

Northampton Borough Council

Corporate Plan 2012-2015

2014 update

**Northampton alive with
innovation, enterprise and
opportunity**

February 2014

Corporate Plan 2012-2015 (2014 update)

Welcome to Northampton Borough Council's Corporate Plan. This sets our priorities and explains what we want to achieve over the next two years.

Northampton's population reached 212,100 at the last census, making it one of the largest towns and the largest district in the country. By 2020 the population of Northampton is projected to increase to 242,900 and by 2033, to 273,100.¹

The Corporate Plan has been reviewed for the start of the 2014-15 financial year, to ensure it remains up to date and guides our actions at a time of unprecedented change. It does not aim to set out in detail information about all of the services that the council provides.

Our plan focuses on two themes:

'Your Town', recognising the importance that investment and growth in local business and jobs will have on the long term prospects for the town and those people that choose to live and work here.

'You', acknowledging the significant challenges that the current economic climate and future welfare and housing reforms will have on the lives of people impacted by the changes and the importance of the role the Council will have in supporting people through the change

Our priorities

The Corporate Plan is structured according to the council's eight priorities:

Your Town

- Northampton Alive
- Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods
- Celebrating our heritage and culture
- Making every £ go further

You

- Better homes for the future
- Creating empowered communities
- Promoting health and well-being
- Responding to your needs

For more information about individual services please visit the Council's website or for full descriptions of spending according to service areas these can be found in the Budget Book.

¹<http://www.northamptonshireobservatory.org.uk/docs/docNorthampton%20Facts%20&%20Figures%20combined%202010110308154441.pdf>

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This information can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

To discuss this and for any other help you may need in order to understand this document, please contact 0300 330 7000

YOUR TOWN

A town to be proud of

A successful vibrant town centre economy is an essential part of prompting growth and prosperity. Our focus is on regenerating the Town and raising its national profile. Northampton is one of the UK's most enterprising places and operating costs are low in relation to other parts of the country. The town is also making the UK's fastest economic recovery.

The Council recognises it cannot achieve this alone. It is actively working with others to keep the Town clean, safe, attract new investment, visitors and jobs, whilst enhancing the Town's heritage and cultural opportunities.

We recognise that our parks and open spaces and the facilities available within them contribute to our sense of wellbeing. We will work with local communities and groups, benefit from their experience and their contribution to improve our beautiful parks and open spaces across the Town. Having access to a wide variety of cultural, leisure and sport activities and events is also a key part of having a vibrant and successful Town. We will also work with partners to improve access to cultural opportunities such as our Museums, cultural events programme and through our support to the local Theatres.

The establishment of the Northampton Cultural Quarter will provide a driving force for economic and social regeneration of the town. It presents an opportunity to celebrate both the town's rich history and to showcase its unique contemporary offer. Raising the profile of Northampton as a great place to live, visit, work, study and invest, the Northampton Cultural Quarter has the potential to significantly enhance the town's reputation as a first class cultural venue, a place with a diverse and extensive offer, a great atmosphere and a tangible energy.

As well as taking a leading role in the future development and growth of Northampton, the Council must ensure that Council Tax payer's money is spent wisely. The Council will continue to review how it is organised, to ensure it has the right skills and capacity and to identify the most effective methods of delivery. This will reduce our costs in order to prioritise spending to allow us to promote the Town's economic growth, regeneration and protect frontline services.

Our key priorities for the 'Your town' theme are:

- ◇ **Priority 1 – Northampton Alive**
A vibrant town
- ◇ **Priority 2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods**
Creating an attractive, clean and safe environment
- ◇ **Priority 3 - Celebrating our heritage and culture**
- ◇ **Priority 4 - Making every £ go further**
Provide Value for Money to protect local services

Priority 1 – Northampton Alive-A vibrant town

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

Revitalise our Infrastructure to support economic growth

- Northampton Castle railway station – this year will see the completion of a redeveloped £20m station
- North Gate bus station – creating a clean, bright and modern welcome to our town for bus users
- Abington Street – improvements to support businesses and shoppers
- Heritage Gateway – a project that will recognise and celebrate the rich story of Northampton
- Successful sports clubs – supporting the redevelopment and expansion plans at Sixfields Stadium, Franklin’s Gardens and the County Cricket Ground

Be a hub of excellence to stimulate and energise Business and Education

- New University of Northampton campus – a new £330m university campus is set to be built in our Enterprise Zone
- Waterside Enterprise Zone – continuing to support our business community and attract new investment
- Innovation Centre - The building will provide office accommodation and support services for up to 55 small businesses in the social enterprise sector

We will

- Deliver the new Enterprise Zone to regenerate the Waterside area of the Town by developing our strategy to dispose of public land and our marketing plan to attract new businesses ;
- Introduce a Business incentive scheme to help businesses looking to grow or join our town centre to improve the business environment and make our town centre a more vibrant and attractive location for shoppers and investors;
- Local Development Orders to simplify the planning application process for new businesses;
- Work to focus on reducing factors deterring people from visiting the Town, to stimulate the local economy;
- Review the Parking Strategy to provide more free parking to shoppers visiting the town throughout the year, including free parking every Saturday in multi-storey car parks (St John’s, St Michael’s, Grosvenor and Mayorhold) plus an extension of the previous one hour free stay to two hours in St John’s, St Michael’s, Grosvenor and Mayorhold;
- Following the decommissioning of Greyfriars Bus Station work will start to demolish the building and free up land for redevelopment;
- The restoration work at Delapre Abbey will continue with over £1.1million being invested next year in essential work to restore the buildings and roofing as part of a wider scheme supported with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund;
- Work is also set to start on reopening Abington Street. Next year the Borough Council will invest £2.85million in supporting businesses and making it easier for shoppers and businesses to come into Northampton town centre;
- To support our Cultural Quarter we will be investing £2 million in public realm improvements to establish the identity of the area, promote the features of the Quarter and make the area more welcoming to visitors who want to spend time enjoying what the area has to offer;
- Work collaboratively with the Local Enterprise Partnerships for Northamptonshire and the South East Midlands;
- Support partners in the re-development of Northampton Castle railway station ;
- Progress development plans for St John’s, including the building of a new hotel following on from the new student accommodation;
- Work in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council to deliver regeneration projects within the Town Centre;
- Identify ways of incorporating the Marina and the waterways into the life of the Town to exploit it to its full potential as a tourist attraction ;
- Support the independently chaired Market Advisory Group.

Priority 2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods

Creating an attractive, clean and safe environment

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

- A clean Town with neighbourhoods that are tidy and well maintained
- A place where people want to visit and enjoy our parks and open spaces
- A place where visitors and residents from all communities feel safe, secure and protected with low levels of crime
- Less waste and increased recycling through education and waste reduction schemes

We will

- Improve the appearance and cleanliness of our neighbourhoods and open space land across the Town by removing fly-tipping, graffiti and litter and use enforcement, with a zero tolerance approach;
- Improve standards and facilities within our parks and open spaces to contribute to the achievement of green Flag status and 'Northampton in Bloom' success. We will do this by working in partnership with local groups and Friends Associations, establishing local management committees for our premier parks, the development of local 'park plans', improving public conveniences and ensuring our trees are well maintained. We will also work in partnership with community groups to provide community events in our parks all year round and deliver high quality holiday sports and play programmes for young people;
- Review and rationalise the land currently used for allotments seeking new sites, disposal of sites, investment in existing sites and provision in future developments through a review of the Allotment Strategy;
- Deliver the Community Safety Strategy action plan to improve safety across the Town, in particular:
 - Work in partnership to deliver a programme of projects throughout the year to tackle local priority issues; alcohol related violent crime, anti-social behaviour and serious acquisitive crime ;
 - Review the Council's approach to licensing to ensure that it supports the Council's aims of reducing anti-social behaviour and making the Town centre safer ;
- Improve the mechanisms available for local people to report incidents of Hate Crime and support individuals to feel confident that the Council will act appropriately on the information provided;
- Actively work with Northamptonshire Probation Trust and local communities to utilise the Community Payback Scheme;
- Reduce waste and increase recycling and focus on fly posting and fly tipping removal and enforcement.

Priority 3 - Celebrating our heritage and culture

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Increased tourism
- Promotion, protection and improvement of our heritage and other attractions
- Delapre Abbey restored and its future secured
- Delivery of events to celebrate and enjoy the Town's heritage and culture
- Celebration of national events through a varied cultural programme

We will

- Work to promote tourism to increase the economic prosperity of the Town through the delivery of a varied programme of events;
- Continue to support and promote Delapre Abbey and Delapre Park as part of wider heritage strategy ;
- Seek innovative ways to bringing the Town's cultural museum offer to a wider audience with a broader exhibition programme and to raise the regional profile ;
- Consult on the conservation management plan for the site of the Battle of Northampton in Delapre Park;
- Continue to seek funding opportunities to improve the offer at Abington Museum;
- Increase opening hours of Northampton Borough Council's museums;
- Work constructively with the management of the Royal & Derngate theatres to safeguard the work they undertake and enhance their vital contribution to wider cultural life of Northampton;
- Provide support to the Arts Collective;
- Hold an annual 3 day music festival at Delapre Park in 2014 and 2015 ;
- Work together across the Council to improve the way we promote museums and events ;
- Work with others to make the most of the way we promote each other in partnership to consolidate the promotional efforts of all agencies and to achieve the best results for Northampton.

Priority 4 – Making every £ go further

Provide Value for Money to protect local services

The outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Public money used to maximum benefit
- Cost savings achieved through the use of shared services, outsourcing opportunities and reduction in the use of consultants
- Delivery of value for money services in terms of service delivery and use of energy
- A continued freeze on Council Tax in 2014/2015 and the delivery of a local Council Tax Support Scheme
- A modern diverse workforce

We will

- Continue to review Council services to identify the most efficient and effective methods of delivery and identify shared services and outsourcing opportunities to make savings and further improve services;
- Continue to reduce the use of consultants to ensure that skills of existing staff are maximised and resources are targeted towards areas most in need ;
- Further reduce the Council's Carbon footprint and energy costs by identifying and implementing energy saving initiatives and purchasing energy wisely. We will also continue to promote sustainable energy initiatives across the wider community ;
- Continue to freeze Council Tax if possible, alongside creating a local Council Tax Scheme and lobby central Government to get the best for the Council in terms of funding.

YOU

How your Council will support and empower you and your community

In order to have a successful vibrant town, Northampton needs to have the right number and types of homes, across both the private and public sectors, which address the needs of local people. The quality of these homes is also an important factor in determining how people feel about where they live, their sense of pride in their neighbourhoods and the Town overall.

The delivery of new homes has fallen in Northampton over the last few years. With demand on the Housing Register increasing rapidly, it is vital that we facilitate and co-ordinate the delivery of new affordable homes for our customers. The Housing Strategy team work with RSL partners, the Homes & Communities Agency and Institutional Investors to get new homes built in Northampton.

During 2014/15 the Council will invest over £50m improving the housing stock in its ownership, bringing every home up to a modern standard and ensuring that properties are well maintained in the future.

Being able to stay in your home, when you want to, is also important to personal wellbeing and the Council will support people with advice and guidance to make the right choices for them and support vulnerable people to be able to live independently, when they want to.

Homelessness is increasing due to economic climate. We need to manage the increasing demand, prevent homelessness, where ever possible and support people in housing crisis by working in partnership with other key agencies. The Council is also proactively working to anticipate the impact of emerging central government Social Housing Reform on local people.

The Council recognises the important work undertaken by voluntary and community groups across Northampton and how this work supports the Government's aspirations to build a Big Society, where people can play an active role in their neighbourhoods and communities. We will continue to work with voluntary and community groups to build capacity and encourage wider community management of our Community Centres. We will also continue to develop our approach to neighbourhood management to ensure we provide support to frontline councillors in their community leadership role.

We provide services to ensure that the community has access to a variety of leisure and sport facilities to promote healthy lifestyles and a sense of wellbeing. The Council will continue to improve such facilities and opportunities, by supporting the Northampton Leisure Trust and improving facilities and opportunities to be physically active, across the Town.

Delivering high quality, cost effective services in a way that local people want them is a key focus for the Council. We are committed to delivering excellent customer service, treating our customers fairly and listening to them to develop and improve services and put things right when our standards have not been met.

Our key priorities for the 'You' theme are:

- ◇ **Priority 5 - Better homes for the future**
Helping you to have a home
- ◇ **Priority 6 - Creating empowered communities**
- ◇ **Priority 7- Promoting health and well-being**
- ◇ **Priority 8 - Responding to your needs**

Priority 5 - Better homes for the future

Helping you to have a home

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Managing the supply and growth for the future of Northampton
- Create resilient and cohesive communities
- Deliver well designed, high quality homes, neighbourhoods and services
- Improve customer access, opportunity and choice
- Improve the relationship with private sector housing through engagement, regulation and enforcement

We will

- Deliver the Council's Housing Strategy for 2013-2016;
- Create an Arms' Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to take over the management of the Council's housing stock from January 2015;
- Continue to work with partners to reduce causes of homelessness and support the Homeless Forum, Oasis House and other organisations tackling homelessness and rough sleeping in the Town ;
- Implement a scheme of additional licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMO) , following approval;
- Review policies, processes and procedures around Disabled Facilities Grants to ensure an efficient, effective and proportionate response to the needs of our customers.

Priority 6 - Creating empowered communities

The outcomes we want to achieve:

- Empowered local communities with a greater capacity to become involved in community life
- Increased capacity of our partners in the voluntary sector to better support communities
- Community managed community centres

We will

- Encourage individuals, communities and groups to get involved and contribute to activities within their local neighbourhoods in order to promote integration and cohesion within communities and foster a sense of pride across the Town;
- Maintain the current investment to help community based projects in Northampton through the small based grants process;
- Engage and involve young people in shaping services and promoting positive activities within the Borough;
- Work with others to support and develop the capacity of the voluntary sector for the benefit of NBC and local people ;
- Support localism plans for neighbourhood planning to increase community involvement in the planning process;
- Adopt an open door policy to allow our parish councils, resident associations, community groups and other organisations to take over the management and running of community centres still within the Council's full or partial control, where they have the capacity to do so.

Priority 7 - Promoting health and well-being

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Work with the new local 'Health & Well-being' Board to improve the health of local people
- Promote the health and well-being of residents through continued support of leisure and sporting opportunities in local clubs and the Leisure Trust
- Improved public health

We will

- Respond to the emerging Health & Wellbeing Board strategy;
- Work with the new Clinical Commissioning consortia and develop locality plans to influence spend to deliver local priorities;
- Actively support our sports clubs;
- Support the Leisure Trust to deliver healthy living and Children and Young People outcomes and widen participation in leisure activities across all sections of the community;
- Work with businesses and individuals to promote responsible drinking;
- Work to influence our partners to improve air quality and meet Government minimum targets;
- Implement the Affordable Warmth Strategy;
- Work with external energy providers to implement the Community Energy Savings Programme to improve energy efficiency standards and reduce fuel bills in some of the Borough's most vulnerable communities;
- Ensure that all council owned homes are fitted with modern fuel efficient heating and insulation.

Priority 8 - Responding to your needs

The long-term outcomes we want to achieve are:

- Appropriate support provided to those in most need
- All services are fair, accessible and responsive to individual needs
- Residents and customers feel informed and engaged in service quality and design

We will

- Further develop services to support those in most need;
- Support the Council's Equality Strategy and continue to work towards becoming 'Excellent' in terms of equality;
- Expansion of the range of partners providing services in the One Stop Shop and focus on channel shift through the self-service area ;
- Provide consistency of customer service and "one point of contact" for customers by migrating the remaining service areas into the telephone contact centre and one stop shop;
- Continue to create effective dialogue with people so that they can feel involved in the decision making process and ensure developing policy and service delivery takes into account different needs;
- Support individuals affected by Social Welfare and Housing Reforms through effective communications of the changes and impacts upon them.