



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Future Ways of Working Strategy



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Foreword by the Chief Executive

I am delighted to introduce the Council's Future Ways of Working Strategy.

I cannot understate how important this strategy is for the future of the Council and the area that it serves.

I believe that if we all work together to embrace new ways of working in a manner that reflects the Council's newly adopted vision and values, then this strategy will result in an organisation that is far greater than the sum of its parts.

Our elected members have set out an ambitious vision for North Northamptonshire along with a set of supporting key commitments and priorities that are equally as aspirational. It is our job now to work together in the most effective way to deliver them, whilst at the same time, developing an organisation worthy of describing itself as 'the employer of choice'.

To help achieve the above aim, this strategy sets out to develop the Council's approach to our people and culture, our buildings and workspaces and how we make best use of our technology. For this strategy to be effective, we are going to have to make the best use of the resources that we have. To do that, we have to be bold and challenge traditional ways of doing things.

New ways of working will inevitably mean different things to different people and teams. One size will not fit all. It will however mean working in new and more innovative ways with the focus of helping the Council become more efficient and effective, transforming and improving services for our local residents and businesses.

New ways of working has to deliver benefits that are tangible and clear to see and we all have a role to play in delivering that aim. I look forward to working with you all to help bring this strategy to life.

Thank you,
Rob Bridge, Chief Executive

A supporting comment from the Leader of the Council:

"This Strategy is vitally important to the delivery of our new Corporate Plan that sets out our vision and priorities for the future. Future ways of working, if adopted properly, can make a significant positive difference to both North Northamptonshire and our staff who deliver such important services"

Councillor Jason Smithers,
Leader of the Council

"I believe that if we all work together to embrace new ways of working in a manner that reflects the Council's newly adopted vision and values, then this strategy will result in an organisation that is far greater than the sum of its parts."

Rob Bridge, Chief Executive

1. Introduction

North Northamptonshire Council has a bold vision for the future. Our Corporate Plan sets out our priorities to deliver excellent services to the residents and businesses of North Northamptonshire.

We want to encourage services that are outcome focussed. This means that we focus on what the impact or end result will be for the person using our services. It is less about how we get there and more about how we enable our staff to have the flexibility to develop the right solutions to the issues and problems that we face, both today and in the future.

Our approach to working is not just about locations, desks, workstyles and hours; it is about how we provide solutions and services in the most appropriate way. That may be through collaborative spaces where people come together and problem solve, digital solutions that provide better responsiveness or a hybrid approach to working in the office and at home to enhance productiveness and support our colleague's health and wellbeing.

This Strategy will act as the catalyst for developing modern working practices that ensure colleagues are supported to maximise their performance and productivity.



2. How we developed this Strategy

We have reviewed best practice from both the public and private sector. We have learned from our experience of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and listened to residents, councillors and colleagues.

We have also taken some time to consider how we support the Council's wider strategic ambitions around climate change and the green environment and ensure we consider how we can provide the most economic, efficient and effective services for our residents and customers. We also need to keep our financial sustainability at the forefront of our minds.



3. Defining our approach

What did our colleagues tell us?

During October 2021, a staff survey was carried out to understand more about the following areas:

- Current ways of working in the Council;
- Future ways of working;
- Wellbeing and staff support;
- Management support; and
- Home working.

Staff engaged well with the survey, with a total of 1,409 colleagues taking part. Unsurprisingly, the survey established that prior to COVID-19, most staff were working from the office or other place of work. Currently, a large proportion of staff are working from home. However, a third split their time between home and the office.

Findings of the survey

- The majority of colleagues would prefer a hybrid way of working – attending the office anywhere from once a month to five days per week, primarily to attend face-to-face meetings, collaborate with others, get support, and socialise.
- The majority of staff drive to work (when in an office), commuting between 0 – 15 miles on average. This has reduced for those colleagues that are working away from the office more.
- There has been a decrease in mileage expenses since more meetings have moved to remote meetings. This has resulted in a financial saving for the Council and is more efficient in terms of working time.
- Remote / hybrid working has contributed to reducing CO2 emissions.
- In general, staff wellbeing is good. The majority of colleagues state that they are happy with the level of social connectivity, number of meetings, and available wellbeing resources.
- Most staff feel capable of managing their own wellbeing and work-life balance but some staff are finding the combination of remote working, COVID-19 and adjusting to new unitary working difficult. We are absolutely committed to providing advice, support and assistance to those staff who need it. and staff feel managers support their wellbeing, provide sufficient guidance and engagement.



4. How we will work in the future

The Principles

Overarching principles:

- Our services will be outcome focussed and the way we work will support the best possible end result for our service users.
- We will break down barriers between services and focus on the issue rather than what team we work within.
- Where it is appropriate, we will encourage our colleagues the flexibility to determine where work is carried out.
- We won't have a 'one size fits all' approach and will be considerate of different service needs and the health and wellbeing of our colleagues.
- We will support our colleagues and leaders to work and manage in a hybrid environment.
- We will introduce digital technologies that support our workforce to be more efficient and support our service users to access our services digitally as well as through traditional methods.
- Working spaces will be designed to encourage innovation, building relationships between services and teams, social interaction, collaboration and sharing knowledge.
- Our workplaces will be designed to support a hybrid approach to work.
- Colleagues will have the necessary tools, equipment, training, and ongoing support to fulfil their role wherever and however they are working.



5. Scope of the ‘Future Ways of Working’ strategy

Our workforce are our greatest asset and we know that a ‘one size fits all’ approach will never work. Our adopted working practices need to reflect that our staff deliver a wide range of services and each bring different skills and value to the organisation.

None of our colleagues are the same; their motivations are different; their personalities and skills are unique and their health and wellbeing is vitally important. Our People Plan states that “your difference is our difference” and to have a “one size fits all approach” to how we work will not be practical nor will it deliver the best services.

Some roles will not lend themselves to working in a flexible way and will be required to continue working in a face-to-face environment and at a particular place. We do however believe that it is possible for the majority of colleagues to develop what is often referred to as a hybrid or blended model of working; one that focusses more on the outcomes and services being delivered and less on where colleagues are delivering them from.

The Council has a range of flexible working policies in place and this Strategy underpins those. We want to support a culture of working wherever and however is most appropriate to get the work done and provide the best services to North Northamptonshire.

It is vitally important that our customers, staff and members see the advantages and benefits of our new ways of working. The new way of working should not in any way impose a hinderance on the efficiency and effective delivery of services.

Whilst colleagues will be aware of these requirements, it is important that managers clarify these points. It is also important that managers have meaningful conversations with their teams and individuals about whether their preferences can be balanced with the needs of the service.

Whilst this Strategy sets out the Council’s approach, the implementation, particularly around the design of buildings and workspaces, will be supported by an action plan and consulted on with colleagues, relevant partners and service users.



6. The benefits of new ways of working

Working in a more outcome focussed way will improve services and will have a positive impact for North Northamptonshire.

Workspaces that are designed around people rather than services will allow us to look at the bigger picture when we are dealing with issues. We will be able to share knowledge and resolve issues in a space designed for that purpose.

Working from wherever is the most appropriate place will increase the Council's efficiency and effectiveness and will support our colleagues to work where they will be most productive.

By not being fixed to an office space, our workforce can be more agile. We can start to facilitate a dialogue about how we further shape the organisation, unbounded by the practices of the past.

Colleagues will travel less, both to and from their place of work, but also between offices for meetings. This will save time, money and will also reduce our carbon footprint.

Working flexibly will support a better work life balance for our workforce and will deliver our ambition to become an employer of choice. Our approach will allow us to attract and retain the skills and experience that we need to deliver our future ambitions in the challenging environment that we face.

Maximising our use digital technology and resources will enable us to be more accessible to the public. It will allow our service users to access services in the most convenient way for them.



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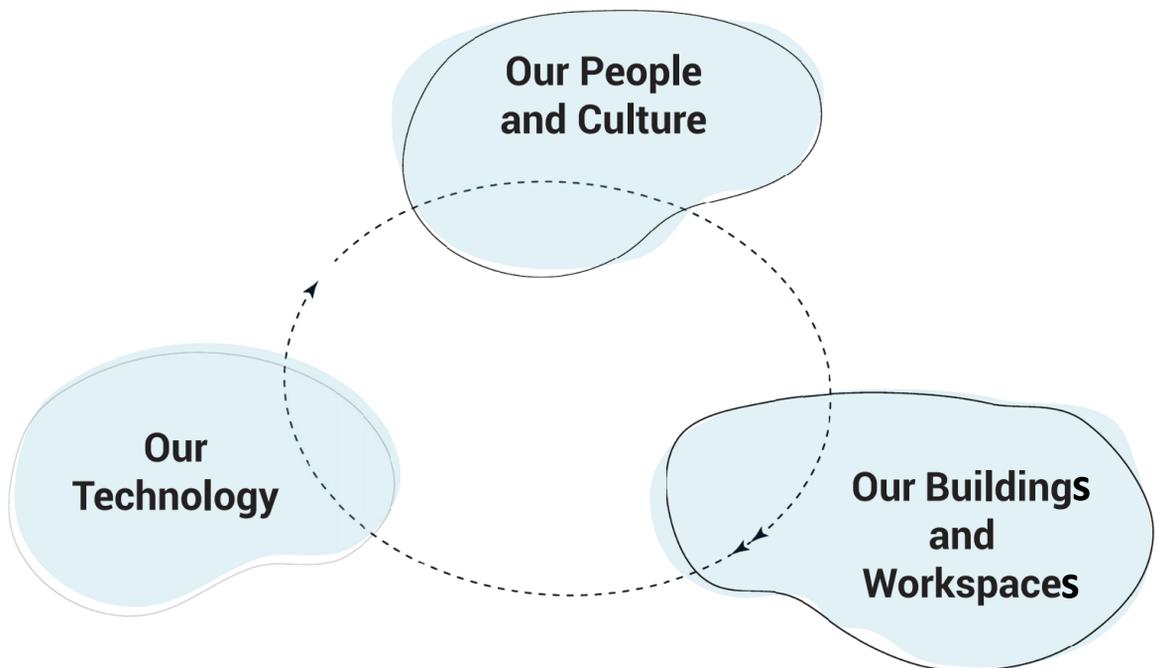
7. New Ways of Working: Three key themes

There are three key themes to our Future Working Strategy. These are:

- Our People and Culture
- Our Technology
- Our Buildings and Workspaces

We have identified a number of high-level actions under the three key thematic areas that need to be undertaken to implement this Strategy. The Strategy was built as a result of feedback from a range of stakeholders and to be successful, all colleagues will need to commit to implementing this Strategy and helping promote the development of the right culture to help make the approach work.

Our three key themes



Our People and Culture



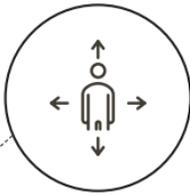
1. We will work as one team to embed our culture



2. Encourage and support staff to try new ways of working



3. Ensure our health, safety and well-being policies and processes support colleagues equally working from different locations



4. Support a safe working environment wherever colleagues work



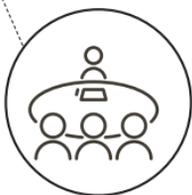
5. Listen to our colleagues and regularly check in on how they are feeling



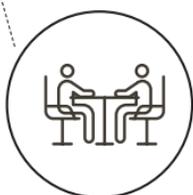
6. Ensure that alongside increased flexibility, staff remain accountable for their work outcomes



7. Continue to explore how we can enable more colleagues to work flexibly when it is appropriate to do so



8. Ensure the learning and development offer to managers supports them to manage colleagues in the hybrid environment in the best way possible



9. Ensure there is regular face to face contact and that office space is available to those who need it



1. We will ensure our buildings support and enable a virtual and physical 'hybrid' approach to working



2. Ensure better equipped meeting facilities that support hybrid meetings.



3. Introduce a booking system for colleagues to attend workplaces, with designated hot-desk areas.

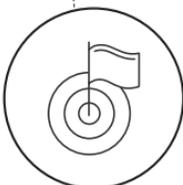
Our Buildings and Workspaces



4. Allow access to all offices for all employees of North Northamptonshire.



5. Reduce the amount of fixed desks to support workplaces being places for collaboration with an increased emphasis on problem solving and finding solutions.

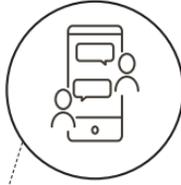


6. Make buildings more interesting spaces to work in, and areas that stimulate innovation and collaboration

Our People and Culture



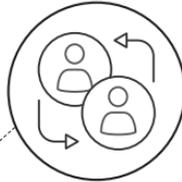
1. We will ensure that our technology is fit for purpose and supports the development of more agile ways of working



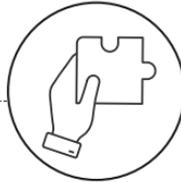
2. We will implement technologies that better enable customers, services, staff and members to contact who they need to, when they need to



3. We will make sure our people have the knowledge and skills they need to get the most out of new ways of working



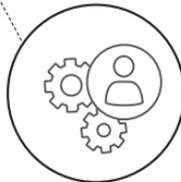
4. We will utilise technological solutions that better connect the council and its services with local communities



5. We will make better use of the existing technology that we have. Replacing a system should not be the first option we consider. Getting the most out of what we have may be more cost effective



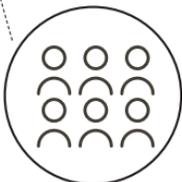
6. We will unify systems and approaches in a managed and affordable way to facilitate more efficient and effective ways of working across the organisation



7. We will ensure technology is used as a tool to improve organisation communications and productivity, for collaborating within and between different teams



8. We will look for ways to automate more mundane processes to free capacity up to tackle some of the bigger problems the organisation is facing



8. We will make better use of the data the Council has to make safe and smart decisions that benefit our residents and the area within which they live

8. Implementing the strategy

We will continue to listen to our colleagues and review this Strategy as a result of their feedback. This Strategy is the start of a culture shift and sets out what kind of Council we want to be.

An Action Plan will be developed with clear implementation timelines. We will work with services, stakeholders and service users in order to implement this strategy in an effective and responsible way.

To provide feedback on this strategy and to contribute ideas, please contact:

ideas@northnorthants.gov.uk

