

Northamptonshire County Council

Council Plan 2018-2020

A new conversation

Foreword

At a time when the whole public sector finds itself under unprecedented pressure to meet more complex needs with ever-reducing budgets, Northamptonshire County Council is taking the opportunity to review and refresh its vision and purpose, in order to place itself in a position where it can not only deliver for the residents of the county, but also be financially sustainable.

The context in which we operate has changed beyond recognition in the past few years. This is the case for all partners in the county, and for councils up and down England. Northamptonshire finds itself in a particularly difficult position due to demographic growth and funding reductions which mean that we now have to take unprecedented action to ensure the survival of public services.

This plan sets out our short and medium-term vision, our values and our role in not only managing the difficult financial situation the county faces, but in ensuring that Northamptonshire will grow and thrive.

We acknowledge that the actions required now will set in motion changes which will re-shape local public services and that the next two financial years are crucial to making this a success, due to the financial pressures we are managing – hence the short-term focus of this plan. Whilst we have a vision for the organisation over the next four years, we are clear that next year is the most challenging and important.

We want to reconsider our role in the county, our relationship with residents, partner agencies and Central Government and we want to do so in a way which encourages residents to take ownership of their own lives and of their communities, and shape services with the County Council when they need our support. We are not here to deliver or commission all services, but to work with residents and partner agencies to facilitate the achievement of our vision statement:

Making Northamptonshire a great place to grow up, live, learn, work and grow old.

Vision

Our vision is a county where we all look after each other and take responsibility, where the vulnerable are protected and supported, and where the people who can help themselves receive the assistance they need to stay independent and healthy – making Northamptonshire a great place to grow up, live, learn, work and grow old.

The achievement of this vision is dependent on a new relationship between residents and public services, a two-way relationship with clear expectations and responsibilities. This is a new conversation we are entering with the public, in full knowledge that sustainability of public services can only be achieved with everyone's participation.

Our vision is simple, but delivering it will only be possible with everyone in our county working together. To succeed in the current climate, collaboration and making every pound count have to underpin our actions:

- The people of Northamptonshire take responsibility for their lives, families and communities;
- Public, private, voluntary and community organisations in the county work together for the benefit of residents;
- Administrative duplication and complexity are removed through the reorganisation of local government in the manner which most benefits the county;
- The County Council delivers statutory services to safeguard and support the most vulnerable residents.

Role

Our purpose is manifold, and as a strategic influencer and facilitator, we take an active role in promoting and advocating the case of the county, regionally and nationally.

Over the medium term, we want to move towards becoming a more strategic Council, working with others to deliver services better targeted at those who need them most, and continuing to safeguard those vulnerable to abuse or neglect.

However, the reality in which we operate means that we are here to meet our statutory responsibilities within the budget envelope set by the Government. It is therefore important that we make it clear what our duties are, what we can and can't do for the people of Northamptonshire and what it is that residents and communities can do themselves with the right support if they need it.

This is not a model where the Council merely controls spend and services, but a collaborative model where the Council's role is to help join the dots between residents and private or public services, and to shape the place.

Over the past few years we have had to take out a significant amount of services due to the reduction in funding and the commitment to keep council tax low. Our direct and support services are as efficient as they can be in the context of the county. It is now necessary that we understand what makes people need our services, and what drives up costs. We can then focus on effectively managing spend, either through targeted prevention, or through working with providers to develop those services which would make a real difference to people. Through a county-wide commissioning strategy, we want to grow the capacity and diversity of the providers in the market, especially around social care, so that people can be supported by services which are of high quality and offer good value for money.

Our ambition is to continue to be a trusted enabler: we are here to empower others to achieve their goals and facilitate the growth and sustainability of the county. By promoting economic growth, we want to make sure that Northamptonshire's communities, businesses and people are resilient to any economic, political or demographic changes the county might face.

We can only do this however once we have assured ourselves and our residents that we are able to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, in the context of our statutory duties.

Values

At the heart of what we do is the principle of fairness and equitability. We will continue to spend tax payers' money wisely and responsibly, from the basis of a smaller Council estate and workforce, but one which is equipped to perform in an ever-changing context, and respond to changes in policy and demand. We will live within our means and sometimes this will require unpopular actions and a change in how we operate in the local and national context.

Our organisational culture is underpinned by the principles of public life. Our people shape the organisation and the services, and are the best placed to improve and transform the offer to the residents of the county. Management and front line staff will come together to develop solutions and interventions which best meet the needs of people. We want our staff to live and breathe the County Council values, fostered and modelled at all levels of the organisation:

- Good leadership demonstrated by all
- Thought leadership and considered actions
- Culture of discipline and professional behaviour
- Honest, open and transparent dialogue inside and outside of the organisation
- Skilled and competent permanent workforce
- Decisions taken by empowered staff with clear responsibilities
- A whole organisation working together as a team and developing cross-system solutions.

We believe this plan sets out our direction of travel in a way residents, communities and partner organisations can engage with constructively. Accompanying this plan, we have also developed a customer-friendly presentation to support our narrative, based on our vision for the newly defined relationship between public sector and residents.