



EXECUTIVE

15th February 2024

Report Title	Levelling Up in North Northamptonshire Plan 2024 - progress report
Lead Member	Councillor Mark Rowley, Executive Member for Housing Communities and Levelling Up
Report Author	David Watts – Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS)

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	N/A
Which Corporate Plan priority does the report most closely align with?	All

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Levelling-Up North Northamptonshire Plan v2.1 December 2023

Appendix B – Levelling-Up Progress Summary v1.1 December 2023

Appendix C – Copy of Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide the Executive with a progress report for the Levelling up action plan and agree the proposed steps for further consideration of the progress report, as set out on page 5 of **Appendix A**.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. An amended motion at Full Council on 28th July 2021 called for the Scrutiny Commission to review the underlying data and associated report relating to areas highlighted as “left behind” and bring forward a proposed plan to work towards Levelling Up those left behind areas.

- 2.2. The Scrutiny Review concluded its work with a report to Scrutiny Commission on 5th July 2022. The content of the final report was subsequently agreed by the Executive on 25th August 2022, and the proposed plan to be progressed under the political leadership of the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-Up, with the Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing.
- 2.3. **Appendix B** provides a summary position for the programme to date, setting out some of the key achievements

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Executive:
 - a) Notes the progress against the Levelling Up Plan in North Northamptonshire.
 - b) Requests the Scrutiny Management Board consider if the report should be received and considered by any of its scrutiny committees.
 - c) Recommends to Full Council that the progress report is received by Full Council in quarter one of the 2024 – 2025 municipal year, as set out in the governance for the plan in **Appendix A**, following consideration by the relevant Scrutiny committees, as determined by the Scrutiny Management Board.
- 3.2. Reason for Recommendations:
 - i) The levelling up agenda is both a national and local priority and of importance to council members. The scrutiny review was undertaken because of an amended motion and discussion at Full Council.
 - ii) The recommendations seek approval from the Executive to progress the update through the governance set out in **Appendix A** (Page 4).
- 3.3. Alternative Options Considered:
 - i) Do not follow the governance set out in the Levelling Up plan, and transfer reporting activity to Business as Usual activity.
- 3.4. Whilst it would be expected that this activity will eventually transfer into business as usual activity and be subsumed into the corporate plan priorities, it is felt that there should be 1 – 2 full reporting cycles including scrutiny and Full Council prior to transferring this activity to business as usual.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. An amended motion at Full Council on 28th July 2021 called for the Scrutiny Commission to review the underlying data and associated report relating to areas highlighted as “left behind” and bring forward a proposed plan to work towards Levelling Up those left behind areas.
- 4.2. The Scrutiny Review concluded its work with a report to Scrutiny Commission on 5th July 2022. The content of the final report was subsequently agreed by the Executive on 25th August 2022, and the proposed plan to be progressed under the political leadership of the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-Up, with the Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing.
- 4.3. Links to the full report are provided in the background papers section of this report.
- 4.4. A governance structure is in place to maintain momentum and ensure delivery of a Levelling Up plan that was informed by the Levelling-Up Scrutiny review.
- 4.5. Recognising delivery of the plan needed to be managed through a matrix approach. This means that there are already services or partnership arrangements delivering aspects of the plan’s recommendations, however it is important for any developments to be cognisant of the Levelling-Up Plan.
- 4.6. Whilst parts of the plan will be delivered through Business as Usual (BAU) activity, there will be commitment and work required that may require individuals or teams to complete work in addition to their BAU roles or to set up task and finish groups to deliver. Where this happens, that activity will be directly monitored through the Levelling Up Delivery Group.
- 4.7. **Appendix B** provides a summary of work delivered to date. Where that work is led through a service or partnership the respective service or partnership is referenced in the progress summary.
- 4.8. Whilst the governance and matrix management approach to managing this activity has proven complicated, there are a significant number of milestones achieved. Where the “Key project progress” column in **Appendix B** states “refer to...” this indicates that key evidence on progress is held in full through those pieces of work by the service, report or partnership referenced.
- 4.9. A summary table of key achievements for each recommendation is included below:

Priority	Levelling Up Plan Recommendation	Examples of Key Achievements
Short term	Improving engagement and communications	Establishment of Local Area Partnerships and Community Wellbeing Forums as systematic approach to community engagement and collaborative problem solving

		<p>Well Northants Programme resident-led Neighbourhood Action Groups and Plans for the 3 left behind communities. Numerous community engagement events run e.g: Residents engaged – 606 Winter 2023 engagement events in Kettering and Corby providing small hampers as part of an engagement opportunity with key stakeholders. Over 100 attendees across two events. October 2023 engagement event in Kettering engaging families and young people. Over 100 attendees. Seeing a sustainable group developing out of a pilot tots group implemented as part of PB a year ago.</p>
		<p>FreshFest event held in Wellingborough in Sept 23 through the LAP to promote local offer to young people. 63% of young people were from left behind areas.</p>
		<p>Over 50 Warm Spaces supported during winters 2022-3 and 2023-4.</p>
	Businesses, communities, networking and problem solving	<p>Well Northants Programme resident-led Neighbourhood Action Groups and Plans for the 3 left behind communities. Numerous community engagement events run: Social Action Project in place to clean up the Grange Shopping Area. Working collaboratively with the Kettering Wombles, GRC, Co Op, Wider Community and NNC. Linking and supporting VCSE development (Brightways/ Groundworks group), to develop a bicycle project in Avondale and the Grange which will be linked to HMO 5 Wells, focusing on employability skills</p>
		<p>Establishment of Local Area Partnerships and Community Wellbeing Forums as systematic approach to community engagement and collaborative problem solving.</p>
	Pride in our neighbourhoods- street scene	<p>Adopted a new strategy for Tackling Litter and Fly-tipping. Commenced pilot project with Probation Service on Rapid Deployment Project – to target resources for such things as cleansing, graffiti removal, vegetation clearance and removal, ditch clearances.</p>
	Install more bleed boxes	<p>Largely funded by Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners Office many new bleed</p>

		boxes installed and interactive map produced
Medium Term	Supporting Community and Voluntary groups to write bids and develop projects	<p>Funding Fair delivered to support VCSE LAPs supported to develop ideas for projects which contribute to LAP action plans and to submit bids for funding</p> <p>VCSE organisations supported to submit bids for various NNC VCSE grant programmes e.g £4000 of Member Empowerment funding has been allocated to the left behind areas.</p> <p>Residents supported to bid and deliver projects funded through the Well Northants Participatory Budgeting programme.</p> <p>VCSE organisations engaged around their future requirements for funding support and bid writing to inform draft Communities Strategy and future VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements to be tendered during 2024.</p> <p>Communities in Sheds project Corby and the new Pump Track at Kingswood Neighbourhood Centre, both community led projects completed during 2022-3, supported by NNC.</p>
	Crowd Funding	
	The return on investment of strategically investing in local youth work	<p>Total of £105,000 recently invested in youth related projects in xx through Shared Prosperity Funding:</p> <p>£24,000 for Queensway for positive activities for young people and youth games equipment; £24,000 for Avon Dale and Grange for a safe space and events and equipment for young people, and for an early years drop in centre, and for new baby changing facilities; £35,000 for Kingswood and Hazel Leys for the Kingswood Urban Activity project for young people and education programmes around vaping and drug substance misuse as well as a young person's music project. Projects being delivered across all 3 areas were also funded (£22,000) for drugs education, life skills, wellbeing support, detached youth work and therapeutic art sessions all for young people.</p> <p>Best Practice review undertaken</p> <p>Well Northants programme is co-ordinating a Youth Work asset mapping exercise to link in with the VCSE thematic group and Family Hubs youth offer. This is being done with Childrens Trust, Northamptonshire Sport and local youth groups in Kingswood and Hazel Leys. And</p>

		is supporting Kingswood & Hazel Leys Youth Projects. Work to date has been to ensure groups are linked with Northamptonshire Association of Youth Clubs (NAYC).
	Strategies and approaches to address county lines, drug dealing and knife crime	Knife Angel Knife Crime awareness programme delivered during 2022. Multi-agency needs assessment undertaken to inform the new Serious Violence Strategy for Northamptonshire and a draft strategy has been produced to inform future investment. Combatting Drugs Partnership established during 2022 across the county which is leading on the work to address County Lines.
Longer Term	Community Hub Strategy	
	Estate Regeneration Strategy	Housing Repairs backlog project underway with positive results
	Safer Streets- Street Lighting and CCTV	Safer Streets Government funded programmes delivered during 2021-2023. New Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras installed on both Hemmingwell and Queensway estates in Wellingborough. Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner committed funding to Safer Streets Lite projects during 2022-23 which saw improved street lighting in Kingswood and improvements to the underpass on the Queensway estate, in conjunction with students from Wheelers Academy
	Putting communities at the heart of levelling up	This is at the heart of the Well Northants programme, which takes an asset-based community development approach.

4.10. Further work is to be developed under the following themes:

- Increase engagement of businesses in Local Area Partnerships;
- To include exploration of a crowd funding platform in the new VCSE Infrastructure contract requirements;
- Funding opportunities to be explored to support a co-produced piece of work with the VCSE on what is a community hub, what works currently within NN or elsewhere, best practice and how to apply a community hub strategy within the context of place within North Northamptonshire;
- Further development work towards a Youth Offer for North Northamptonshire
- Complete development of a Housing Strategy;
- Embed the principles of the Well Northants programme around asset-based community development into business as usual by aligning it with the LAP work programme.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Executive is asked to consider the future reporting arrangements as part of this report's recommendations.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Progress will continue to be monitored through the internal governance process for the Delivery Group.
- 6.2. Further "next steps" are set out in the body of this report and recommendations and are subject to decisions of the Executive at its meeting on 15th February 2024.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources, Financial and Transformation

- 7.1.1. At this point no specific budget has been required to facilitate the work to date including that of the Levelling-up North Northamptonshire Delivery Group, however the following identifies some of the resources that were required through officer time:

- i. Lead officers identified to own and lead delivery of each of the recommendations.
- ii. Other officers from across directorates to be nominated to support in the delivery of cross-cutting recommendations.

- 7.1.2. Officers involved in the delivery of the plan should monitor external funding/grant opportunities to deliver the plan.

- 7.1.3. Where there are budget requests required in order to deliver recommendations that have financial requirements in order to deliver them, any requests will be built into the Council's budget setting process and will seek to identify external and partner funding.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. Legal and governance implications of each recommendation and any associated activity are considered as plans are designed and monitored through the appropriate governance route where delivery is delivered outside of the Levelling-Up North Northamptonshire Delivery Group.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

7.3.1. The scrutiny review has followed the Scrutiny Procedure Rules set out in the Council's Constitution. 7.3.2. Relevant links can be made to all elements of the Corporate Plan, however, it may be necessary to consider whether aspects of the corporate plan may need to be amended, at such points when it is periodically reviewed, to reflect any decisions made.

7.4. Risk

7.4.1. There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report as most of the activity is delivered in a dispersed way with other group groups and governance monitoring and managing the risks associated with the activity they are delivering.

7.5. Consultation

7.5.1. Evidence to develop the final report was obtained through a variety of engagement events throughout the period of the scrutiny review.

7.5.2. The report containing a summary of the work undertaken and output from those sessions is available on the link referenced in the background papers at paragraph 8.1.1 of this report.

7.6. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1. Current progress was updated at the Prosperous Communities Executive Advisory Panel held on 24th January 2024, in order to shape later approaches to delivering against the plan. The Panel acknowledged the progress underway and provided feedback about relevant projects which has been included in this report.

7.7. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1. This report recommends that Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting of 29th March 2024. If Scrutiny Management Board considers whether any additional scrutiny is required in addition to the public discussions at both Executive (18th January 2024) and the Prosperous Communities Executive Advisory Panel (EAP) on 24th January 2024. Feedback will be collated and included for updates to Full Council.

7.8. Equality Implications

7.8.1. There are nine protected characteristics that are afforded protection against less favourable treatment within the Equality Act (2010). These are:

- (a) Age

- (b) Race
- (c) Sex
- (d) Gender Reassignment
- (e) Sexual Orientation
- (f) Marriage and Civil Partnership
- (g) Religion or Belief
- (h) Disability
- (i) Pregnancy and Maternity

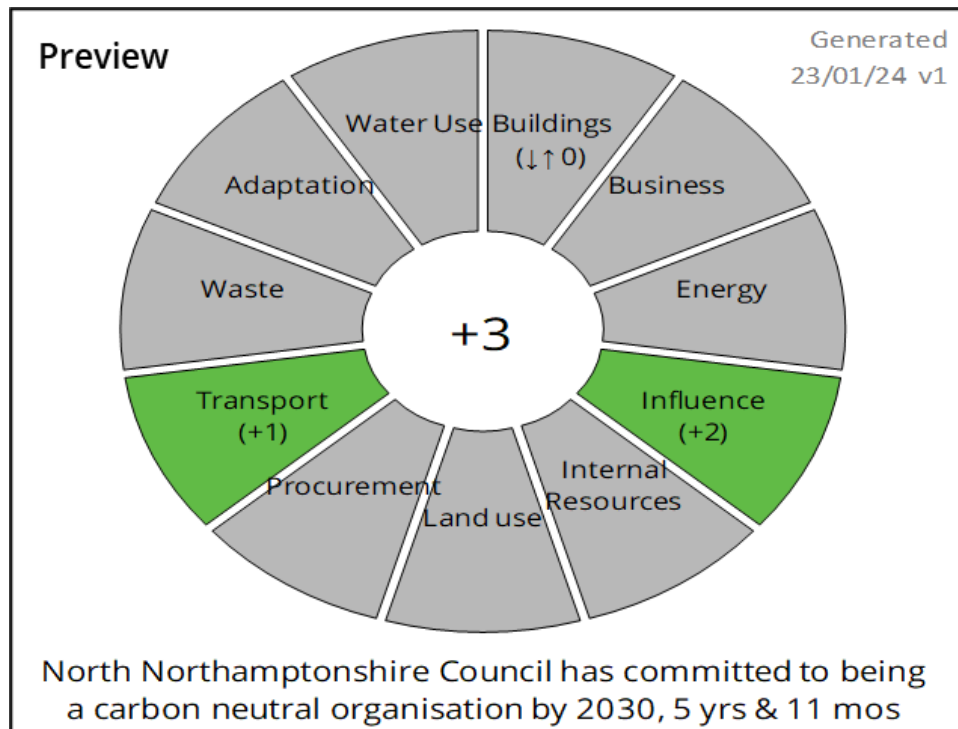
7.8.2. The three aims of the General Equality Duty, which must be considered consider in our decision-making processes, are:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- (b) Advance the equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those that do not share it.
- (c) Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those that do not share it.

7.8.3 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for each of the recommendations as specific pieces of work are progressed to implementation to provide a greater understanding of the impacts on local communities.

7.9. **Climate and Environment Impact**

7.9.1 There are no direct impacts following the work to date. However, a Climate Change Impact Assessment has been undertaken which has demonstrated a likely small positive impact:



7.9.2 Delivery of environmental changes set out to be developed in the plan could positively benefit those communities.

7.10. Community Impact

7.10.1 The plan is expected to positively impact on communities identified as left behind.

7.11. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1. Elements of this plan are expected to positively impact on aspects of crime and disorder in the areas that are the focus of this plan. Some pieces of work may be delivered at a locality wide basis impacting across North Northamptonshire.

7.11.2. Where another delivery group is responsible this is referenced in the progress summary at **Appendix B**.

8. Background Papers

8.1. The following background papers are relevant to this update report:

8.1.1. Levelling Up North Northamptonshire report presented to NNC Executive 25 August 2022 (pp 272 – 318) ([Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Executive, 25/08/2022 14:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/25/08/2022/14:00))

8.1.2. Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge (2019) – full report

[local trust ocsi left behind research august 2019.pdf \(localtrust.org.uk\)](#)

- 8.1.3. Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge (2019) – summary report
[Local-Trust-Left-Behind-Report-Executive-Summary-December-2019.pdf \(localtrust.org.uk\)](#)
- 8.1.4. Left behind? Understanding communities on the edge (2020) – interim data set
[Left-Behind-Areas-IMD-2019-REVISED-SLIDE-DECK-with-revised-unemployment-slide-Read-Only-copy.pdf \(localtrust.org.uk\)](#)
- 8.1.5. The strength of community and charitable giving in 'Left Behind' neighbourhoods (2021)
[The All Party Parliamentary Group publishes our report on the strength of community and charitable giving in 'Left behind' neighbourhoods - OCSI](#)
- 8.1.6. Scrutiny Review in to Levelling Up Communities (24 August 2021)
<https://northnorthants.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s2211/Scrutiny%20Review%20in%20to%20Levelling%20Up%20Communities.pdf>
- 8.1.7 Scrutiny Review – Levelling Up Communities scoping document (24 August 2021)
[Blank Scrutiny Scoping Document \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)