



Borough Secretary
Service Plan
2018-23

Borough secretary:	Managers:	Portfolio Holder:
Francis Fernandes	Governance Manager Democratic Services Manager Health & Safety Manager Practice Manager (acting) HR & Payroll Manager Communications Manager Elections Manager	Cllr Jonathan Nunn

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1. Service Overview:

The Borough Secretary directorate comprises the following:

Legal services/Monitoring Officer Services -

- Ensure the lawfulness and fairness of the council's decision-making processes
- Ensure compliance with codes and protocols and the promotion of good governance and high ethical standards
- To monitor and review the operation of the council's constitution to ensure that the aims and principles of the constitution are given full effect. To engage in consultation over matters of interpretation of the constitution's rules and procedures and make a determination if necessary.
- To deal with matters relating to the conduct of councillors and officers and to act as the principal adviser to the authority's Standards Committee and report on matters the Monitoring Officer believes are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration.

Monitoring Officer

To undertake all functions required under Section 5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 and to develop, implement and support good governance.

Legal Services

The Legal Services Team provide the following legal services to the Council:

- Legal advice to full council, Cabinet, statutory committees, Members, Management Board and Officers
- Prosecution including environmental crime and anti-social behaviour, licensing, food safety, health and safety, tenancy fraud, private sector housing offences and planning
- Defence on claims against the council including money and complex insurance claims
- Sale, lease and letting of land and property
- Development agreements
- Planning advice
- Section 106 agreements
- Planning appeals
- Support for full council, Cabinet and all statutory committees

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- Advice on the Constitution
- RIPA advice and monitoring of requests for authority
- Legal insurance claims (breach of statutory duties)

HR & Payroll:

The HR and Payroll team provide an end to end service from recruitment to leaving NBC specifically:

HR

- Recruitment
- Absence management
- Contract provision
- Employee relations case work
- Trade Union engagement
- Job evaluation
- Provision of ER statistical information
- Legal compliance

Payroll

- Starters' payroll
- Variations to pay
- Cycle to Work
- Absence Management
- Maternity pay
- Child care vouchers
- Leavers
- P45 and P60

The HR team monitor changes in minimum wage, pension payments and any other statutory payments feeding these changes into the business and keeping managers informed of these changes

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Electoral Services

Electoral services maintain the register of electors all year and between July and December each year we carry out the annual canvass, sending up to three forms to every property and/or elector. The aim is to get everyone on to the electoral register (it is actually a legal requirement) it is then up to the individual if they wish to vote.

Responsibilities include:

Sending out application forms for postal votes, overseas elector registration and anonymous registration.

Keeping up to date with the legislation and maintain or legal books.

Maintaining the NBC databases updating information for our canvasser and election staff.

Every four years we have to do a review of all our polling stations and polling districts.

Every February we have to write to postal voters whose postal vote has been in place for five years and ask for a new signature.

We have to complete a community governance review if petitioned (we are doing one at the moment on whether a parish boundary should be moved).

Elections

We administer:

- All local and national elections
- Briefings with prospective candidates
- Appoint polling and counting staff
- Training for polling station and count staff
- Receiving nomination papers
- Arranging printing and proofing poll cards, postal votes and ballot papers.
- Liaise with printers to send out postal votes including to overseas electors.
- Booking polling stations
- Printing paperwork and filling ballot boxes
- Opening of postal votes
- Arranging and completing the counting of votes
- Publishing results
- Liaise with Parish Clerks on Casual Vacancies and administer an election if necessary
- Administer any Neighbourhood Planning referendums that may be required
- Prepare and submit election accounts to the Cabinet Office for national elections and County Council for county elections

Elections have regular meetings as a county group and also attend the Association of Administrators East Midlands branch meetings.

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Democratic Services

Democratic and Chief Executive Services is responsible for supporting the council's managerial and democratic decision-making processes, as well as civic and mayoralty activity in the town. This is enabled by our teams in Chief Executive's Office support, Overview & Scrutiny, Democratic Services, Electoral Services and Political Support.

We support the political and managerial decision making of the council by:

- Producing agendas and minutes for Council meetings
- Running elections and administering registrations (applications to vote in Elections).
- Providing administrative support to the Chief Executive,
- Service the weekly Management Board meetings.
- Having Political Assistants to support each of the political groups that have 5 or more councillors (over 10% of the Council)
- Contribute to councillors' learning and development running
- Overview and Scrutiny.
- Providing administrative support to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet.
- Organising the Mayor's engagements and chauffeuring the Mayor to these events.
- Update and maintain the Register of Councillor Interests
- Set the annual meeting cycle

Land Charges

The main purpose of Land Charges is to produce a local search which will enable the buying and selling of property to proceed to completion. The Local Search has two parts, LLC1 and CON 29 Form of Enquiries. This will inform a potential buyer of, for example, a conservation area, Smoke Control Order, Tree Preservation Order and any Planning and Building Control applications. It has been a busy twelve months with a large number of requests being received which we have been able to return within 2-3 working days.

Land Charges also maintain the LLPG (Local Land and Property Gazetteer) which is a list of official addresses which feed into address databases within NBC and externally i.e. Utility companies, fire service, police etc.

This is monitored monthly and we provide daily updates to the NLPG (National Land and Property Gazetteer), for which we currently have a silver rating. The levels being Gold, Silver, Bronze, ANS (achieving national standard) and BNS (below national standard).

Communications

The Communications Team is responsible for ensuring the council's message is delivered to residents and that its reputation is protected.

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We manage all proactive communication which you'll find on the news section of the website, plus promotion of the council's services and events across a variety of social media channels. We can't do this effectively without the support of all other service areas across the council, who we rely on to keep us informed of what's going on.

We also deal with all internal communication via the news section of the intranet, through the NBC News e-bulletin which has been running for several months now, and through staff emails which we try to keep to a minimum as we all receive enough spam. Internal communications is an evolving strand of our work and one we are more than happy to hear suggestions for from staff.

Another aspect is to dealing with media enquiries which can sometimes take up a significant proportion of our working day, and we often find ourselves defending the council's reputation against attack from a variety of sources. The sooner we hear about a potential problem, the more effective our response will be as we have time to consider risk and propose appropriate responses.

It's not all bad news with the media, though. We also spend a substantial amount of time organising recording opportunities and interviews with councillors for TV, radio and publications regarding the work we do. This is only made possible because we have a substantial number of positive stories to tell.

We help service areas with their proactive communications work, whether that's devising leaflets or brochures or helping design and place adverts to raise profile for their events. The Communications Team is also instrumental in organising a variety of events and we are happy to help other service areas in this respect.

Our proactive work is by far the most effective way of positively managing reputation as the success of teams reflects directly on the council. We are already directly engaged with teams across the council but if any are not yet benefiting from our input, we'd love to hear from them.

Governance & Risk (including Internal Controls, Emergency Planning, PMO and Information Governance)

The governance and risk team is primarily responsible for the monitoring and management of policies, procedures and how council officers conduct both their business and themselves. Within this team is an internal controls officer responsible for reviewing current procedures to identify any control weaknesses and assisting the service teams to amend and update their processes to address any issues identified.

The Governance team are also responsible for service plans, the corporate plan and performance monitoring through the P+ software. A dedicated officer is responsible for collating information from throughout the council to ensure that we have reporting on key performance indicators on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The process will be undergoing a review and refresh during 2018 to update current performance measures linking in to the service plan and corporate plan. There will also be a citizen's portal added to the NBC website to give visibility to residents of Northampton how the council is performing.

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In addition, the team look after and update the corporate risk register and help the service areas to populate the risk register formats including the performance measures that will be fed through from the service plans. The risk registers will be presented on a quarterly basis to the Corporate Improvement Board where they will be reviewed to ascertain if any should be escalated onto the corporate risk register.

Emergency planning and business continuity

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, Northampton Borough Council has obligations to respond in an emergency and to co-ordinate that response with other agencies including the “blue light” services (Fire, Police, Ambulance) and other local authorities, health services and other agencies such as the Environment Agency.

NBC has a rota of senior officers, drawn from both NBC and NPH, responsible for our initial response in any incident and contact arrangements are managed through Call Care and the County Emergency Planning Unit with whom we currently have a service level agreement.

We also assess risks jointly and make preparatory plans through the Local Resilience Forum. Keeping up to date with those preparations and the latest on risks is critically important and this includes annual CPD (continuous professional development) sessions. Although it is a number of years since we last had to respond to an incident on any scale, the risk of flooding and other hazards is ever-present and it could as easily happen tomorrow or in a few more years. The public expect us to be ready and that is what we aim to achieve.

Project Management Office (PMO)

We need projects to bring about sustainable organisational change that is different from continual business improvement. Project management helps us structure and manage projects robustly by ensuring they deliver to time, cost and quality. A new Project Management Framework document has been produced and a review of the forms and templates that were previously used will be carried out during the first quarter of the 18/19 financial year. There are a number of improvements with the project management process that have to be implemented to ensure that all projects are registered and monitored through the Northampton Alive Programme Board with escalations to the Corporate Delivery Board for any projects identified as a risk.

The PMO is required to provide an independent body to support project managers within NBC and to oversee the processes to ensure good governance.

Information Governance (FOI and GDPR)

The Information Governance team is responsible for:

- Recording and responding corporately to all Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests received by the council. This includes responding to disclosure challenges and liaising with the Information Commissioners’ Office (ICO).
- Providing data protection advice to staff on a daily basis, helping everyone safeguard personal information.
- Records management advice, guidance and retention (including archiving and data security).

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- Issuing guidance notes on data security compliance issues and training on all aspects of data protection.
- In May 2018, new legislation for data protection comes into force and new ways of working will be introduced and implemented throughout NBC. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will be implemented by 25th May 2018.

The team also provides the Local Government Ombudsman link officer role, coordinating responses to LGO complaints within the 28 day deadline

Our mantra is and always has been Releasing Public Information, Safeguarding Personal Data.

Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team provide a number of strategic and operational services to NBC leadership and all its operational services. Corporate health and safety works across all NBC directorates and NPH.

Services include;

- Ensuring NBC and NPH fulfils its legal health and safety obligations and duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and all relevant secondary legislation.
- To provide a suitable health and safety compliance framework in which all services should be incorporated and effectively delivered.
- To provide a suite of health and safety documents to support leadership and management in delivering a legal and compliant service for its staff and for its customers.
- To help maintain a safe working environment, healthy work colleagues and to positively promote colleague wellbeing.
- To offer advice, support and coaching to all levels of employees on all matters of health, safety and wellbeing and coordinate 'Health and Safety Champions' workloads.
- To lead on and manage all existing significant risk areas within the council's remit of control (inclusive of radon, asbestos, legionella etc.)
- To coordinate and arrange external health and safety training, or deliver in-house training for NBC employees and maintain the current health and safety training matrix.
- Services include;
 - health and safety audits and inspections
 - direct and steer divisional health and safety
 - advise the council on significant risk areas
 - investigation of health, safety and welfare related complaints
 - investigation of accidents, incidents, near misses, dangerous occurrences and occupational diseases
 - manage DSE usage
 - liaise with persons associated with NBC health and safety to include; facilities/ premises managers, trade unions, external contractors etc.

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- Provide a strategic and operational health and safety lead for our NPH partners; by working closely with the Head of Housing, Head of Asset Management & Development and Head of Property Maintenance & Compliance and their respective operational teams
- Maintain various data bases for NBC and NPH, to include;
 - Potentially Violent Persons (PVP) database
 - Accident & Incident database
 - Training matrix and evidence all directorate training undertaken
- Regularly report performance plus results for divisional and auditing purposes.
- Assist Borough Secretaries in complying with its health and safety 'arrangements' as required under the NBC corporate Health, Safety Policy.

2. Service Achievements 2017/18:

- Successful continuation of the re-integration of HR, payroll, legal and land charges from LGSS.
- Strengthened corporate governance team.
- Dedicated data protection officer post formed to ensure NBC are ready for compliance with GDPR in May 2018.
- Development and implementation of a Risk Management Framework and Project Management Framework.
- Introduction of new risk register and service plan formats.
- Review and update of all HR policies

3. Corporate Plan Priorities:

The corporate plan priorities are cascaded through all that we do and deliver.

Corporate Plan Priority	
Northampton Alive	A vibrant successful town for now and the future
Safer Communities	Making you feel safe and secure
Housing for Everyone	Helping those that need it to have a safe and secure home Ensuring that a buoyant market provides a wide choice of homes for all ages

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Protecting Our Environment	A clean and attractive town for residents and visitors
Love Northampton	Enhancing leisure activities for local people and encouraging participation
Working Hard and Spending your Money Wisely	Delivering quality modern services
Improving Our Governance	Implementing the Governance Action Plan

4. Service Plan Objectives:

Risk Ref.	Corporate Plan Priority	Objective / Project	Expected Outcomes	Risks to the Outcome	Responsible Officer
	Improving our Governance	To implement the internal control review plan to cover all processes within NBC	Internal control actions that are monitored by the Audit Committee.	No support from Senior Managers. Lack of compliance by process owners. Recommendations for improvement are not implemented.	Francis Fernandes
	Improving our Governance	To attain CIPFA/SOLACE accreditation within five years.	Accreditation	No support from Senior Managers. Lack of compliance by process owners.	Francis Fernandes
	Working hard and spending your money wisely	Get the best from the resources available and develop an agile workforce culture. Recognise, support and empower Council employees better through changing the Councils culture to do so.	Implementation of an organisational review	Lack of appetite from staff to change the culture of the business. Changes as a result of the organisational review are not of benefit to staff.	Francis Fernandes

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Risk Ref.	Corporate Plan Priority	Objective / Project	Expected Outcomes	Risks to the Outcome	Responsible Officer
	Working hard and spending your money wisely	Implement the culture change mission, vision and values as developed by the employees of the Council and continue to transform the culture of the Council accordingly.	Mission and values work done, implementation phase the key focus.	Staff are not included in the consultation for change.	Francis Fernandes
	Working hard and spending your money wisely	Retain transparent approach on consultants and limit their time.	Corporate monitoring of value v cost of interims/consultants, with the development of clear standards in terms of roles/ outcomes desired and early consideration and development of exit strategies for such resources.	Negative view of consultants/interims by members of staff. Procedures are not defined and followed by Senior Management.	Francis Fernandes
	Working hard and spending your money wisely	Unitary Council Review, preparations and implementation	Programme structure to be developed, with major work streams across the directorates.	Clear directions are not given to staff. There is no shared view of what the Unitary should look like.	Francis Fernandes
	Working hard and spending your money wisely	LGSS options review for all remaining services: IT Finance (not S151)	To have an efficient and value for money solution for Finance, IT, Procurement and Insurance	Inaccurate information reported as part of the review leading to poor decisions.	Francis Fernandes

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Risk Ref.	Corporate Plan Priority	Objective / Project	Expected Outcomes	Risks to the Outcome	Responsible Officer
		Procurement Insurance Greater control and clearer direction over the functions identified.		Reviews performed and managed by individuals not qualified or experienced in the relevant areas.	

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5. Performance Measures for 2018/19:

Risk Ref.	Measure	Frequency (M / Q / A)	Target
Overarching			
BV008	Percentage of invoices for commercial goods & serv. paid within 30 days	M	99%
BV012R	Average no. of days/shifts lost to sickness for rolling 12 month figure	M	9
BV008	NN postcode invoices paid within 10 days	M	80%
BV012	Days sick per FTE	M	<1
HR43	Percentage of 'return to work' interviews completed in target time	M	100%
HR44	Percentage of annual appraisals completed by 30 April	A	95%
HR45	% of interim appraisals completed by 30 September 2018	A	??
HR05	% of Staff either Achieving or Exceeding standard	A	50%
Corporate Policy and Governance			
IG01	% LGO cases responded to within 28 days (Exclude pre-determined cases)	Q	100%
IG02	Ave time to respond to LGO cases (Exclude pre-determined cases)	Q	
IG03	% FOI / EIR responded to within 20 working days	M	100%
IG04	% Subject Access requests responded to within 40 days	M	100%
IG07d	Number of DPA requests received this month	M	
IG08	Number of FOI complaints received from the ICO	Q	
IG09	Number of DPA complaints received from the ICO	Q	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing			
LI960	Total Number of accidents or incidents	M	

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LI960a	Total 'No Injury'	M	
LI960b	Total 'loss time' injuries (7 days or less)	M	
LI960c7	Total 'loss time' injuries (7 days or more)	M	
LI960d7	Total 'loss time' injuries	M	

6. Financial Resources:

Revenue:

Expenditure Description	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
Employees	2,234,418	2,635,810	2,323,473	2,347,980	2,373,460
Premises	350	350	350	350	350
Transport	4,530	4,530	4,530	4,530	4,530
Supplies and Services	1,021,762	1,025,586	1,029,535	1,033,662	1,037,975
Service Expenditure	3,261,060	3,666,276	3,357,888	3,386,522	3,416,315
Income	-582,157	-812,157	-812,157	-812,157	-812,157
Service Income	-582,157	-812,157	-812,157	-812,157	-812,157
Total Net Budget	2,678,903	2,854,119	2,545,731	2,574,365	2,604,158

Capital:

Scheme Description	2018/19 £	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	2022/23 £
IT Tablets – Elections	13,200	0	0	0	0
Total Budget	13,200	0	0	0	0

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7. People:

