable, which includes expenses related to such areas as catering stock, casual wages, and event resources. The service management team will convene on a fortnightly basis to review income and make informed decisions on when to allocate this budget.

In case of a drop in income, the team can allocate reserved expenditure to counterbalance the shortfall.

7.1.5. It is essential to note that the current service plan and financial projections do not encompass the mobilisation and launch of the Cornerstone. The Cornerstone's initiation will entail significant expenses related to both the core operations and commercial elements, including staff wages and catering stock. Once a definitive opening timeframe for the Cornerstone is established, a comprehensive business plan will be developed for the department. This will lead to a revision of the overall Business Plan finances to incorporate the additional income and expenditure associated with the Cornerstone's operations.

7.1.6. Any surplus generated within the service prior to this milestone will be actively reinvested back into the continuous development of the service.

7.1.7. It should also be noted that the costs to the Council for support to external providers who operate Council assets on our behalf, which is facilitated through the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service, are not included in the table above. These include the 3 theatres, Stanwick Lakes and Twywell Hills and Dales and all arrangements were inherited by the Council from the former sovereign councils under lease, contractual or grant arrangements.

7.1.8. The costs for these services are shown here:

	<b>Revenue Allocation</b>	<b>Capital Allocation</b>
<b>Stanwick Lakes</b>	-	Up to £110,000
<b>Twywell Hill and Dales</b>	£36,000	-
<b>Core Theatre</b>	£297,500	-
<b>Castle Theatre</b>	£225,408	-
<b>Lighthouse Theatre</b>	£30,000	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>£588,908</b>	<b>£110,000</b>

## 7.2. Legal and Governance

7.2.1. There are no legal implications arising from the Business Plan

## 7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. The Business Plan aligns with the Council's commitment to strategic development, maximising commercial opportunities, financial prudence, and preservation of the area's unique cultural identity.

7.3.2. The North Northamptonshire Councils Corporate plan adopted in 2021 has key commitments which are key to this project. These include:

- Active, fulfilled lives :- supporting people to live healthier more active lives. Active travel schemes and use of our green heritage spaces supports commitment.
  - Safe and thriving places:- thriving economy that shapes great places to live, learn work and visit which can be achieved within this service plans.
  - Green, sustainable environment:- the vision is to develop a green infrastructure for walking, cycling and use of our waterways.
- [Corporate plan | North Northamptonshire Council](https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan)  
([northnorthants.gov.uk](https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk))

#### 7.4. Risk

7.4.1. Whilst successful delivery of the Business Plan is dependent on meeting income targets which can be affected by a range of factors outside of our control, such a further economic downturn, this risk has been carefully considered in setting of the financial forecasts. The financial targets for the fiscal year 2024/2025 have been meticulously crafted and are firmly grounded in our past accomplishments and the future strategies outlined.

7.4.2. The Business Plan designates 35% of costs as controllable, which includes expenses related to such areas as catering stock, casual wages, and event resources. The service management team will convene on a fortnightly basis to review income and make informed decisions on when to allocate this budget. In case of a drop in income, officers can allocate reserved expenditure to counterbalance the shortfall.

#### 7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. The Business Plan has been co-produced with a range of stakeholders, including academic and commercial partners.

#### 7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. This report has not been considered by the Executive Advisory Panel as it is not a policy or strategy.

#### 7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. This report has not been considered by Scrutiny, but will be subject to call in.

#### 7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. There are no equality implications from this report. The service always seeks to make an inclusive offer, as demonstrated for example by the free to access

arrangement at Chester House and the ongoing partnership with the Creating Tomorrow College and our broader offer to SEND children and their families.

- 7.8.2. Future development of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators provides an opportunity to set out benefits to particular target communities that may have less opportunity to access culture and heritage learning opportunities.

## 7.9. **Climate and Environment Impact**

- 7.9.1. Capital works undertaken to date have been focused on heritage buildings, some of which have listed building status. Whilst heritage buildings create limitations in relation to 'green' modifications that can be made, the service, for future capital projects and targeted improvements will consider the use of greener technologies wherever possible.

## 7.10. **Community Impact**

- 7.10.1. The service plan highlights the need to maximise the value of our cultural, tourism and heritage assets which have positive effects for our communities in terms of economic and mental, health and wellbeing.

## 7.11. **Crime and Disorder Impact**

- 7.11.1 None identified

## 8. **Background Papers**

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- 8.1 None