

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held in the Jeffery Room
at the Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on
Tuesday 28 January 2014, at 6:00pm

D Kennedy
Chief Executive

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please 'phone Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, telephone 01604 837408 (direct dial), email tiff@northampton.gov.uk who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** please visit the website www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Members of the Committee

Chair	Councillor Jamie Lane
Deputy-Chair	Councillor Brian W Sargeant
Committee Members	Councillor Tony Ansell Councillor Joy Capstick Councillor John Caswell Councillor Michael Ford Councillor Brendan Glynane Councillor Elizabeth Gowen Councillor Phil Larratt Councillor Matthew Lynch Councillor Lee Mason Councillor Nilesh Ramesh Parekh Councillor Suresh Patel Councillor Sivaramen Subbarayan Councillor Winston Strachan

Calendar of meetings

Date	Room
7 April 2014 6:00 pm	All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated
9 June	

Northampton Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda

Item No and Time	Title	Pages	Action required
1 6:00pm	Apologies		Members to note any apologies and substitution
2	Minutes	1 - 9	Members to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2013 and the minutes of the Call In Hearing held on 2 December 2013.
3	Deputations/Public Addresses		<p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a Public Address Protocol and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p>
4	Declarations of Interest (Including Whipping)		Members to state any interests.
5 6:05pm – 7:20pm	Draft budget 2014-2019	10 - 19	The Committee to consider the Council wide draft budget 2014-2019.
6 7:20pm	Local Government Shared Services (LGSS)	20 - 59	The Committee to receive an update regarding LGSS.
7 7:35pm	NBC owned street lighting	60 - 62	The Committee to receive a briefing on the ownership and location of NBC's street lighting.
8 7:50pm	West Northants Development Corporation (WNDC)		The Committee to receive an update on the transition from WNDC to Northampton Borough Council (NBC).
9 8:00pm	Performance Monitoring Report	63 - 72	Members to review the Performance Monitoring Report
10 8:10pm - 8:35pm	Scrutiny Panels		The Overview and Scrutiny Committee to receive a progress report from the Scrutiny Panels.
10 (a) 8:10pm	Scrutiny Panel 1 - Improving the town's parks	73 - 176	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee to approve the final report of Scrutiny Panel 1 (Improving the town's parks)

Northampton Borough Overview & Scrutiny Committee

10 (b) 8:20pm	Scrutiny Panel 1 - Impact of the Welfare Reform Act	177 - 182	The Scrutiny Panel to approve the scope of the Review – Impact of the Welfare Reform Act.
10 (c) 8:30pm	Scrutiny Panel 2 - Management and regulation of private sector housing (including HIMOs)	183 - 184	The Committee to receive a progress report from the Chair of Scrutiny Panel 2.
11 8:35pm	Potential future pre decision scrutiny	185 - 186	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider any potential issues for future pre decision scrutiny
12	Urgent Items		This issue is for business that by reasons of the special circumstances to be specified, the Chair is of the opinion is of sufficient urgency to consider. Members or Officers that wish to raise urgent items are to inform the Chair in advance.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 11 November 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Jamie Lane (Chair); Councillor Brian Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Capstick, Ford, Glynane, Larratt, Lynch and Mason

Councillor David Mackintosh – Leader of the Council
Councillor Brandon Eldred, Cabinet Member - Community Engagement
Councillor Tim Hadland, Cabinet Member – Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Councillor Mary Markham, Cabinet Member – Housing
Councillor Alan Bottwood – Cabinet member - Finance
Steve Boyes – Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Julie Seddon - Chair of the CSP
Tracy Tiff – Scrutiny Officer
Nicola Brindley – Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES: Councillor Gowen, Councillor Patel, Councillor Subbarayan and Councillor Strachan

1. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September were signed by the Chair as a true record.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Capstick declared an interest in Item 7 as a Board member of the WNDC.

Councillor Hadland declared an interest in Item 7 as a Board member of the WNDC.

4. CABINET'S PRIORITIES 2013/2014

Leader of the Council and Environment

Councillor David Mackintosh addressed the committee and confirmed that he had regular meetings with the Health and Wellbeing Board and the GP consortia where the priorities would be brought forward. The Hospital and health services agenda was good for the town and relationships had evolved with the Chief Executive of the Hospital. He suggested that Health and Wellbeing is an area that could warrant future Scrutiny input, particularly of the action plan when finalised.

In response to a question, Councillor David Mackintosh confirmed that the definition criteria had changed on jobs in the Enterprise Zone and different sections were reviewed to attract more businesses into Northampton. Churches Shoes had just created 150 more jobs and Cosgrove had consulted with Northampton College to take on more trainees. He

considered that progress had been made.

Councillor Joy Capstick paid tribute to Councillor Mike Hallam with regard to a maintenance problem in her ward which he resolved and provided prompt feedback. She highlighted the problems of other homeowners in her ward which were due to the Council not maintaining areas properly.

Councillor David Mackintosh confirmed that Councillor Mike Hallam was aware of the issues and would follow them up.

Housing

Councillor Mary Markham addressed the committee with regard to the stock option review and examined the most appropriate way it could be delivered in council homes. Five people had been selected to go on the panel and the Employee Focus group reviewed stock conditions and the tenants survey. The Government draft consultation paper developed the option criteria and had visited other local authorities to adopted best practise and experience they had. The Employee Focus group and tenants had operated in a fair and transparent way and had made recommendations on factual information. Both groups had recommended the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) for consideration by Cabinet and Full Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Phil Larratt she confirmed that street lighting could be reviewed before the suggested timescale of April 2014 although a lot of changes were still happening and they would have to ensure the appropriate time and effort would be invested in it.

There was further discussion on the structure of the team who were reviewing the HIMOs and their roles.

Councillor Mary Markham confirmed that resources had been put into the housing area and a helpline had been set up for residents which was guaranteed to give a response on the same day. A survey in Semilong and Sunnyside had been completed which had detected more HIMOs than previously thought and 6000 more homes had to be visited. They were setting their own policies and standards given to all Landlords. She expected the HIMO policy to be completed by December 2013.

Finance

Councillor Alan Bottwood addressed the committee with regard to the monitoring of shared services. He considered the transition had gone smoothly and had received positive feedback at NBC and NCC. The staff which remained were positive about the future and out of the 18 staff in Finance, 6 of them were in better positions in LGSS. He also confirmed that morale had not suffered.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had regular briefings and considered that the process was positive. The Scrutiny Panel looking at the Welfare Reform Act would start work in January 2014.

Councillor Alan Bottwood confirmed that the number of claimants had not decreased compared to other years although the number of bogus claims had. The council had been proactive about the changes which took place. The Welfare Reform would stay on the agenda.

Community Engagement

Councillor Brandon Eldred addressed the committee and confirmed that the management of the museums had had a restructure and moved the back office staff into the Guildhall. Abington Park museum would open at the weekends from next winter.

He confirmed that there were many events scheduled in 2014 which would bring people into the town centre and get the local schoolchildren and businesses involved.

In response to a question Councillor Brandon Eldred confirmed that they were advertising for buskers for the town centre and would be launched on 21st November 2013.

Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning

Councillor Tim Hadland addressed the committee and confirmed that the HML Bid was successful and the money was awarded in October. The Delapre project was proceeding and the roof would be replaced in January. It was an 18 month project and the main work would commence in the autumn. The future governance would be reviewed with other stakeholders and a dedicated officer was now in place to work on the Delapre project. They would bring forward the activity plan and recruit accordingly.

He referred to the transition of the WNDC to the Council and confirmed that work on the joint core strategy was on going. Further work would be done and it was in its final stages subject to inspection in the spring.

RESOLVED: That details of Cabinet's priorities be noted.

5. COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities submitted a report and confirmed that the serious acquisitive crime figures could be linked to the recession. She confirmed that that the CCTV cameras had been decommissioned strategically and there had been no evidence of impact of the ones removed.

Councillor Phil Larratt suggested that the lights had been switched off unnecessarily and an inventory of lights were needed as the residents were suffering. People did not feel safe and poorer areas were suffering.

In response to a question, Julie Seddon confirmed that domestic abuse had decreased although there were complex issues in under reporting. Historically there was an increase over the Christmas period. Good treatment was provided to people with drug issues and work would be carried out with street drinkers and beggars particularly in the town centre area. There were professionals in place to help people with complex issues although the licensing department had been working with the police to tackle the problem.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that there would be a further update in June. They could review the figures and if necessary request the Police and Crime Commissioner to the committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and a further update be provided to the committee in June 2014.

6. WEST NORTHANTS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (WNDC)

Councillor Tim Hadland submitted a report and confirmed that the WNDC would be replaced by local control and would provide more accountability. An agreement would be reached

shortly and the council would not suffer financially. There were 24 people left at WNDC who worked hard to keep the project going and had satisfactory resources.

In response to a question, Councillor Tim Hadland confirmed that the Bus station redevelopment was a medium to long term risk and would create an asset. How it was financed was a matter for discussion which was on going.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that an update would be brought to the Committee in January.

RESOLVED: That an update on progress regarding the transition from WNDC to NBC be brought to the committee in January.

7. SCRUTINY PANELS

7.A SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - IMPROVING THE TOWN'S PARKS

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the Scrutiny Panel will receive the Chair's draft report at its meeting on 25th November and would present the final report to this committee in January for approval. It would then be presented to Cabinet in March 2014.

7.B SCRUTINY PANEL 2- MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (INCLUDING HIMOS)

Councillor Joy Capstick confirmed that at the next meeting on 18th November there would be representations from senior officers regarding HIMOs and licensing.

Councillor Jamie Lane thanked Councillor Joy Capstick for her work on it.

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORTING AND MONITORING WORKING GROUP

Councillor Lane advised that the inaugural meeting of the Working Group had set the Terms of Reference for 2013/2014, a copy of which was presented to the Committee for approval.

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the next meeting was on 6th January 2014 and the suggestions from the Working Group on budget items for Scrutiny input would come to committee on 27th January 2014 where the public could speak on it.

9. REPORT BACK FROM NBC'S REPRESENTATIVE TO NCC'S HEALTH, ADULT CARE AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Jamie Lane confirmed that the written report from Councillor Matt Lynch would be circulated to the Committee for information.

10. POTENTIAL FUTURE PRE DECISION SCRUTINY

There were none.

11. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 19:30 hrs

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 2 December 2013

PRESENT: Councillor Lane (Chair); Councillor Sargeant (Deputy Chair); Councillors Ansell, Capstick, Ford, Glynane, Larratt, Lynch, Mason, Parekh, Patel and Strachan.

Also present: Call-in Authors: Councillors Meredith and Beardsworth.

Witnesses: Councillor Hadland, Cabinet member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning and Simon Dougall, Corporate Asset Manager.

Officers: David Kennedy, Chief executive, Francis Fernandes, Borough Secretary, Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer and Peter Storey, Democratic Services Officer.

Members of the public: 23.

1. APOLOGIES

None.

The Chair reminded everyone present of the procedure for the meeting that was set out on the agenda paper and also made available to members of the public. He also commented that the Monitoring Officer had confirmed that the Call-in process, as set out in the Council's Constitution, had been correctly followed in this case.

2. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Helal Miah, Blackthorn Tandoori, stated that he could not understand why the Council wished to sell the site and why it could not be developed. He had received a letter from a Council officer stating that tenants would have another year on the site but not saying what would happen following that. Helal Miah stated that the decision had had a devastating effect on employers, employees, families and the community. He had been in business for approximately 25 years and had built up a good reputation. The Council could not guarantee him any premises in Northampton, which is where his customers are based. It would cost approximately £20,000 to move to a new site and could take 45-50 minutes to travel there if the site was on the opposite side of Northampton and would take ten years to build a reputation. Helal Miah stated that the Council wanted to create jobs but the decision would lose jobs and local shops at the site plus 5 shops around the site.

In answer to questions Helal Miah stated that he had first learned of the proposal in a letter from the Council dated 5 November, one week before the meeting of Cabinet on 13 November 2013. There had been no time to prepare for the meeting. Councillor Mackintosh, as Ward Councillor, had been invited to meet the tenants but had been too busy. Councillor Hadland had met the tenants on the day of the Cabinet meeting. Helal Miah had been a tenant on the site for eleven years and had a three months' notice period on his contract.

Members asked for a copy of the letter the tenants had received and this was copied and circulated to the Committee.

Fred McVavish, Blackthorn Workshop, stated that he had been told the site would be used a supermarket or workplace or houses. He had not received an answer when he asked what the site would be used for at the Cabinet meeting on 13 November 2013. He stated that there were many empty sites which could be used for development but the Council was adamant that this site should be developed. His daughter had a five year lease on the site but six months into the lease she had received a letter from the Council saying the property would be knocked down. He had emailed Councillor Mackintosh about the site but said he had not understood the reply received. In answer to a question Fred McVavish stated that he had heard of the proposals for the site on Radio Northampton on the day of the cabinet meeting. He had been allowed to address the Cabinet meeting, although he had not registered to speak. He had received a letter from the Council about the site previously but had telephoned Council officers and been told not to be concerned as this issue was only at the discussion stage.

Julie Mallia, Ray's Kebabs, stated that she had been on the site for fifteen years and been in business for ten years before that. She had built up a good reputation with the people around the site and relied on people walking into the unit. Closing the site would be devastating. Julia Mallia had heard of the proposals for the site in a letter one week prior to the Cabinet meeting on 13 November 2013 which had said that .the proposals might not be realized. She had seen more information on the facebook page of a local newspaper. Councillor Mackintosh had been invited to meet the tenants but had not attended. In answer to a question Julia Mallia stated that her customers came from areas within a short radius of the site.

Sadik Chaudhury, Asian Community, stated that he had two shops on the site and employed more than five people, who were family members. He had run shops for twenty years. He stated that jobs would be lost and asked that consideration be given to people who had been on the site for many years.

Mr A Hussani stated that he had been a resident of Blackthorn but had moved to Ecton Brook three years ago. He stated that there were not many venues for small businesses in the area and that he usually travelled to Weston Favell or the town centre to make purchases. It would be better for residents if the units remained on the site. There were many unused buildings on the site and it was an eyesore which should be developed as the shops on the site were earning income. People used the shops on the site rather than going into town and the shops should be supported and the focus should be on creating jobs, not losing them. Mr Hussani had not heard about businesses on the site being lost or the site being put up for sale.

Mr A Karavatra stated that he ran a supermarket at Blackthorn and employed two people and there were approximately five shops like his in the surrounding area. He had been seven years on the site and 37 years in business. It would not be easy to replicate his business elsewhere. Mr Karavatra had not seen the letter sent to tenants and had been informed of the proposals for the site by Councillor Meredith. If the proposals were carried out they would devastate the community.

George Smid, Liberal Democrat candidate, stated that he supported the retention of the site. He stated that the decision was taken without a due consideration, justified by the Council by the inadequate income of £22,424 generated by the site, the majority of the tenants having been in occupation for a limited number of years and the purchaser who would be would be responsible for complying with the provisions of the various leases and for compliance with statutory obligations. George Smid considered that the income could not be the real issue as a landlord would not generate more income by selling assets, that many tenants had been on the site for a number of years and moving them would lead to their

businesses closing. He stated that passing on the interests of the tenants to a purchaser was unprofessional. Mr Smid stated that the tenants had been asked to accept an unclear situation and that was callous and immoral. He stated that as a minimum the decision should be referred back to the Cabinet for full consultation and procedural provision.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

Councillor Capstick declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest as she had previously been a Ward Councillor for the area including the Blackthorn Workshops.

4. CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION OF 13 NOVEMBER 2013, ITEM 10: - DISPOSAL PROGRAMME 2013/2014 - SALE OF BUILDINGS AND LAND

Councillor Capstick declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest as she had previously been a Ward Councillor for the area including the Blackthorn Workshops.

Councillor Meredith as one of the Call-in authors, stated that:

- There were a number of demonstrable flaws in the decision making process in relation to the decision;
- The Council's Consultation Tool Kit had 8 steps, with 3 further elements, and that none of them had been considered, consulted or observed;
- He quoted from various parts of section 15.9.4.6 of the Constitution, stating that there had been no consultation other than with the Ward Councillor, which was inadequate and not in accordance with the Council's Consultation Tool Kit, and the Ward Councillor had not attended a meeting requested by the tenants;
- There had been inadequate information to take a decision which meant that the impact of the decision on the local community was not known and there had been no independent valuation of the market value of the land;
- The decision had generated substantial controversy amongst the tenants and the local community, proper financial information had been notably lacking and important factors relating to the tenants and the local community had been overlooked.

Councillor Meredith referred to Councillor Hadland meeting the tenants on the day of the Cabinet meeting. Councillor Meredith stated that there were six businesses in the eastern area of the site which employed 350 people, including suppliers. He stated that the decision had caused much despondency wondering about the future as a supermarket being built on the site would mean the closure of the existing business. The tenants were so concerned they had produced leaflets about the situation and delivered them around Rectory Farm. He asked the Committee to refer the decision back to Cabinet.

Councillor Beardsworth, as the second Call-in author, stated that the decision would destroy a community that people had tried to build and that the Council should support and encourage small businesses, which were very good at keeping in touch with local communities. Small businesses needed to be protected against big supermarkets, to protect jobs and local communities. The small businesses would not survive if they had to move because it would take them too long to build up new customers.

In answer to questions Councillors Meredith and Beardsworth stated that:

- One of the businesses on the site had told them that a supermarket had made an approach for the site. They stated that they had been assured at one time that the site was for housing;
- Councillor Meredith had produced a leaflet about the proposals for the site in addition to the one produced by the traders and stated that the depth of feeling in rectory farm was "astronomical" and there was great concern amongst the local Asian community;

- Traders from the site would be speaking at full Council about the proposals. There were thirteen businesses on the site, five food outlets and the rest retail, plus seven supermarkets in the surrounding area. No units were empty. One trader had invested £5.5K in their unit during the current year.
- The Call-in authors would like to see the units retained and the adjacent land developed for other uses.

Councillor Hadland, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning, stated that the Corporate Asset Management Strategy looked at value for money from the Council's assets and the site had been on the radar for some time. An unsolicited approach had been received for the site and adjoining land by NBC and NCC which it was only logical to consider further. The approach had been reported to Cabinet in principle to consider if a possible sale was a viable proposition. Tenants had been contacted at the earliest opportunity. Negotiations regarding the site were at an early stage, no planning application had been received and the land had not been sold. Cabinet was looking to see if a deal could be made to benefit the Council and the Borough as a whole. There were opportunities to impose conditions regarding the tenants in any sale of the land. There were no details of the potential use of the site available at this stage. Valuations of land are not usually reported to Cabinet and a professional valuation of the land would be obtained to ensure the Council got best value for the site in the event of a sale proceeding. Public consultation regarding the site would be carried out at the planning stage and the Corporate Asset Management Strategy itself had been consulted on.

Simon Dougall, Corporate Asset Manager, stated that the tenants had been given comfort in writing (in advance of the Cabinet Meeting) of them having a secure minimum period in respect of their tenancy until November 2014 (rather than the rolling three months' notice period in their leases), regardless of whether or not the Cabinet did choose to support an 'in principle' decision regarding the site.

Councillor Hadland stated that NCC had the significantly larger vacant land area adjacent to the site. There were complications regarding the NBC premises, which had started as a collection of workshops but had changed its emphasis over time to include some retail/ hot food takeaway aspects, which would not normally be appropriate in these types of buildings. The Council would look to see if it was possible to include some of these uses in any development of the site. If the existing businesses moved to other workshop type premises a number of tenants would require a planning consent for some of their existing uses at Blackthorn.

Simon Dougall confirmed that 44% of the gross sum for any disposal of the site, if completed in 2013, would be payable to the Homes and Communities Agency (reducing at 2% per annum). The Council was working with the Agency on "claw back" issues to seek to have funds reinvested in the Borough.

Councillor Hadland, in answer to a question asking what would happen if the tenants were displaced and the developer then walked away, stated that any displacement of tenants would only take place after a developer had a binding contract to buy the site. It was unlikely a developer would then walk away having committed a considerable sum.

Simon Dougall stated that the letter sent to tenants on 5 November 2013 was not a notice to quit but rather explained that a report would be considered by the Cabinet regarding the site and the potential effect that could have on tenants of the premises. The letter did not pre-empt the Cabinet decision. Whatever the decision taken regarding the site, it made clear that tenants could remain in occupation until at least November 2014 if they wished.

Councillor Hadland, in replying to questions, stated that:

- He was aware of the Council's consultation process and that it was advisory and not mandatory. He stated that the report made to Cabinet was for an in principle matter and not for a final decision. He stated that it was very early in the process and the Consultation Tool Kit was not relevant at this point. Tenants would be further consulted and be able to give their views on the future of the site.
- It was appropriate at this stage to only consult the Ward Councillor about the site.
- With regard to a supermarket being built on the site, he did not know where this information had come from.

Councillors Meredith and Beardsworth stated that clarification was still needed regarding the future of the site and that no assurances had been given to tenants about their future. They believed that the communication with tenants had been inadequate. It was difficult for tenants to run their businesses with this uncertainty. The local businesses would be threatened by the introduction of large businesses on the site and they should be supported.

A Member stated that it was his understanding that most of the business for the take aways on the site came from delivery services, with some local people calling in at the units.

Members considered that it would be helpful to have clarification regarding the position of the small business if the site were sold.

The Call-In was upheld and the Committee asked Cabinet to reconsider its decision. It was proposed by Councillor Suresh Patel, seconded by Councillor Lee Mason, and upon a vote it was:

RESOLVED:

1. That after all the evidence had been heard, the Call In be upheld on the grounds that there was lack of consultation and communication.
2. That full consultation takes place with all stakeholders using Northampton Borough Council's Consultation Toolkit as a guide.

The meeting concluded at 8:30 pm



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 JANUARY 2014

BRIEFING NOTE: Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring
Working Group – Council Wide Draft Budget 2014-19

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring Working Group met on 6 January 2014 to review the draft budget details and identify proposals that it considered merited closer scrutiny.

2 UPDATE

- 2.1 All the items in the revenue and capital budget proposals were discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring Working Group, The Working Group agreed a number of priority items forward for closer scrutiny by the full Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 2.2 The items chosen for closer scrutiny are:

General Fund Saving Option

Print Review £150k

General Fund Growth Option:

Car Parking:

Car park first two hours free (multi storey only) £382k

Car park free Saturday parking £282k

General Fund Capital Scheme:

Delapre Abbey Restoration £5.6m

- 2.3 Cabinet Members and Officers have been asked to attend this meeting to support the scrutiny of these proposals.
- 2.4 Comments raised by Overview and Scrutiny will form part of the Cabinet considerations for agreeing the final budget proposals to Council. They will be provided to Council as an Appendix to the Cabinet report so that they can also be taken into account in approving a final budget.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agrees its comments and observations to be included as an Appendix to the Cabinet report; and for consideration by Cabinet in agreeing a final budget proposal.

4. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 4.1 Budget Consultation (NBC internet).

Author: Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Jamie Lane, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Reporting and Monitoring Working Group

7 January 2014



Revenue MTP Options for Detailed Scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MTP Reference	MTP Option Description	2014/2015 £	2015/2016 £	2016/2017 £	2017/2018 £	2018/2019 £
Customers & Communities - (Savings)						
GF04	Print Review	(150,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)	(250,000)
Customers & Communities - Growth						
GF58	Car Parking - Additional Free Saturdays	282,348	282,348	282,348	282,348	282,348
GF59	Car Parking - Additional first 2 hours free MSCP car parks only	382,435	382,435	382,435	382,435	382,435

Medium Term Planning and Budget Build proposal

MTP Ref No: GF04 **MTP Title:** Print Services Unit

Budget Manager/Head of Service: Marion Goodman

Directorate: Customers & Communities **Service:** Customer & Cultural Services

***Dept:** Customer & Cultural Services

*if applicable

Financial Impact:

Year	Impact	£'s
2014/15	Saving	£150,000
2015/16	Saving	£250,000
2016/17	Saving	£250,000
2017/18	Saving	£250,000
2018/19	Saving	£250,000

Links to Corporate Plan: (please select all that apply)

Your Town

- CP1 - Northampton on Track
- CP2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighborhoods
- CP3 - Celebrate our Heritage and Culture
- CP4 - Making every £ go further

You

- CP5 - Better Homes for the Future
- CP6 - Creating empowered communities
- CP7 - Promoting health & wellbeing
- CP8 - Responding to your needs

Brief Description of Proposal:

The Council has been through substantial change, with a number of Council services having transferred to LGSS (Local Government Shared Services). Given these changes the council's current needs have been assessed in the context of budgetary constraints. A restructure of Print Service Unit is therefore proposed.

Key benefits (including measures of success) and impact arising from the proposal:

The total saving arising from this proposal will be approx £150k

Key consequences/risks of not delivering the proposal:

A reduction in the costs for the department are needed to meet challenging budgetary constraints.

Community Impact

Has a Community/Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes

No

Please explain why a Community Impact Assessment is not relevant, or has not been completed:

The restructure proposals are at a formative stage and whilst brief informal consultations have been carried out with staff; HR policies will be followed in the normal way. The impacts on staff and services will be assessed on an ongoing basis, leading right up to the final restructure proposal.

Who is affected by this proposal? (include public, community groups or staff as relevant):

Many of the services and activities affected by these proposals are "internally facing back office functions" and do not directly impact on the public. The proposals are at a very formative stage and the potential impacts will be considered throughout the process, once the proposals are firmed up through the staff consultation process.

Please detail any internal service considerations arising from this proposal e.g. staffing, training, succession, procurement, IT, and inc LGSS:

None that can be ascertained specifically at this stage.

Medium Term Planning and Budget Build proposal

MTP Ref No: GF58 **MTP Title:** Free parking on Saturdays

Budget Manager/Head of Service: Marion Goodman

Directorate: Customers & Communities **Service:** Customer & Cultural Services

***Dept:** Town Centre Operations

*if applicable

Financial Impact:

Year	Impact	£'s
2014/15	Growth	£282,348
2015/16	Growth	£282,348
2016/17	Growth	£282,348
2017/18	Growth	£282,348
2018/19	Growth	£282,348

Links to Corporate Plan: (please select all that apply)

Your Town

- CP1 - Northampton on Track
- CP2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighborhoods
- CP3 - Celebrate our Heritage and Culture
- CP4 - Making every £ go further

You

- CP5 - Better Homes for the Future
- CP6 - Creating empowered communities
- CP7 - Promoting health & wellbeing
- CP8 - Responding to your needs

Brief Description of Proposal:

Free Parking on Saturdays * Figure is estimated and does not include any transitional changes in car parking habits to take advantage of the free parking offer. This figure has been adjusted to reflect the 2 hour free parking offer included in the additional MTP. Offering free parking in town centre car parks on Saturdays.

Key benefits (including measures of success) and impact arising from the proposal:

Increased usage of car parks on Saturdays leading to increase town centre footfall and economic growth.

Key consequences/risks of not delivering the proposal:

That visitors to the town centre reduce and town centre trade is adversely affected.

Community Impact

Has a Community/Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

Yes

No

Please explain why a Community Impact Assessment is not relevant, or has not been completed:

The proposals are currently in development.

Who is affected by this proposal? (include public, community groups or staff as relevant):

Potential impacte will be considered throughout the process.

Please detail any internal service considerations arising from this proposal e.g. staffing, training, succession, procurement, IT, and inc LGSS:

n/a

Medium Term Planning and Budget Build proposal

MTP Ref No: GF59 **MTP Title:** Car parking - free for 2 hours

Budget Manager/Head of Service: Marion Goodman

Directorate: Customers & Communities **Service:** Customer & Cultural Services

***Dept:** Town Centre Operations

*if applicable

Financial Impact:

Year	Impact	£'s
2014/15	Growth	£382,435
2015/16	Growth	£382,435
2016/17	Growth	£382,435
2017/18	Growth	£382,435
2018/19	Growth	£382,435

Links to Corporate Plan: (please select all that apply)

Your Town

- CP1 - Northampton on Track
- CP2 - Invest in safer, cleaner neighborhoods
- CP3 - Celebrate our Heritage and Culture
- CP4 - Making every £ go further

You

- CP5 - Better Homes for the Future
- CP6 - Creating empowered communities
- CP7 - Promoting health & wellbeing
- CP8 - Responding to your needs

Brief Description of Proposal:

To introduce free parking for the first two hours

Key benefits (including measures of success) and impact arising from the proposal:

Increased usage of car parks leading to increased town centre footfall and economic growth.

Key consequences/risks of not delivering the proposal:

That visitors to the town centre reduce and town centre trade is adversely affected.

Community Impact

Has a Community/Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? Yes No

Please explain why a Community Impact Assessment is not relevant, or has not been completed:

The proposals are currently in development.

Who is affected by this proposal? (include public, community groups or staff as relevant):

Potential impact will be considered throughout the process.

Please detail any internal service considerations arising from this proposal e.g. staffing, training, succession, procurement, IT, and inc LGSS:

n/a



Proposed Capital Programme 2014-15 to 2018-19 - General Fund

Project Title	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<u>Heritage & Culture</u>							
Delapre Abbey Restoration - BA653	179,715	997,477	3,877,450	595,031	0	0	5,649,673
<u>Proposed General Fund Capital Funding</u>							
Grants & Contributions:							
Heritage Lottery Funding - Delapre Abbey	102,438	568,562	2,210,147	339,168			3,220,315
Delapre Abbey Contributions - Secured	2,000	95,000	70,000	70,000			237,000
Delapre Abbey Fundraising Target (unsecured)		200,000	420,000	180,000			800,000
NBC Earmarked Reserves - Delapre Abbey	75,277	133,915	630,808				840,000
Capital Receipts			546,495	5,863			552,358
Total Proposed Funding	179,715	997,477	3,877,450	595,031	0	0	5,649,673

Description

The restoration will seek to halt the decline in the Abbey and bring substantial parts back into public use as a nationally significant visitor attraction whilst maximising income generation to ensure the long term sustainability of the Abbey. Following the successful completion of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid the council has been awarded £3.22m. The Council is providing match funding of £840k from earmarked reserves plus £552k from capital receipts. Other contributions of £237k have been secured and the Delapre Abbey Preservation Trust have a target to secure a further £800k, with any shortfall being a further call on Council funding.

Northampton Borough Council

Quarter Three 2013/14 Performance Report

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Summary

The attached report summarises LGSS's progress in providing services up to the end of Quarter Three. In summary, the RAG status of the 54 key performance indicators (KPIs) as at 31 December 2013 is as follows:

Status	Quarter One Performance	Quarter 2 2013/14	Quarter 3 2013/14
Green	24	25	29
Amber	2	5	5
Red	7	5	1
No activity	4	2	2
Baseline	3	3	3
NBC Managed	1	1	1
Annual	13	13	13
Total	54	54	54

The majority (29) of KPI's are continuing to perform well with a green RAG status. The number of red status KPIs has fallen steadily over the last three quarters, with just one red KPI status for Quarter Three.

Red Status KPIs

Over the last two quarters the indicators where performance was recorded as red are detailed below. It should be noted that of the five KPIs reported as red in Quarter Two, all but one are now green for Quarter Three.

KPI Ref	KPI Description	2013/14 Target	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three
F002	Percentage of invoices from local suppliers paid within 10 days (NN Post Code)	99.00%	G	R	G
			82%	69%	80%

As part of the ongoing review of processes and systems involving NBC and LGSS staff we have identified an issue in the reporting of payments made to local suppliers within 10 days.

In April 2013, NBC entered into a contractual arrangement with Travis Perkins for a Stores Service for Building Materials and Associated Services with payments terms of 30 days. An analysis of the Agresso system has revealed that whilst the payment terms are set correctly at 30 days the field that drives how the supplier payment performance is reported shows 'Local' and not 'National'. What this means is that the invoices are being paid to the contractual terms but being reported in the Local category of payments made in 10 days.

The Agresso system has now been amended to reflect the correct information and the reports re-run for

the months of April to December 2013 with the revised performance data being reported above.

Work continues between NBC and LGSS to improve processes and drive out non-compliance to ensure the additional resources currently being deployed to support the processing of NBC invoices can be withdrawn.

LEG06	UPRN within 3 days of receiving notification	99.00%	G	100%	R	↓	90%	G	↑	100%
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7 requests were received in December and 100% were processed within the 3 day target. The year to date target has moved from red to amber after the technical problems encountered earlier in the year.

PAY03	Percentage of statutory returns submitted on time and without significant recall	100%	G	100%	R	↔	72%	G	↔	100%
--------------	---	------	----------	------	----------	---	-----	----------	---	------

All statutory returns have been submitted on time for December. It should be noted that the full-year KPI target of 100% will not be achieved due to the issues encountered in August.

REV02	Speed of processing New Benefit Claims	19 Days	R	27.07	R	↑	25.47	R	↑	21.88
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As demonstrated across the Revenues and Benefits service indicators performance within the service remains high. This includes the improved performance in assessing new claims, which was impacted in the early part of the year due to a large number of staff leaving the Council's new claims team in April 2013. The service is now reviewing all cases within the first week of receipt, alongside managing the changes in circumstance caseload effectively. Any delays in processing new claims are predominantly the result of customers delaying responding to requests for further information. It is worth adding that the service have been managing increased caseloads in 2013/14, alongside delivering efficiencies in order to meet national funding reductions across local Government. Again workload volumes are being monitored and will be reported regularly, alongside any insight available relating to the cause of these increased volumes of work.

REV09	NNDR Collection Rate	99.40%	R	31.78%	R	↑	60.09%	G	↑	89.79%
--------------	-----------------------------	--------	----------	--------	----------	---	--------	----------	---	--------

Collections rates have improved for Business Rates over the month of December and we are now slightly above target. During January, February and March we will be concentrating on chasing those who have fallen behind on their instalments to ensure the collection rate is still on target at the end of the financial year.

Other news

Revenues and Benefits

- The service was successful in winning the Gold medal for its Revenues service at the national IRRV awards in Telford during the quarter. The service also received a silver medal for its training and staff development function.
- As demonstrated across the Revenues and Benefits service indicators performance within the service remains high. This includes the performance in assessing new claims, which was impacted in the early part of the year due to a large number of staff leaving the Council's new claims team in April 2013. The service is now reviewing all cases within the first week of receipt, alongside managing the changes in circumstance caseload effectively.

- Performance levels are high despite one of the most challenging years for the service for some-time. This has included the recruitment issues the service has faced during the year in replacing vacant posts, something that is becoming a problem nationally as skilled staff move into other sectors as talk of housing benefit moving into the proposed universal credit continues,
- The service have been managing increased caseloads in 2013/14, alongside delivering efficiencies in order to meet national funding reductions across local Government
- Complexity within the service has also increased in 2013/14 following the implementation of a new Local Council Tax Support scheme, alongside national reforms that introduced the benefit cap, reductions to benefit for those under – occupying social sector housing and the enhanced Discretionary Housing Payments scheme. All of these reforms have been successfully managed alongside meeting the ongoing day to day demands across services,
- The transition to LGSS has been managed successfully and we are now moving back into business as normal following the completion of transitional work areas,
- LGSS continue to develop the service in terms of working with existing and future partners. This has included closer working arrangements with the LGSS Norwich operation to ensure economies of scale can be delivered in the future.



**Northampton Borough Council
Performance Report
2013/14 - December 2013**



Publish Date: 14 January 2014

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KPI Summary List

	Measure	Description	2013/14 Target	Reporting Frequency	RAG Bands	Q1 Rag Status	Q2 Rag Status	Q3 Rag Status	Q4 Rag Status
Health	LGSS01	Health of Partnership Indicator	90.00%	2xyear%		-	-	-	
	REP01	Cross service Customer satisfaction of NBC staff (excluding external customers) (biannual)	90.00%	2xyear%	tba	-	-	-	
Finance Operations	F001	Percentage of invoices (with the exception of local suppliers) paid within 30 days	99.00%	Monthly	<98% Amber, <96% Red	R 93%	A ↑ 96%	G ↑ 98%	
	F002	Percentage of invoices from local suppliers paid within 10 days (NN Post Code)	75.00%	Monthly	<75% Amber, <70% Red	G 82%	R 69%	G 80%	
	F003	Aged debt analysis for Sundry debt as measured at the end of the financial year is as good as or better than current performance.	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	-	-	-	
	F004	Level of write off within target.	<£175k	Monthly	+/- 5% profiled target	G £16,690	G ↑ £5,163	G ↓ £8,627	
	F005	PCiDSS Annual review has a successful outcome for areas falling under LGSS.	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	-	-	-	
	F006	All reconciliations completed and discrepancies resolved without exceeding the tolerance threshold	Score < 16	Monthly	>16 Amber, >18 Red	G 3	G ↑ 0	G ↔ 0	
Finance Professional	PF01	Provision of quality assured budget, budget options, council tax, rents, and medium financial projects by agreed date	100.00%	Annual	<100% Amber, <95% Red	-	-	-	
	PF02	Difference between weighted average of month 7 (October) and month 10 (January) 'controllable budget' forecasts and final 'controllable budget' outturn figures as a percentage of final 'controllable budget' outturn figures within 20%	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	-	-	-	
	PF03	Accounts approved within statutory timescale and with no qualifications and an annual audit letter reporting only non-material uncorrected errors.	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	-	-	-	
	PF04	All statutory grant claims and statistical returns accurately prepared and meeting certification requirements.	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	-	-	-	
	PF05h	Number of external or internal audit report recommendations in relation to systems of financial control relating to services provided by LGSS with high / medium risk recommendations.	High Risk=0;	Annual	High: >0 Amber, >1 Red	-	-	-	
	PF05m		Medium Risk=4		Med: >4 Amber, >6 Red	-	-	-	

	Measure	Description	2013/14 Target	Reporting Frequency	RAG Bands	Q1 Rag Status	Q2 Rag Status	Q3 Rag Status	Q4 Rag Status
Finance Professional	PF06	The number of reported breaches of agreed treasury management policies and procedures.	3	Monthly	>3 Amber, >6 Red	G 0	G ↔ 0	G ↔ 0	
	PF07	Average monthly investment performance compared to 7 day LIBID	Min 0.5 above LIBID	Monthly	<0.5 Amber, <0.3 Red	G 0.66	A ↓ 0.50667	A ↓ 0.3133	
	PF08	Closing bank balance is maintained above zero – maximum number of exceptions per month	1	Monthly	>2 Amber, >4 Red	G 1	G ↑ 0	G ↔ 0	
	PF09	Closing current account bank balances are maintained below £200,000 - maximum number of exceptions per month	1	Monthly	>2 Amber, >4 Red	G 0	G ↓ 1	G ↔ 1	
	PF10	Internal Audit Payroll Risk (Annual Report)	Medium / Low	Annual	High = Red	-	-	-	
HR&OD	HR01	Percentage of HR queries (calls) resolved upon first interaction with HR Helpdesk	55.00%	Montly	<55% Amber, <50% Red	G 81%	G ↑ 88%	G ↓ 84%	
	HR02	Number of course places offered against plan	100.00%	Monthly	<100% Amber, <90% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
26 ICT	IT01	Resolution of reported incidents	96.50%	Monthly	<96.5% Amber, <90% Red	A 95.8%	A ↓ 95.7%	A ↓ 94.8%	
	IT02	Annual Customer Satisfaction	5.93	Annual	<5.93 Amber, <5.88 Red	-	-	-	
	IT03	Service Availability	99.95%	Monthly	<99.95% Amber, <96% Red	G 100.00%	A ↓ 99.81%	G ↑ 99.98%	
Insurance	INS01	Liability decisions	93.00%	Monthly	<93% Amber, <90% Red	R 72%	A ↑ 92%	G ↑ 98%	
	INS02	Claim lifecycle	60 days	Monthly	>60 days Amber, >65 days Red	None settled	G ↑ 42	None settled	
	INS03	Annual external insurer audit (currently Travellers)	Travelers TSP: Good >90%	Annual	<90% Amber, <85% Red	-	-	-	
Legal	LEG01a	Client Satisfaction Questionnaires	98.00%	Monthly	<98% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
	LEG01	Customer satisfaction with service received	85.00%	Monthly	<85% Amber, <80% Red	No responses yet	No responses yet	G G	
	LEG02	Lexcel quality mark is retained on an annual basis	Yes	Annual	NO = Red	G Yes	G Yes	G Yes	
	LEG03	Processing of applications for land acquisitions to Land Registry	95.00%	Monthly	<95% Amber, <90% Red	No acquisitions	No acquisitions	No acquisitions	

	Measure	Description	2013/14 Target	Reporting Frequency	RAG Bands	Q1 Rag Status	Q2 Rag Status	Q3 Rag Status	Q4 Rag Status
Legal	LEG04	Drafts for PDAs leases and transfer	75.00%	Monthly	<75% Amber, <70% Red	No completions	G 100%	G 100%	
	LEG05	Improvement to the Gazetteer	Achieve National	Annual	NO = Red	G Yes	G Yes	G Yes	
	LEG06	UPRN within 3 days of receiving notification	99.00%	Monthly	<99% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	R ↓ 90%	G ↑ 100%	
	LEG07	EIR information to be provided in line with the statutory requirements	99.00%	Monthly	<99% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
Payroll & Recruitment	PAY01	Payroll Accuracy	98%	Monthly	<98% Amber, <95% Red	G 99.98%	G ↓ 98.23%	G ↑ 99.99%	
	PAY02	Percentage of payroll control accounts reconciled each month	98%*	Monthly	<98% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
	PAY03	Percentage of statutory returns submitted on time and without significant recall	100%	Monthly	<100% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	R ↔ 72%	G ↔ 100%	
	PAY04	Percentage of third party payments paid on time	98%*	Monthly	<98% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
	PAY05	Percentage of Variable Payroll Claim forms processed in accordance with the Annual Payroll Schedule.	98%	Monthly	<98% Amber, <95% Red	G 100%	G ↔ 100%	G ↔ 100%	
Procurement	PROC01	Increase in contracted expenditure as a percentage of total influencable spend (non-pay spend)	Baseline	Monthly	<10% Amber, <5% Red	Baseline year	Baseline Year	Baseline Year	
	PROC02	All procurement exercises via LGSS (over £75k) to be undertaken through the e-procurement portal	100%	Monthly	<100% Amber, <95% Red	G 100.00%	G ↔ 100.00%	G ↔ 100.00%	
	PROC03	Increase in % of savings achieved through the use of corporate contracts and collaborative arrangements	Baseline	Monthly	<10% Amber, <5% Red	Baseline year	Baseline Year	Baseline Year	
	PROC04	Increase in % of contract spend with local suppliers	Baseline	Monthly	<5% Amber, 0% Red	Baseline year	Baseline Year	Baseline Year	
Revenues & Benefits	REV01	Speed of processing Benefit Claims	11 days	Monthly	>11 days Amber, >12 days Red	R 12.94	G ↑ 8.88	A ↓ 11.74	
	REV02	Speed of processing New Benefit Claims	19 Days	Monthly	>19 days Amber, >21 days Red	R 27.07	R ↑ 25.47	R ↑ 21.88	
	REV03	Speed of processing Changes of Circumstances	9 Days	Monthly	>9 days Amber, >11 days Red	R 11.12	G ↑ 7.16	A ↓ 10.57	

Measure	Description	2013/14 Target	Reporting Frequency	RAG Bands	Q1 Rag Status	Q2 Rag Status	Q3 Rag Status	Q4 Rag Status
REV04	LA Error	0.40%	Monthly	>0.40% Amber, >0.47% Red	G 0.35%	G ↑ 0.33%	G ↓ 0.33%	
REV05	Fraud Sanctions	94	Monthly	<94 Amber, <89 Red	R 15	G ↑ 56	G ↑ 102	
REV06	% of calls in the contact centre answered (To be reviewed after initial transition October 2013)	85.78%	Monthly	<85.78% Amber, <80% Red	NBC Managed	NBC Managed	NBC Managed	
REV07	Council Tax Collection Rate (including Council Tax Benefit)	96.50%	Monthly	+/- 0.2% profiled target	G 39.04%	G ↑ 62.66%	G ↑ 86.21%	
REV08	Council Tax Collection Rate	96.20%	Monthly	+/- 0.2% profiled target (Abs)	G 29.42%	G ↑ 56.85%	A ↑ 84.12%	
REV09	NNDR Collection Rate	99.40%	Monthly	+/- 0.2% profiled target	R 31.78%	R ↑ 60.09%	G ↑ 89.79%	
REV10	Inactive Debt	4.5%	Monthly	+/- 1% profiled target	G 2.9%	G ↓ 1.2%	G ↑ 4.1%	

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Revenues & Benefits

Summary of KPI Performance	RAG Bands	Q1 Rag Status	Q2 Rag Status	Q3 Rag Status	Q4 Rag Status
----------------------------	-----------	---------------	---------------	---------------	---------------

KEY

	Not due to be reported this quarter
G	Green
A	Amber
R	Red

↑
↔
↓

Annual	13	13	13
Green	25	25	29
Amber	1	5	5
Red	7	5	1
No activity	4	2	2
Baseline	3	3	3
NBC managed	1	1	1
Total	54	54	54

Please refer to the individual service pages for details of performance against each individual KPI.

Generic KPIs

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LGSS01	Health of Partnership Indicator	Composite health of partnership KPI - Based on results from the following; Reputation - Overall Customer Satisfaction, Service surveys - KPI's relating to customer satisfaction or client satisfaction in the Business Improvement, Business Systems, HR & OD, Revenues & Benefits and ICT services Service Standards - Service KPIs Realisation of savings - % savings delivered compared with those identified in the Agreement										n/a	90.00%
Reported twice yearly		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
RAG Status													

LGSS01a Service Delivery performance													
LGSS01b Reputation													
LGSS01c Realisation of Savings													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
FO01.2	Cross service Customer satisfaction of NBC staff (excluding external customers) (biannual)	What is the end user's perception of the LGSS Service										n/a	90.00%
Reported twice yearly		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
RAG Status													

Finance Operations

Measure	Description					Purpose					2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F001	Percentage of invoices (with the exception of local suppliers) paid within 30 days) (F001.1)					To ensure that invoices are correctly and promptly paid and penalties are not incurred					99.33%	99%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Monthly Percentage	99%	95%	86%	98%	93%	98%	97%	98%	99%	-	-	-
<98% Amber, <96% Red	G	R	R	A	R	G	A	G	G			
2013/14 Year to date	99%	97%	93%	94%	94%	94%	95%	95%	96%	-	-	-
<98% Amber, <96% Red	G	A	R	R	R	R	R	R	A			
Quarterly average	R		92.51%		A	↑	96%	G	↑	98%		

A slight performance improvement over last month has been achieved. Work continues between NBC and LGSS to improve processes and drive out non-compliance to ensure the additional resources currently being deployed to support the processing of NBC invoices can be withdrawn.

3
0

Measure	Description					Purpose					2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F002	Percentage of invoices from local suppliers paid within 10 days (NN Post Code) (FO01.2)					To ensure that invoices are correctly and promptly paid, assisting local suppliers economically.					73.33%	75%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Monthly Percentage	80%	85%	82%	75%	64%	69%	77%	75%	85%			
<75% Amber, <70%	G	G	G	G	R	R	G	G	G			
2013/14 Year to date	80%	82%	82%	80%	76%	75%	75%	75%	76%	-	-	-
<75% Amber, <70%	G	G	G	G	G	A	A	A	G			
Quarterly average	G		82%		R		69%		G		80%	

As part of the ongoing review of processes and systems involving NBC and LGSS staff we have identified a issue in the reporting of payments made to local suppliers within 10 days.

In April 2013, NBC entered into a contractual arrangement with Travis Perkins for a Stores Service for Building Materials and Associated Services with payments terms of 30 days. An analysis of the Agresso system has revealed that whilst the payment terms are set correctly at 30 days the field that drives how the supplier payment performance is reported shows 'Local' and not 'National'. What this means is that the invoices are being paid to the contractual terms but being reported in the Local category of payments made in 10 days.

The Agresso system has now been amended to reflect the correct information and the reports re-run for the months of April to December 2013 with the revised performance data being reported above.

As mentioned under F001, work continues between NBC and LGSS to improve processes and drive out non-compliance to ensure the additional resources currently being deployed to support the processing of NBC invoices can be withdrawn.

Measure	Description					Purpose					2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F003	Aged debt analysis for Sundry debt as measured at the end of the financial year is as good as or better than current performance. (FO02.1)					Ensure maintenance of NBC income levels					Yes	Yes
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
NO = Red	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F004	Level of write off within target. (FO02.2)											Ensure maintenance of NBC income levels	<£175k	<£175k
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Write off level (£)	£16,785.45	£13,465.08	£19,820.29	£946.70	£8,052.50	£6,489.86	£18,743.41	£5,894.26	£1,244.00					
£25,583 +/- 5%	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
2013/14 Year to date	£16,785	£30,251	£50,071	£51,018	£59,070	£65,560	£84,303	£90,198	£91,442	-	-	-		
Target	£25,583	£51,166	£76,749	£102,332	£127,915	£153,498	£179,081	£204,664	£230,247	£255,830	£281,413	£306,996		
£25,583 +/- 5%	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
Quarterly average	G		16,690.27	G	↑	5,163.02	G	↓	8,627.22					
We are currently reviewing the data included for reporting processes to verify its accuracy and to ensure it is in line with the PDA.														

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Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F005	PCiDSS Annual review has a successful outcome for areas falling under LGSS. (FO03.1)											To ensure security of customer data and to prevent financial penalties.	Yes	Yes
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
NO = Red	Annual	Annual	Annual	Pass	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual					

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
F006	All reconciliations completed and discrepancies resolved without exceeding the tolerance threshold in aggregate standards as listing in Quality and Timescales sections are met. Changes to the content of the Quality Assessment Methodology to be mutually agreed through separate change control arrangements. (E004.1)										To ensure that the administration and accounting for reconciliations are timely and accurate	Score = 0	Score < 16
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Score	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0				
>16 Amber, >18 Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	-	-	-	
2013/14 Year to date	0	0	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	
>16 Amber, >18 Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	-	-	-	
Quarter Average	G		3	G	↑	0	G	↔	0				
All reconciliations completed within deadline.													

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Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Finance Professional

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF01	Provision of quality assured budget, budget options, council tax, rents, and medium financial projects by agreed date in order to meet statutory deadlines and local lead in times to key meetings of Council, Cabinet, Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny. (PF01.1)	Quality assured budget proposals and estimates submitted by due date in required format in accordance with corporate guidelines.										100.00%	100.00%
Report		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Reported Annually													
<100% Amber, <95% Red		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF02	Difference between weighted average of month 7 (October) and month 10 (January) 'controllable budget' forecasts and final 'controllable budget' outturn figures as a percentage of final 'controllable budget' outturn figures within 20%. (NB excludes Debt Financing) (PF01.2)	To increase certainty over the Council's spending against budget during the financial year.										Yes	Yes
Reported Annually		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
NO = Red		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF03	Accounts approved within statutory timescale and with no qualifications and an annual audit letter reporting only non-material uncorrected errors. (PF01.3)	To ensure statement of account fully complies with all relevant financial and audit requirements.										Yes	Yes
Reported Annually		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
NO = Red		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF04	All statutory grant claims and statistical returns accurately prepared and meeting certification requirements. (PF01.4)	To ensure all grant claims and statistical returns accurately submitted to deadlines without any significant issues										Yes	Yes
Reported Annually		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
NO = Red		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF05	Number of external or internal audit report recommendations in relation to systems of financial control relating to services provided by LGSS with high / medium risk recommendations. (PF01.5)	To ensure financial controls are robust										High risk = 0 Medium Risk = 2	High risk = 0 Medium Risk = 4
Reported Annually		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
PF05a High Risk		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			
PF05b Medium Risk		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual			

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF06	The number of reported breaches of agreed treasury management policies and procedures. (PF02.1)	To ensure good governance and compliance with Treasury policies that are set under the regulatory framework for Treasury Management										6	3
Reported Monthly		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Number of breaches		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Cumulative total		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0			
>3 Amber, >6 Red		G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G			
End of quarter result (year to date)		G		0	G	↔	0	G	↔	0			
No breaches reported													

Measure	Description					Purpose					2012/13	2013/14
PF07	Average monthly investment performance compared to 7 day LIBID (PF02.2)					To ensure good investment returns compared to the market					0.79	Min 0.5 above LIBID
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Performance	0.76	0.62	0.60	0.58	0.50	0.44	0.35	0.29	0.30			
<0.5 Amber, <0.3 Red	G	G	G	G	G	A	A	R	A			
2013/14 Year to date	0.76	0.69	0.66	0.64	0.61	0.58	0.55	0.52	0.49	-	-	-
<0.5 Amber, <0.3 Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	A			
Quarter Average	G	0.66	A	↓	0.51	A	↓	0.31				

The ability to track this target is reliant on the market providing financial products with suitable rates in which to invest. Economic initiatives such as Funding for Lending and Quantitative Easing have seen financial institutions cut back on offered rates as their need to attract new money has diminished. The rates available on financial products that meet the risk requirements set out within the Treasury Management Strategy framework have fallen since the beginning of the year. As long as the market rates remain at these subdued levels, this target is unlikely to be achieved.

Ω

To ensure the council is maximising the current opportunities contained in the TM Strategy it will work with its external TM advisers to review the position, and if opportunities exist, it will propose these to NBC for consideration.

Benchmarking data available to the authority demonstrates that the drop in investment returns is common across local authorities. From Sept 2012 to Sept 2013 the NBC weighted average rate of return on investments decreased by 49 basis points (i.e. 0.49% from 1.27% to 0.78%). The comparative average decrease for the non-metropolitan districts (approx. 80) in the benchmarking group was 55 basis points, and for the total investment benchmarking population (approx. 200) was 51 basis points.

One approach to counter the failure to achieve the target may be to review the Council's risk appetite for investments as part of the annual review of the Treasury Management Strategy, for example by permitting (limited) investments with non-rated building societies, or by extending the duration period of investments with existing counterparties. However this approach is not recommended by officers, as it would involve setting risk parameters outside those recommended by the Council's treasury management advisers, and furthermore CIPFA guidance is clear that security and liquidity of investments should be prioritised above investment yield.

It is recommended that in the current economic environment, and until market conditions improve, the target is reduced to minimum of 0.1% above LIBID, this being the forecast of the likely margin achievable over the next two to three years.

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF08	Closing bank balance is maintained above zero – maximum number of exceptions per month (PF02.3)	To ensure overdraft costs are minimised										2 exceptions in year	4 exceptions in year
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No of exceptions	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0				
Cumulative total	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
>2 Amber, >4 Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
No of exceptions in quarter	G		1		G	↑	0	G	↔	0			
The bank balance remainder above zero throughout the month.													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF09	Closing current account bank balances are maintained below £200,000 - maximum number of exceptions per month (PF02.4)	To ensure investment income is maximised										2 exceptions in year	4 exceptions in year
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
No of exceptions	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1				
Cumulative total	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	2				
>2 Amber, >4 Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
No of exceptions in quarter	G		0		G	↓	1	G	↔	1			
The account balance exceeded £200k on one occasion due to the receipt of a large unexpected business rates payment into the bank account late in the day after the final cashflow transactions for the day had been conducted. The bank balance remained under £200k for rest of the month.													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PF10	Internal Audit Payroll Risk (Annual Report) (PF03.1)	To ensure that payroll processes and systems are audit compliant and include sufficient controls to mitigate the risk associated with provision of a payroll service										Medium/ Low	Medium/ Low
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
High = Red	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual				

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

HR&OD

Measure	Description										Purpose		2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
HR01	Percentage of HR queries (calls) resolved upon first interaction with HR Helpdesk (<i>measure 1</i>)										To ensure timely provision of HR support		61.76%	55%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Percentage	83%	85%	64%	88%	90%	85%	87%	77%	88%					
<55% Amber, <50% Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
2013/14 Year to date	83%	84%	81%	83%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	-	-	-		
<55% Amber, <50% Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
Quarterly average	G	-	81%	G	↑	88%	G	↓	84%					
HR First line resolution of Helpdesk calls for December remains high.														

Measure	Description										Purpose		2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
HR02	Number of course places offered against plan (<i>measure 2</i>)										To ensure timely delivery of planned training courses		100%	100%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Percentage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%					
<100% Amber, <90% Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
2013/14 Year to date	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-		
<100% Amber, <90% Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					
Quarterly average	G	-	100.00%	G	↔	100.00%	G	↔	100.00%					
2 NBC staff also attended other OWD courses during the month of December, including one who attended a course in Cambridge														

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

ICT

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
IT01	Resolution of reported incidents (<i>measure 1</i>)											To ensure the service delivers its promises of responding to pre agreed timescales to incidents that are presented. Based on VQSM report of % of calls fixed within agreed timescales. This may need to be reviewed once LGSS converge systems but in the meantime NBC assumes all calls will continue to be processed through the VQSM system.	96.00%	96.50%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
2012/13 data	96.7%	96.0%	96.4%	95.6%	96.8%	96.2%	96.7%	97.0%	98.0%	94.8%	86.8%	80.3%		
2013/14			95.8%	95.7%	95.3%	96.3%	95.3%	94.0%	95.1%					
<96.5% Amber, <90% Red			A	A	A	A	A	A	A					
2013/14 Year to date	-	-	95.80%	95.76%	95.60%	95.78%	95.68%	95.40%	95.36%	-	-	-		
<96.5% Amber, <90% Red			A	A	A	A	A	A	A					
Quarterly average	A		95.8%	A	↓	95.7%	A	↓	94.8%					

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
IT02	Annual Customer Satisfaction (<i>measure 2</i>)											Full and detailed analysis of perception of the service from the end users view point.	SOCITM survey	5.93%
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
<5.93 Amber, < 5.88 Red	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	5.94	Annual					
								G						

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
IT03	Service Availability (<i>measure 3</i>)										To measure the availability of the ICT service to users during core working hours (excluding planned outages & scheduled downtime). For clarity core hours are Monday to Friday 08:00 – 17:00.	99.95%	99.95%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100.00%	99.99%	99.48%	99.97%	99.95%	99.99%	99.99%				
<99.95% Amber, <96% Red			G	G	A	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100.00%	99.99%	99.82%	99.86%	99.88%	99.90%	99.91%	-	-	-	
<99.95% Amber, <96% Red			G	G	A	A	A	A	A				
Quarterly average	G	100.00%	A	↓	99.81%	G	↑	99.98%					

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Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Insurance

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
INS01	Liability decisions (<i>measure 1</i>)										To ensure decisions on liability claims made and communicated to claimant/representatives in accordance with Civil Procedure (CP) Rules.	90%	93%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage	58%	83%	79%	100%	87%	94%	100%	100%	88%				
<93% Amber, < 90% Red	R	R	R	G	R	G	G	G	R				
2013/14 Year to date	58%	70%	72%	76%	78%	81%	84%	85%	86%	-	-	-	
<93% Amber, < 90% Red	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R				
Quarterly average	R		72%		A	↑	92%	G	↑	98%			

For the past 2 years the Borough Council has obtained insurance broking services from Aon Ltd.

The services provided include a limited claims handling function, which primarily covers Employers Liability claims and any claims where there may be a potential conflict of interests.

Due to a change in personnel at Aon, the action date on one of the employers liability claims was missed and a decision on liability not made by the due date of the 27 December 2013.

Aon have now reviewed the documentation previously provided by the Council, with a view making a decision on liability by the 10 January 2014, as per the extended period allowed by the third party solicitors.

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
INS02	Claim lifecycle (<i>measure 2</i>)										To ensure that non-complex material damage and motor own-damage claims are managed to reduce timescales (from receipt of claim to closure) and settled in appropriate time from first notification to LGSS Insurance.	60 days	60 days
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Average days	-	-	-	-	-	42	-	-	-	-	-	-	
>60 days Amber, >65 days Red	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	G	No activity	No activity	No activity				
2013/14 Year to date	-	-	-	-	-	42	42	42	42				
>60 days Amber, >65 days Red						G	G	G	G				
Quarterly average	None settled			G		↑	42	None settled					

No claims were due for settlement (at 60 days) in December.

Measure	Description	Purpose									2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target	
INS03	Annual external insurer audit (currently Travellers) (<i>measure 3</i>)	To ensure robust procedures and controls are in place. That decision making is robust and defensible and that the process is fair and consistent.									TSP 92%	TSP > 90%	
Reported Annually		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<90% Amber, <85% Red		Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	G	Annual			
<p>The auditor concluded that claim handling undertaken by NBC/LGSS during 2012/13 is to a "excellent" standard supported by the 97% technical service proficiency (TSP) result.</p> <p>LGSS continue to maintain the high standards noted during previous audit visits, management of the caseload remains in very capable hands.</p>													

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Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Legal

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG01a	Client Satisfaction Questionnaires (<i>measure 1</i>)										To ensure that all clients receive an end of file client satisfaction survey after the closure of a file	98%	98%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100%	100%			100%	100%	100%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	No activity	No activity	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	-	-	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G			G	G	G				
Quarterly Average	G		100.00%		G ↔		100.00%		G ↔		100.00%		
22 NBC files were closed in the month of December, double the tally for November.													

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Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG01	Customer satisfaction with service received (<i>measure 2</i>)										To ensure that the end of file client satisfaction survey is returned with a rating of satisfactory or higher	90.00%	85.00%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage								100%	100%				
<85% Amber, <80% Red			No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date								100.00%	100.00%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red													
Quarterly Average	No responses yet			No responses yet			G ↑		100.00%				
Only one response was received in December, which is disappointing. Whilst this process is a voluntary option for clients, this is really not a significant enough return to be a useful guide as to performance levels and client satisfaction. However, we are working with colleagues within NBC to improve the return rate and we are confident that this will very shortly be reflected in a significant improvement in the return rate, which will in turn allow us to focus on any areas where we can improve client satisfaction and service delivery.													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG02	Lexcel quality mark is retained on an annual basis (<i>measure 3</i>)	To ensure that the Lexcel quality mark is retained on an annual basis										Yes/No	Yes/No
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
			Yes										
NO = Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarter Result	G		Yes		G		Yes		G		Yes		
The 2013 Lexcel Assessment took place on the 19th and 20th June. LGSS Law were successful in retaining their accreditation. The next assessment will take place in June 2014.													

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Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG03	Processing of applications for land acquisitions to Land Registry (<i>measure 4</i>)	Applications for registration to be submitted to Land Registry within 2 months of completion										95.00%	95.00%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage	-	-											
<95% Amber, <90% Red			No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity	No activity				
2013/14 Year to date													
<95% Amber, <90% Red													
Quarterly Average	No acquisitions			No acquisitions			No acquisitions						
No acquisitions have completed since the 1st June 2013													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG04	Drafts for PDAs leases and transfer (<i>measure 5</i>)	Drafts to be prepared and provided to client officers within 15 working days of full instructions										75%	75%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage	-	-	-	100%	100%	100%		100%	100%				
<75% Amber, <70% Red			No activity	G	G	G	No activity	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			-	100%	100%	100%	-	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<75% Amber, <70% Red				G	G	G		G	G				
Quarterly Average	No completions			G			100%	G			100%		
<p>10 Right to Buys, 1 Buy Back Purchase, 1 Share Sale, 1 Sale and 1 Lease. All drafts were submitted within the 15 day deadline keeping the 100% record of LGSS in this area.</p>													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG05	Improvement to the Gazetteer (<i>measure 6</i>)	Gazetteer hub to disseminate information to the Utilities companies and Fire Service										Achieve National Standard	Achieve National Standard
Reported Annually	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
			Bronze	Bronze	Bronze	Bronze	Bronze	Silver	Silver				
NO = Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarter Result	G		Yes			G			Yes				
<p>LGSS continue to achieve the national standard and are currently at silver standard.</p>													

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
LEG06	UPRN within 3 days of receiving notification (<i>measure 7</i>) (UPRN= Unique Property Reference Number)											Ensure that Planning are provided with the UPRN	100%	99%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Percentage			100%	83%	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%					
<99% Amber, <95% Red			G	R	R	G	G	G	G					
2013/14 Year to date			100%	91%	89%	92%	95%	96%	97%	-	-	-		
<99% Amber, <95% Red			G	R	R	R	R	A	A					
Quarterly Average	G		100%	R	↓	90%	G	↑	100%					
7 requests were received in December and 100% were processed within the 3 day target. The year to date target has moved from red to amber after the technical problems encountered earlier in the year.														

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
47 LEG07	EIR information to be provided in line with the statutory requirements (<i>measure 8</i>) (EIR = The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 provide public access to environmental information held by public authorities)											Ensure that the EIR is responded too within the statutory timeframe	100%	99%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Percentage			100%		100%	100%			100%					
<99% Amber, <95% Red			G	No activity	G	G	No activity	No activity	G					
2013/14 Year to date			100%		100%	100%			100%					
<99% Amber, <95% Red			G		G	G								
Quarterly Average	G		100%	G	↔	100%	G	↔	100%					
There was one request in December														

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner
None to report		

Payroll & Recruitment

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PAY01	Payroll Accuracy (<i>measure 1</i>)										To determine the accuracy of the payroll by calculating the percentage of payment corrections required as a percentage of total pay bill.	98.00%	98.00%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			99.98%	99.96%	95.06%	99.97%	100%	100%	100%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	A	G	G	G	G				
Year to date			99.98%	99.97%	98.29%	98.70%	98.94%	99.11%	99.23%	-	-	-	
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarterly Average	G		99.98%	G	↓	98.23%	G	↑	99.99%				
No major incidents													

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PAY02	Percentage of payroll control accounts reconciled each month (<i>measure 2</i>)										To validate that the payroll control account reconciliations are being undertaken on a monthly basis.	98%	98%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarterly Average	G		100%	G	↔	100%	G	↔	100%				
Accounts are reconciled in the month following payroll.													

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PAY03	Percentage of statutory returns submitted on time and without significant recall (<i>measure 3</i>)										To ensure accurate and timely submission of statutory returns in accordance with external submission deadlines.	100%	100%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100%	100%	13%	100%	100%	100%	100%				
<100% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	R	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	75%	81%	84%	87%	88%	-	-	-	
<100% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	R	R	R	R	R				
Quarterly Average	G		100.00%	R	↓	72.00%	G	↑	100.00%				

All statutory returns have been submitted on time for December. It should be noted that the full-year KPI target of 100% will not be achieved due to the issues encountered in August.

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PAY04	Percentage of third party payments paid on time (<i>measure 4</i>)										To ensure timely payment of all third parties in accordance with contractual terms	98%	98%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarterly Average	G		100%	G	↔	100%	G	↔	100%				

All third party payments paid on time (17 in November)

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PAY05	Percentage of Variable Payroll Claim forms processed in accordance with the Annual Payroll Schedule. Applies only to correctly completed and authorised claim forms submitted by the specified payroll deadline. <i>(measure 5)</i>	To ensure variable payroll claims are processed in accordance with the Annual Payroll Schedule.										98%	98%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly Percentage			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%				
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<98% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarterly Average	G	100%	G	↔	100%	G	↔	100%					
All claims were processed in accordance with schedule (268)													

01

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Procurement

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PROC01	Increase in contracted expenditure as a percentage of total influencable spend (non-pay spend) (<i>measure 1</i>)	To minimise inefficient off-contract spend.										Baseline	New KPI. Target TBA 2014
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Baseline			95%	93%	99%	91%	99%	96%	97%				
<10% Amber, <5% Red	Baseline year - New KPI. Target TBA 2014												
2013/14 Year to date			95%	94%	96%	95%	95%	96%	96%	-	-	-	
Quarterly Result	Baseline year												

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PROC02	All procurement exercises via LGSS (over £75k) to be undertaken through the e-procurement portal unless specific request from NBC to do otherwise. (<i>measure 2</i>)	To maximise the benefits of using e-procurement and to maintain reliable audit trails.										100%	100%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly percentage			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%				
<100% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
2013/14 Year to date			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	-	-	-	
<100% Amber, <95% Red			G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
Quarterly Result	G		100%	G	↔	100%	G	↔	100%				

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PROC03	Increase in % of savings achieved through the use of corporate contracts and collaborative arrangements (where procurement have identified the opportunity). (<i>measure 3</i>)	To minimise inefficient off-contract spend.										Baseline	New KPI. Target TBA 2014
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Baseline			0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%				
<10% Amber, <5% Red	Baseline year - New KPI. Target TBA 2014												
2013/14 Year to date			0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%	-	-	-	
Quarterly Result	Baseline year												

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
PROC04	Increase in % of contract spend with local suppliers (as defined in current Local Supplier Policy) where economically justifiable. (<i>measure 4</i>)	To maximise the support of local supplier market.										Baseline	New KPI. Target TBA 2014
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Baseline			62%	94%	63%	81%	72%	72%	76%				
<5% Amber, 0% Red	Baseline year New KPI. Target TBA 2014												
2013/14 Year to date			62%	78%	73%	75%	74%	74%	74%	-	-	-	
Quarterly Result	Baseline year												

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Revenues & Benefits

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV01	RB01 Speed of processing Benefit Claims (<i>measure 1</i>)											Combines RB02 & RB03 to give an overall average of time taken to process claims. It is based on the total number of days taken to process new claims plus the total taken to process changes in circumstances, divided by the sum of new claims and changes. It was previously a National Indicator but is maintained now mainly to have an overview of processing times. All speed of processing time indicators are monitored daily and daily updates forwarded to team leaders to facilitate work allocation.	9.9 days	11 days
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Average	13.88	14.12	11.29	8.61	8.98	9.12	10.92	11.98	12.34	-	-	-		
Monthly Target	<i>12.00</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>11.00</i>	<i>11.00</i>	<i>11.00</i>	<i>11.00</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>11.40</i>	<i>10.00</i>	<i>7.00</i>		
Monthly RAG	R	R	A	G	G	G	G	G	A					
2013/14 Year to date	13.88	14.01	12.94	11.61	11.08	10.77	10.79	10.93	11.08	-	-	-		
Year to date target	<i>12.00</i>	<i>12.00</i>	<i>11.70</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>11.40</i>	<i>11.40</i>	<i>11.40</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>11.40</i>	<i>11.00</i>		
Year to date RAG	R	R	R	A	G	G	G	G	G					
Quarter Average	R	12.94	G	↑	8.88	A	↓	11.74						
<p>December: We have been focusing on clearing older work items and this does have an impact on the speed of processing. However this does not impact on the overall expected performance at year end. This combined indicator captures the average time to process all claims and reflects well on the service. 2013/14 has been particularly challenging in terms of delivery of reforms and increased workloads. This workload increase is under analysis to ascertain the reason for such increases. However for some-time and particularly since the financial downturn we are seeing a large number of customers entering part time or casual employment, leading to increased workloads due to the frequency of changes to income levels and circumstances.</p>														
Rolling 12 month average	9.99	10.12	10.16	10.21	10.04	9.90	9.79	9.72	9.75					
Rolling 12 month RAG: >11 days Amber, >12 days Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G					

Measure	Description										Purpose		2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV02	RB02 Speed of processing New Benefit Claims (<i>measure 2</i>)										Measures the time taken to process new claims for benefits from the date the claim is first received in the office to the date the claim is determined. The indicator is reported as an average [Days taken divided by number of new claims].		21.06 days	19 days
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar		
Monthly Average	23.15	30.04	29.86	27.16	24.50	24.37	22.16	21.89	21.58	-	-	-		
Monthly Target	22.00	19.00	18.00	17.00	17.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	18.00	17.00	17.00	17.00		
Monthly RAG	A	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R					
2013/14 Year to date	23.15	25.96	27.07	27.10	26.60	26.29	25.74	25.29	24.92	-	-	-		
Year to date target	22.00	20.50	19.70	19.00	18.60	18.50	18.40	18.40	18.30	18.20	18.10	18.00		
Year to date RAG	A	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R					
Quarter Average	R		27.07		R	↑	25.47	R		↑	21.88			
<p>5 demonstrated across the Revenues and Benefits service indicators performance within the service remains high. This includes the improved performance in assessing new claims, which was impacted in the early part of the year due to a large number of staff leaving the Council's new claims team in April 2013. The service is now reviewing all cases within the first week of receipt, alongside managing the changes in circumstance caseload effectively. Any delays in processing new claims are predominantly the result of customers delaying responding to requests for further information. It is worth adding that the service have been managing increased caseloads in 2013/14, alongside delivering efficiencies in order to meet national funding reductions across local Government. Again workload volumes are being monitored and will be reported regularly, alongside any insight available relating to the cause of these increased volumes of work.</p>														
Rolling 12 month average	21.08	21.70	22.41	23.37	23.87	24.19	24.38	24.27	24.28					
Rolling 12 month RAG: >19 days Amber, >21 days Red	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R					

Measure	Description					Purpose					2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV03	RB03 Speed of processing Changes of Circumstances (<i>measure 3</i>)					Measures the time taken to process notifications of changes in circumstances of claimants. These changes may be received from the claimant or from third parties such as the DWP. The time is measured from the first date of contact notifying of a change to the date the claim is assessed and any change of entitlement determined. The indicator is reported as an average [days taken divided by the number of changes]					8.46 days	9 days
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Monthly Average	12.05	12.25	9.61	6.73	7.24	7.62	9.60	10.87	11.27	-	-	-
Monthly Target	10.00	10.00	9.50	9.50	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	9.00	8.50	8.00	8.00
Monthly RAG	A	R	A	G	G	G	A	A	R			
2013/14 Year to date	12.05	12.16	11.12	9.75	9.24	8.98	9.07	9.28	9.48	-	-	-
Year to date target	10.00	10.00	9.80	9.80	9.60	9.50	9.40	9.40	9.60	9.20	9.10	9.00
Year to date RAG	A	A	A	G	G	G	G	G	G			
Quarter Average	R		11.12	G	↑	7.16	A		↓	10.57		
<p>Changes of circumstance levels have decreased over the last two months, although performance will be impacted by the removal of older cases the performance for year end remains on target. We will see an increase in volumes during the next few months, however the service plans for this period and therefore do not anticipate any problems meeting its responsibilities. Alongside the workload increases, complexity within the service has also increased in 2013/14 following the implementation of a new Local Council Tax Support scheme, and national reforms that introduced the benefit cap, reductions to benefit for those under – occupying social sector housing and the enhanced Discretionary Housing Payments scheme. All of these reforms have been successfully managed alongside meeting the ongoing day to day demands across services,</p>												
Rolling 12 month average	8.56	8.66	8.67	8.64	8.40	8.26	8.13	8.08	8.15			
Rolling 12 month RAG: >9 days Amber, >12 days Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G			

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV04	RB10 LA Error (<i>measure 4</i>)										This measures the level of local authority error in making assessments of benefit claims. If the level of LA Error is above the government threshold of 0.48% the amount of subsidy that the council receives from the government is reduced. If the level is below the threshold then subsidy is received at the rate of 100%.	0.27%	0.40%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly (cumulative)	0.21%	0.26%	0.35%	0.38%	0.36%	0.33%	0.31%	0.32%	0.33%	-	-	-	
>0.40% Amber, >0.47% Red	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
End of quarter result	G		0.35%	G	↑	0.33%	G	↓	0.33%				
The rate has increased slightly, however overall performance is comfortably within the threshold. This will continue to be monitored closely.													

Measure	Description										Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV05	RB11 Fraud Sanctions (<i>measure 5</i>)										This measures, the number of sanctions obtained by the Counter Fraud team either alone or in partnership with the DWP. The sanction may be a Caution, an Administrative Penalty or a Conviction. The indicator is reported as a basic number but may be calculated, per thousand of caseload for benchmarking purposes.	89	94
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Number of sanctions	8	7	0	11	17	13	12	18	16				
Year to date	8	15	15	26	43	56	68	86	102	-	-	-	
Year to date target	8	15	22	30	38	46	54	62	70	78	86	94	
<94 Amber, < 89 Red	G	G	R	R	G	G	G	G	G				
End of quarter result (year to date)	R		15	G	↑	56	G	↑	102				
There has been a drive to focus on bringing cases to conclusion, we continue to have success with Housing Allocation Fraud and subletting.													
Rolling Year	88	94	85	81	96	102	106	116					
<94 Amber, < 89 Red	R	G	R	R	G	G	G	G					

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV06	CS13 - % of calls in the contact centre answered (To be reviewed after initial transition October 2013) (<i>measure 7</i>)	A customer satisfaction survey is carried out on the penultimate working day of each month.										85.06%	85.78%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly percentage	69.35%	80.23%	74.07%	78.70%	85.68%	79.21%	71.24%	65.07%	78.51%				
<85.78% Amber, <80% Red	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC	NBC				
Year to date	69.35%	74.79%	74.55%	75.59%	77.61%	77.87%	76.93%	75.44%	75.78%	-	-	-	
Quarterly average	NBC Managed			NBC Managed			NBC Managed						
<p>The customer contact centre (telephony) continues to be managed via the generic team at Northampton. The project to assess the separation of the revenues and benefits element of the team continues. The expected live date for the new teams at both NBC and LGSS is January 2014, however LGSS and NBC will be discussing the timing of any change as we move towards year – end. In real terms there is no pressure to separate the teams before April 2014 and therefore a pragmatic approach will be taken to ensure that both NBC and LGSS maximise performance in the last quarter of 2013/14.</p>													

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV07	RB05 Council Tax Collection Rate (including Council Tax Benefit) (<i>measure 8</i>)	The percentage of council tax collected in the year it is due including that received by way of grant for the awarding of council tax benefit. (RB05) The grant is not included in the traditional national indicator. The calculation is the percentage of cash collected plus rebates, against the total collectible debt.										97.57%	96.50%
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
Monthly (cumulative)	23.51%	31.33%	39.04%	47.00%	54.79%	62.66%	70.63%	78.53%	86.21%				
Target	23.00%	31.00%	39.00%	47.00%	55.00%	62.00%	70.00%	78.00%	86.00%	94.00%	96.00%	96.50%	
+/- 0.2% profiled target	G	G	G	G	R	G	G	G	G				
End of quarter result (year to date)	G	39.04%		G	↑	62.66%	G	↑	86.21%				
<p>Performance is on target, however we have undertaken the student review a month earlier than last year, and this has resulted in an additional debit of £339k being raised. This has the effect of reducing the collection rate for a short period. However the rate will improve again upon receipt of a valid student exemption or discount. Without this additional debit the collection figure would have been 86.78% at the end of December 2013.</p>													

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target		
REV08	RB06 Council Tax Collection Rate (<i>measure 9</i>)											The percentage of council tax collected during the year in which it is due (RB06) The calculation is the percentage of cash collected against the total collectible debt	97.15%	96.20%		
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar				
Monthly collection	11.26%	9.16%	9.00%	9.35%	9.04%	9.18%	9.26%	9.19%	9.20%							
Monthly target	11.20%	9.10%	9.10%	9.10%	9.10%	9.20%	9.40%	9.50%	9.30%	9.30%	2.00%	0.80%				
Year to date	11.26%	20.43%	29.42%	38.72%	47.72%	56.85%	66.08%	75.22%	84.12%	-	-	-				
Target	11.20%	20.30%	29.40%	38.50%	47.60%	56.80%	66.00%	75.20%	84.30%	93.40%	95.40%	96.20%				
+/- 0.2% profiled target	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	A							
End of quarter result (year to date)	G		29.42%		G		↑		56.85%		A		↑		84.12%	
<p>Performance is on target, however we have undertaken the student review a month earlier than last year, and this has resulted in an additional debit of £339k being raised. This has the effect of reducing the collection rate for a short period. However the rate will improve again upon receipt of a valid student exemption or discount. Without this additional debit the collection figure would have been 84.44% at the end of December 2013.</p>																

Measure	Description											Purpose	2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target		
REV09	RB04 NNDR Collection Rate (<i>measure 10</i>)											The percentage of national non-domestic rates collected during the year in which it is due. (RB04) The calculation is the percentage of cash collected against the total collectible debt	99.06%	99.40%		
Reported Monthly	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar				
Monthly collection	12.28%	9.87%	9.43%	9.33%	8.97%	10.14%	9.69%	9.43%	10.39%							
Monthly target	11.55%	11.00%	9.50%	9.50%	9.40%	9.40%	9.40%	9.50%	9.30%	9.30%	1.00%	0.50%				
Year to date	12.28%	22.30%	31.78%	41.16%	50.00%	60.09%	69.76%	79.17%	89.79%	-	-	-				
Target	11.55%	22.50%	32.10%	41.60%	51.00%	60.40%	69.80%	79.30%	88.60%	97.90%	98.90%	99.40%				
+/- 0.2% profiled target	G	R	R	R	R	R	A	A	G							
End of quarter result (year to date)	R		31.78%		R		↑		60.09%		G		↑		89.79%	
<p>Collection rates have improved for Business Rates over the month of December and we are now slightly above target. During January, February and March we will be concentrating on chasing those who have fallen behind on their instalments to ensure the collection rate is still on target at the end of the financial year.</p>																

Measure	Description	Purpose										2012/13 Baseline	2013/14 Target
REV10	RB07 Inactive Debt (<i>measure 11</i>)	This measure gives the percentage of the corporate debt that is not being actively managed (RB07) The definition of actively managed debt is one that is being dealt with in accordance with the recovery timetable[Here there will be a link/reference to the timetable]										4.40%	4.50%
Reported Monthly Rate (cumulative)	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	
	3.38%	3.12%	2.94%	4.53%	4.33%	1.22%	3.93%	3.65%	4.12%				
Target	6.50%	6.30%	6.10%	5.90%	5.70%	5.50%	5.30%	5.10%	4.90%	4.70%	4.60%	4.50%	
+/- 1% profiled target	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G				
End of quarter result (year to date)	G		2.94%	G	↓	1.22%	G	↑	4.12%				
This remains within target. The total inactive debt figure has increased this month, primarily due to an £85.5k Asset Management invoice, which has been queried and remains unpaid. We also have an amount of former tenant arrears going through a new process of investigation prior to referral to a debt collection agency. If successful this would reduce the need for our collection agencies to be involved at an early stage of the process.													

Major Incidents during month	Remedial Action Taken	Resolution Owner

Northampton Borough Council Overview and Scrutiny



Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 January 2014

Briefing Note: Northampton Borough Council Street Lighting

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current responsibility for street lighting within the Borough is split between the County (mainly street lighting adjacent to the public highway) NBC Corporate Assets funded from the General Fund (mainly street lighting in Parks or within the boundary of the Councils buildings such as the Guildhall, Community Centres, Library's, etc) and street lighting on Council housing land funded from the HRA.
- 1.2 As the question of street lighting from this committee has been directed to the Head of Landlord Services this briefing note focuses on street lighting located on Housing Land.

2 Context

- 2.1 Historically, all street lighting within the Borough was the responsibility of the Borough Council. At this time, repairs of these lights were organised through the County Council under a County wide agreement with East Midlands Electricity.
- 2.2 Those arrangements changed around the early 1990s which resulted in the County becoming responsible for all street lighting, including lighting on land associated with Council Housing, parks and other corporate assets.
- 2.3 A further change occurred around 2003 when the County outsourced the installation, replacement and maintenance of all street lighting to WS Atkins and then to May Gurney. More recently street lighting under the County Council's responsibility has been contracted under a PFI scheme with Balfour Beatty.
- 2.4 It is at this time that the ownership responsibility of street lighting has become blurred with what appears to be a split between Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough Council Corporate Assets and Northampton Borough Council Housing Department.

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

3. Current Position

3.1 Investigations carried out in recent months reveal that due to the number of changes of responsibility over the years a comprehensive inventory of all street lights installed within the Borough is no longer in place.

3.2 Notwithstanding the above the County possess a GIS mapping system of the street lighting that they believe falls under their responsibility. In the main those lights are located next to the public highway.

3.3 Knowledge and the records of the location of lighting on council housing land is restricted to individual Borough Council staff members. This was identified as an unsatisfactory state of affairs during the middle part of 2013. Consequently, work has been on-going to capture that knowledge and the records held by individual members of staff onto the Borough's GIS mapping system and at the time this paper was prepared was almost complete.

3.4 The next steps are as follows:

- An exercise to compare data held on the County Council's GIS system with the records held by the Borough Council will be carried out and any duplication of records will require subsequent discussion regarding ownership with the County.
- Identification of the lights for which the Borough council has responsibility which are on Housing land and those which are not and therefore those which are the responsibility of the Council's Corporate Asset Management Team and those which are the responsibility of Landlord Services.
- A lighting location verification survey is to be included in regular and planned Estate Walkabout Surveys to determine the accuracy of each individual record and to record the existence of lights that have not previously been recorded.
- The new data is to be recorded on the Borough Council's GIS System and recorded on to the Housing Service's Asset Database.
- The future responsibility of NBC's street lighting on Housing Land will be included in discussions regarding the management arrangements between the Council and the ALMO; the Council may decide to retain responsibility for all street lighting, including lighting located on Housing Land, to avoid the risk of service failures due to split responsibilities.

The above action will ensure the records held will facilitate the future timely repair, maintenance and replacement of street lighting on Council land.

Northampton Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 The creation of an accurate database of all street lighting in the Borough and the identification of the body responsible for maintenance and replacement will take approximately 12 months to complete.












5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That the report be noted.

Report Author: Richard Birchett, Head of Landlord Services

Date: 13 January 2014

Key

-  Exceptional or over performance
-  On or exceeding target
-  Within agreed tolerances
-  Outside agreed target tolerance
-  Good to be low: Better
-  Good to be low: Worse
-  Good to be High: Better
-  Good to be High: Worse
-  No change
-  No target available
-  No data available

Corporate Performance - All Measures Report

The report details the full list of performance measures monitoring the Council's Corporate Plan by corporate priority and is published quarterly.

The measures contained within this report are monitored on a monthly, quarterly, half yearly or four monthly basis.

Performance is reported against the latest report period and then by overall performance year to date (YTD). Overall YTD performance is monitored against the current profiled target and helps us to keep track of the progress towards meeting the annual target.




Performance comparison against the same time last year is highlighted where comparative data is available.



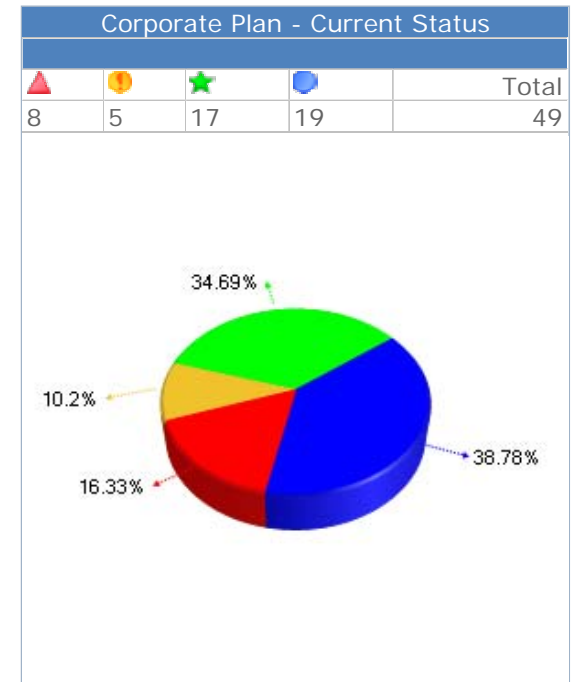
NBC Corporate Plan

The table below has been included for informational purposes, and shows the current year to date performance of each element of the Corporate Plan. The Alerts are generated from the PIs which each Service Area aligned to the 8 priorities during the service planning process.

The score shown against the Corporate Plan corresponds to the performance tracker definition. (<65% = Red, 65% to 85% Green, >85% Blue)

Corporate Plan	
	Score YTD
Putting Northampton back on track	84 % 
Theme	
	YTD
Your Town - A town to be proud of	
You - How your Council will support and empower you and your community	

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Your Town



Your Town															
Polarity	Measure ID & Name	Jul 13	Period	Aug 13	Period	Sep 13	Period	Oct 13	Period	Overall perf. to date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Outturn Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Bigger is Better	AST13 Appropriate disposals agreed at Corporate Asset Board progressed effectively	112.50	★	112.50	★	112.50	★	112.50	★	112.50	★	100.00	-	➡	112.50
Conditional contracts were exchanged for a significant value disposal in month. Corporate Asset Board met on 3 October and new proposals for additional disposals were considered and supported.															
Bigger is Better	AST05a External rental income demanded against budgeted income (M)	94.92 %	🟡	95.06 %	🟡	95.31 %	🟡	95.09 %	🟡	95.09 %	🟡	100.00 %	100.00 %	🔴	97.69 %
We are below the agreed target due to vacant properties. These properties are being marketed and we do have some Legal agreements to be completed over the coming weeks which should improve the figure. We have completed 2 Leases in the last month that have rent free periods of 6 months.															
Smaller is Better	AST05b % commercial rent demanded within the last 12 months (more than 2 months in arrears) (M)	1.26 %	★	1.24 %	★	1.24 %	★	1.33 %	★	1.33 %	★	3.75 %	3.75 %	🟢	3.43 %
Any invoices older than 28 August are classed as being 2 months in rental arrears.															
The figure has increased slightly this month but we expect the figure to fall slightly next month following the clearance of some rent arrears in early November.															
Bigger is Better	AST12 % achieved where return on (sub group) investment properties meets agreed target rate (M)	91.25 %	★	91.25 %	★	91.25 %	★	91.25 %	★	91.25 %	★	90.00 %	90.00 %	🔴	91.25 %
The percentage of properties meeting or performing above the agreed target return for October is 91%.															
The target of 90% is met for October through active management of the investment portfolio and the completion of sales of assets approved for disposal by cabinet or by the cabinet member responsible for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning.															
Currently, the vacancy rates for NBC's investment property are very low due to a proactive approach to property management. This approach has resulted in a higher turnover of tenants for some assets in some locations. Property reviews are on-going and underperforming assets are reviewed and may be considered for reinvestment or disposal.															
Smaller is Better	BV012_12r Ave. no. of days/shifts lost to sickness for rolling 12 month period (M)	10.13	★	10.18	★	10.21	★	10.11	★	10.11	★	9.74	9.50	🟢	12.07
For the rolling 12 month period from November '12 to October '13 a performance of 10.11 days per FTE has been achieved which is consistent with August & September performance.															
	ESC01 No. of missed														

Your Town

Polarity	Measure ID & Name	Jul 13	Period	Aug 13	Period	Sep 13	Period	Oct 13	Period	Overall perf. to date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Outturn Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Smaller is Better	Bins/Boxes as a % of those collected (M)	0.0083 %		0.0069 %		0.0086 %		0.2715 %		0.0133 %		0.0200 %	0.0200 %		0.0316 %
The last 3 months reported missed bins has been 276, 3 months prior to that was 390, there has been a reduction of 29%. This is associated with the routes and rounds following reconfiguration in June.															
Bigger is Better	ESC02 % missed bins corrected within 24hrs of notification (M)	85.00 %		81.93 %		86.41 %		24.46 %		61.94 %		100.00 %	100.00 %		79.89 %
Whilst there is no KPI for rectifying missed bins within a certain timeframe, Enterprise reports these figures to demonstrate its commitment to improving the 'customer experience'.															
Bigger is Better	ESC04 % household waste recycled and composted (NI192) (M)	44.57 %		44.15 %		40.65 %		39.93 %		44.21 %		47.00 %	47.00 %		47.92 %
The month of October brings a decrease of 3.43% of KG's sent for recycling, re-use and composting in comparison to September 13. The YTD recycling performance has decreased by 2.93% in comparison to last year. The household waste residual figure has a minor adjustment of 0.54 tonnes in relation to August 13, following final confirmation from Northamptonshire County Council.															
Bigger is Better	ESC09 % of Fly Tipping incidents removed within 2 working days of notification (SO2) (M)	100.00 %		100.00 %		100.00 %		99.31 %		99.89 %		100.00 %	100.00 %		100.00 %
Flytipping continues to be collected within the reporting timeframes															
Smaller is Better	HI 01 Average time taken to re-let local authority homes (days) (M)	28.32		20.76		23.94		24.98		24.79		16.00	16.00		15.63
A noticeable rise in the number of 3 bedroom void properties was monitored during the month. There was a sharp increase in 3 bed properties being re-advertised without offer and data is being compiled into the effects of Welfare reform. No real impact was felt on Octobers average re-let times but concerns have been highlighted as the trend continues into November.															
Bigger is Better	HI 12 Rent collected as a proportion of rent owed on HRA dwellings % exc.arrears brought forward (M)	100.60 %		100.65 %		98.85 %		96.88 %		97.79 %		97.61 %	98.32 %		98.42 %
During the month of October £4,115,659 was due in rent and service charges with £3,987,338 being collected. This gives a collection rate for the month of 96.88%; while this is lower than profiled it is to some extent balanced by the better than expected collection rate in September. The year to date collection rate of 97.79% remains above the profiled target.															
Smaller is Better	HI 13 Rent arrears as a percentage of the annual debit (M)	3.40 %		3.19 %		3.36 %		3.45 %		3.45 %		3.75 %	3.64 %		3.40 %
Total current tenants rent arrears at the end of October were £1,743,825. The project debit for the year is £50,515,785; therefore arrears as a percentage of the debit are 3.45%. While this is better than the profiled target the figure is slightly higher than at this same point last year.															
Bigger is Better	NI157a % Major Planning applications determined within 13 weeks (M)	75.00 %		33.33 %		57.14 %		66.67 %		63.64 %		60.00 %	60.00 %		
In October no large scale major planning applications were determined.															

In October 3 small scale planning applications were determined, 2 of which were determined within 13 weeks of receipt.

Your Town

Polarity	Measure ID & Name	Jul 13	Period	Aug 13	Period	Sep 13	Period	Oct 13	Period	Overall perf. to date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Outturn Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Bigger is Better	NI157b Percentage of 'minor' planning apps determined within 8 weeks (M)	96.30 %		86.96 %		66.67 %		100.00 %		86.75 %		86.00 %	86.00 %		86.67 %
In October we determined 18 Minor planning applications, all of which were determined within 8 weeks of receipt.															
Bigger is Better	NI157c Percentage of 'other' planning apps determined within 8 weeks (M)	87.23 %		97.33 %		88.89 %		98.04 %		93.29 %		90.00 %	90.00 %		91.45 %
In October we determined 51 Other planning applications, 50 of which were determined within 8 weeks of receipt.															
Smaller is Better	PP06 % change in serious acquisitive crime from the baseline (M)	-4.44 %		-6.52 %		-8.95 %		-9.95 %		-9.95 %		-5.83 %	-10.00 %		6.36 %
The North East sector remains the area with the smallest reduction in SAC, due to a 4.3% increase in domestic burglary since March 2013. SAC has reduced by 9.9% (-405 crimes), just three crimes above the annual target. Whilst there was a notable increase in volume from Sept (218) to October (301), volume remains lower than previous years. Vehicle crime has reduced by 16.6% (-374), whereas Domestic Burglary has reduced by only 0.7% (-11 crimes) this year.															
Smaller is Better	PP09 Overall crime figure for the period (M)	1,419.00		1,468.00		1,326.00		1,428.00		9,880.00		11,840.00	20,068.00		11,729.00
Overall crime is used as a proxy measure for crime relating to drugs and alcohol misuse. There's been a notable reduction of 9.2% (-1828 crimes) in overall crime in Northampton, exceeding the target set. This is primarily due to good reductions in violence, thefts from vehicles and low level stealing offences.															
Smaller is Better	PP14 % change in Violence Offences (M)	-7.29 %		-9.04 %		-10.60 %		-11.82 %		-11.82 %		-2.92 %	-5.00 %		-10.85 %
To date there has been an 11.9% reduction in violence (419 less crimes), exceeding the annual target, continuing the consistent downward trend. Sector breakdown shows reductions in every sector.															
Bigger is Better	PP21 % Licensing enforcement checks completed (M)	83.33 %		100.00 %		89.47 %		100.00 %		94.31 %		80.00 %	80.00 %		
100% of the 18 checks planned took place during October.															
Bigger is Better	PP22 % Hackney Carriage and private hire vehicles inspected which comply with regulations (M)	80.00 %				65.79 %		66.67 %		67.70 %		65.00 %	65.00 %		
6 out of the 9 taxis inspected this month comply with regulations.															
Bigger is Better	CH10 No. of unique visits to Museum Pages (M)	4,460		3,425		4,178		5,046		28,705		25,860	43,000		
After a weak start to the year, the number of visits to the museum website pages has been steadily increasing and we are now 11% ahead of the cumulative target.															

Your Town - (non monthly measures)

Polarity	Measure ID & Name	3 reporting Periods Ago	Period	2 Reporting Periods Ago	Period	Previous Reporting Period	Period	Latest Reporting Period	Period	Overall perf. to Date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Annual Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Smaller is Better	ESC05 % of Land and Highways assessed falling below an acceptable level - Litter (NI195a) (4M)	2.83 %		2.17 %		2.00 %		0.33 %		0.33 %		4.00 %	4.00 %		2.83 %
Monitoring has been undertaken in line with the contract specification and Enterprise' performance for the year remains above target															
Smaller is Better	ESC06 % of Land and Highways assessed falling below acceptable level - Detritus (NI195b) (4M)	6.00 %		4.67 %		3.00 %		1.00 %		1.00 %		6.00 %	6.00 %		6.00 %
Monitoring has been undertaken in line with the contract specification and Enterprise' performance for the year remains above target															
Smaller is Better	ESC07 % of Land and Highways assessed falling below acceptable level - Graffiti (NI195c) (4M)	1.33 %		1.17 %		3.00 %		0.67 %		0.67 %		0.33 %	0.33 %		1.33 %
Monitoring has been undertaken in line with the contract specification and Enterprise' performance for the year remains above target															
Smaller is Better	ESC08 % of Land and Highways assessed falling below acceptable level - FlyPosting (NI195d) (4M)	0.33 %		0.17 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.33 %	0.33 %		0.33 %
Monitoring has been undertaken in line with the contract specification and Enterprise' performance for the year remains above target															
Smaller is Better	ESC10 Level of quality against an agreed standard - Open Spaces & Parks - Litter (%) (Q)	0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		4.00 %	4.00 %		0.82 %
Level of quality is in line with agreed standard															
Smaller is Better	ESC11 Level of quality against an agreed standard - Open Spaces & Parks - Detritus (%) (Q)	3.23 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		6.00 %	6.00 %		4.10 %
Level of quality is in line with agreed standard															
Smaller is Better	ESC12 Level of quality against an agreed std - Open Spaces & Parks - Graffiti & Fly Posting (%) (Q)	3.23 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		0.00 %		3.33 %	3.33 %		0.00 %
Level of quality is in line with agreed standard															
	NI154 Net														

Your Town - (non monthly measures)

Polarity	Measure ID & Name	3 reporting Periods Ago	Period	2 Reporting Periods Ago	Period	Previous Reporting Period	Period	Latest Reporting Period	Period	Overall perf. to Date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Annual Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year	
Smaller is Better	additional homes provided (A)		»	323.00		423.00		516.00		516.00		641.00	100.00		423.00	
<p>The economic recession has resulted in the pace of development across the Borough slowing significantly. The number of houses built has improved on last year's total, but is still very low. New starts on Greenfield sites requiring significant infrastructure have been non-existent. Sites that had started development previously have been finished off, with only a couple of significant new ones replacing them. There is the capacity available on sites with planning permission to deliver a lot more housing than has been delivered, however the housing industry has decided to not take up the capacity that exists. Assumptions last year about the ability of the market to pick up from what appeared to be an all time low were misplaced. Although there has been slight improvement, the housing market has not significantly improved on last year.</p> <p>The Council is actively engaging with developers encouraging them to work to submit planning applications for development. The Council has taken a pragmatic approach to S.106 obligations, deferring, delaying or reducing requirements. The Council has also worked with partners to seek to secure additional funding to support new infrastructure.</p> <p>Estimated targets for delivery of houses for the next few years have been dramatically reduced. LAA targets are substantially below those formerly required to meet Regional Spatial Strategy delivery targets.</p>																
Bigger is Better	NI159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites (A)		»	47.06		46.45		48.72		48.72		100.00	100.00		46.45	
<p>Although Government has taken some action to stimulate the housing market, current built rates fall well below the regional target, despite the housing land supply being available. The Localism Act has led to the revocation of the regional plan targets. A new target for West Northamptonshire will have to be set through the development plan process. This will be done through the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy scheduled for adoption in Autumn 2013. The targets for delivery will be reduced significantly, although still challenging to meet given the current low level of activity in the housing market and the need to provide some substantial pieces of infrastructure to open up sites for development.</p>																
Smaller is Better	NI170 Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years (A)		»	0.52 %		0.49 %		0.72 %		0.72 %		1.00 %	0.78 %		0.49 %	
<p>Performance is better than the target set - this has largely been down to the development of some older industrial land. There has been a large increase in derelict land due to school sites now being vacant for more than 5 years since closing on the mid to late 2000s.</p> <p>The Council will be seeking to work with West Northamptonshire Development Corporation and the Homes and Communities Agency to channel more public investment into derelict and vacant land to assist in regenerating areas of decline, particularly near to the town centre in the Enterprise Zone and also ensuring that delivery to meet housing needs occurs.</p>																
Bigger is Better	PP07 % change in anti social behaviour victimisation (A)		»	8.50 %		11.32 %		11.32 %		11.32 %		10.00 %	10.00 %		8.50 %	
<p>The partnership exceeded its goal of reducing ASB incidents (-10%), reducing incidents by 11.3%. Work focussing on ASB for 2013-14 will aim to improve service delivery, therefore improve public confidence and satisfaction, through the implementation of agreed service standards for victims and the piloting of ASB screening tools and restorative practices across agencies. The CSP will also aim to improve communications strategies to improve public perceptions of safety, as this is the key performance issue for ASB, greater emphasis will be placed upon enviro-crime and the cleanliness of the borough, as this is a key contributory factor towards individuals personal feelings of safety.</p>																
Bigger is Better	TCO01 Number of events delivered in partnership: Town Centre (Q)		7		3		8		7		15		6	12		9
<p>Major events included the Music Festival, Heritage Weekend and the Cricket Club Parade.</p>																
Bigger is Better	TCO02 Number of events delivered in partnership: parks and open spaces (Q)		1		0		3		10		13		4	6		11
<p>The major events included the Alive and Waterside Festivals in July.</p>																
Bigger is Better	TCO05n Town Centre footfall (Q)		3,506,188		3,151,684		3,954,207		3,981,950		7,936,157		7,845,091	14,369,805		8,005,195
<p>In the period July - September, footfall fell by 2.8% in comparison with 2012. Footfall in the quarter was 3,981,950.</p>																



You															
Polarity	Measure ID & Name	Jul 13	Period	Aug 13	Period	Sep 13	Period	Oct 13	Period	Overall perf. to date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Outturn Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Bigger is Better	BV008 Percentage of invoices for commercial goods & serv. paid within 30 days (M)	98.03 %	🟡	92.92 %	🔴	98.16 %	🟡	96.76 %	🟡	94.76 %	🔴	98.52 %	98.53 %	🔴	99.29 %
The LGSS team are up to date with all invoice processing and continue to engage with NBC Heads of Service to drive improvements to this performance indicator in line with the action plan LGSS is managing.															
Bigger is Better	CS05 Percentage satisfied with the overall service provided by the Customer Service Officer (M)	94.19 %	🟢	79.03 %	🔴	93.70 %	🟢	90.91 %	🟢	91.25 %	🟢	90.00 %	90.00 %	🔴	94.82 %
Overall 91% of customers surveyed were satisfied with their contact experience in October.															
Bigger is Better	CS13 Percentage of ALL calls into the Contact Centre answered (M)	86.33 %	🟡	90.29 %	🟢	85.12 %	🟡	78.33 %	🔴	83.12 %	🔴	90.00 %	90.00 %	🔴	87.24 %
<p>The overall contact centre performance reduced by 4.6% in October over September.</p> <p>October was a busier month and calls increased by 1739</p> <p>Emails increased by 242 in October over September</p> <p>Target was not achieved across the contact centre 78.5% against a target of 90%.</p> <p>Individual targets were not met by any of the 9 service areas. Housing repairs was the best performing at 88.6% of calls answered</p> <p>LGSS testing continues and there was an increase in Revs and Bens calls over the previous month, the impact of the reminders played a huge part in the overall CC performance</p> <p>This is the second month of LGSS testing which will continue to impact statistics of the next couple of months</p> <p>Average wait times increased in October over september by 1 min 6 seconds to an average wait of 3 minutes 38 seconds</p>															
Bigger is Better	CS14 One-Stop shop: Percentage of all cust. waiting less than 15 mins (excl. licensing) (M)	82.32 %	🟡	83.49 %	🟡	72.52 %	🔴	83.48 %	🟡	81.68 %	🟡	90.00 %	90.00 %	🔴	87.15 %
<p>Overall OSS performance reduced by 10% in October over September.</p> <p>October was a busier month and footfall increased by 712 over September</p> <p>Email contact increased by 242 in October over September</p> <p>Target was achieved for appointments, 97.64% against a target of 90%.</p> <p>Targets were not achieved on the drop in services bringing the overall percentage to 83.48%</p> <p>Average wait times decreased in October over September by 6 seconds to an average wait of 5 mins 57 seconds.</p>															

You																
Polarity	Measure ID & Name	Jul 13	Period	Aug 13	Period	Sep 13	Period	Oct 13	Period	Overall perf. to date	YTD	Current Profilled Target	Outturn Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year	
Smaller is Better	HI 07 Number of households living in B&B accommodation (M)	28		16		18		19			19		40	40		41
There were 19 households in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of this month and 40 in Council Stock temporary accommodation.																
The team continue to use B&B as a last resort, however the decrease in the number of properties available and subsequent increased wait for permanent accommodation, particularly 2 bed properties in both the social and private sectors, is having an impact on the number of people, and length of time spent in temporary accommodation.																
Bigger is Better	HI 09 Homeless households for whom casework advice resolved their situation (M)	190		176		215		117			1,387		875	1,500		874
Although the figures show we are still on track to meet the annual target, it is becoming increasingly difficult to prevent homelessness as there is a lack of accommodation within the private sector and landlords/families are becoming less willing to negotiate to keep people in their homes due to financial pressures.																
Awaiting DHP information in order to provide full details																
Bigger is Better	LT01 Total Visits to Leisure Centres (M)	80,388		75,396		71,781		74,285			534,068		537,025	902,190		537,025
Above target for October with continued growth in Swimming Lessons & Junior Activities over half term																
Bigger is Better	LT02 Total No. of people enrolled in swimming program (M)	2,573		2,573		2,740		2,740			2,740		2,650	2,800		2,349
Above target after a strong Summer offer which included holiday activities in the Swimming Lesson package																

You - (non monthly measures)

Polarity	Measure ID & Name	3 reporting Periods Ago	Period	2 Reporting Periods Ago	Period	Previous Reporting Period	Period	Latest Reporting Period	Period	Overall perf. to Date	YTD	Current Profiled Target	Annual Target	Perf. vs. same time last year	YTD value same time last year
Smaller is Better	CEX01 Total number of Local Government Ombudsman First Enquiries (cases completed) (O)	12		14		11		17		17		6	12		11
<p>There has been changes to the way the LGO investigates complaints.</p> <p>The increase is due to the LGO making decisions (without going to a an investigation) on the Council's stage 1 and 2 responses providing that the original enquiry has been fully explored and answered accordingly.</p>															
Smaller is Better	CEX02 Av no. of days taken to deal with LG Ombudsman First Enquiries (cases completed) (O)	21.17		19.64		5.82		5.24		5.24		19.50	19.50		20.36
<p>Due to process changes made by the Ombudsmans office, the performance of this measure is inflated. This is due to some cases not requiring investigation by NBC as the outcome has already been determined by the LGO.</p>															
Smaller is Better	HI 10 Total number of people sleeping rough on the streets (A)			4		15		5		5		5	5		15
<p>The rough sleepers count was completed on 22nd November and the figure submitted to Homeless Link was 5.</p> <p>This is an improved figure on last years count and this is because of the alternative options presented to the clients by the outreach team.</p> <p>Additionally NBC has entered into a partnership to work together on a No Second Night Out Project. This scheme aims to assist those new to rough sleeping and to re-connect people who have arrived in Northampton from another area. Two previously entrenched rough sleepers are now using the facilities provided by this project.</p>															
Smaller is Better	HI 33 Percentage of non-decent council homes (NI 158)(A)			51.74 %		50.70 %		48.90 %		48.90 %		46.00 %	41.00 %		50.70 %
<p>The March 2013 result relates to the survey completed during the first quarter of 2012/13.</p> <p>Performance has shown an improving trend over the last three years with results of 51.7%, 50.7%, and 48.9% respectively.</p> <p>Further improvement is expected for the June 2013 survey, with a 41% target being set.</p>															
Bigger is Better	HI 36 Number of affordable homes delivered (NI 155)(Q)	78		30		28		33		61		100	290		82
<p>12 units are shared ownership 21 units are affordable housing</p>															
Smaller is Better	HR32 Stonewall Equality Index rating (A)					210		199		199		200	190		210
<p>In the Equality Index 2013 a ranking of 199 was achieved against a target of 200. This was an improvement of 11 places when compared with 2012</p> <p>Our Community Engagement and Diversity policies were given positive feedback</p> <p>In terms of focusing on improvement next year we were given the following advice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuing the community engagement work - Developing a staff network - Procurement review <p>Our aim next year is to get a 25 point increase, and further improve our ranking.</p>															

Overview & Scrutiny Committee



SCRUTINY PANEL Improving the towns parks

January 2014

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APPENDICES

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Appendix B	Core Questions
Appendix C	Conditions for the maintenance of the parks
Appendix D	Findings from the site visits to a variety of the town's parks
Appendix E	Findings from the desktop research exercise
Appendix F	Precis of the findings of the survey undertaken regarding Parks in Peterborough
Appendix G	Headline Results from the Survey regarding Haringey's s parks

Foreword

The objective of this Scrutiny Panel was:

- To improve community engagement within the town's parks

The required outcomes being:

- To make recommendations for the improvement within the town's parks that better meet the needs of the community
- To ensure that every park and open space within the town achieves its potential
- To inform the terms of reference and membership of the Park Management Committees

The Scrutiny Panel was made up from Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillors David Palethorpe (vice-chair), Tony Ansell, Geraldine Davies, Jamie Lane, Phil Larratt, Matt Lynch, Sivaramen Subbarayan and myself, together with Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Racecourse, Nicola Hedges, Chair, Friends of Delapre Abbey, Anne Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park and Mavis Wilmshurst, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks who we co-opted onto the Scrutiny Panel.

A short sharp review took place between June and November 2013. A series of interviews with a number of expert advisors were held and a variety of community groups and organisations provided written information to inform the review. Representatives from the Panel attended various meetings of the Northampton Forums and received their responses to the core questions. The Scrutiny Panel undertook a number of site visits to various parks around the town. Desktop research was undertaken by the Scrutiny Officer, the findings of which informed the Review.

As part of its monitoring regime, Overview and Scrutiny will review this report six months after Cabinet has received it.

A great interest was shown by a large number of the public, organisations and forums, I would like to thank everyone who took part in this piece of work.



Councillor Elizabeth Gowen
Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors David Palethorpe (vice-chair), Tony Ansell, Geraldine Davies, Jamie Lane, Phil Larratt, Matt Lynch, Sivaramen Subbarayan and Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Racecourse, Nicola Hedges, Chair, Friends of Delapre Abbey, Anne Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park, and Mavis Wilmshurst, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, who sat with me on this Review.
- Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member (Environment), Ruth Austen, Environmental Services Manager (Environmental Protection), and Jason Toyne, Park Ranger, Northampton Borough Council, Mick Tyrell, Partnership Manager, Partnership Unit, John Farrell, Assets Director and Kieron King, Operations Manager, Enterprise Management Services (EMS), for attending a meeting of the Panel and providing a response to the core questions.
- Northampton Friends' Forum, Northampton Federation of Residents Association, Northamptonshire Football Association and various Friends Groups for providing a written response to the Panel's core questions.
- The Northampton Community Forums for welcoming members of the Panel to their meetings and providing a response to the core questions of the Panel.
- Brian Hoare, David Huffadine-Smith and Max Lang for taking the time to address the Scrutiny Panel regarding the town's parks
- Various individuals for taking the time to complete the on-line survey regarding the town's parks.
- Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, NBC, for her support to this Review.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to improve community engagement within the town's parks.

Following approval of its work programme for 2013/2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to include a review of the town's parks in its work for 2013/2014. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. A short, sharp review commenced in June 2013, concluding in November 2013.

A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Elizabeth Gowen (Chair); Councillor David Palethorpe (Vice Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Geraldine Davies, Brendan Glynane, Phil Larratt, Jamie Lane, Matt Lynch and Sivaramen Subbarayan. Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course, Nicola Hedges, Chair, Friends of Delapre Abbey, Ann Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park and Mavis Wilmshurst, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks were co-opted to the review.

This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority 2 – invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods and corporate priority 3 – celebrating our heritage and culture.

The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Context:
 - Parks and Open Space Strategy for Northampton
- Evidence from the Cabinet Member for Environment
- Evidence from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
- Evidence from ward Councillors with key parks within their wards
- Evidence from Friends Groups/User Groups
- Evidence from the Park Rangers
- Evidence from Enterprise Management Services (EMS)
- Desktop research
- Best practice data
- Site visits

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Scrutiny Panel established that: -

Communication

- 6.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that Friends Groups consist of volunteers and communication is key. Communication could be enhanced by improved links with Northampton Borough Council's website and Friends Groups' websites, coupled with improved communications with Enterprise Management Services (EMS). The Scrutiny Panel noted and welcomed the good communication mechanisms that the Friends of West Hunsbury Parks had with EMS.
- 6.1.2 It was highlighted that the Friends of West Hunsbury Parks currently has excellent communication mechanisms with Northampton Borough Council and various local groups.
- 6.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel realised that the town's parks are not identifiable on Internet search engines, such as Google or on satellite navigation software. The usefulness of adding parks as points of interest was emphasised.
- 6.1.4 The work undertaken by the various Friends Groups is pivotal in the success in many of the Council's parks. The contribution from Friends Groups is also recognised with various different external funders which plays a key part in whether a park acquires funding from external Agencies.
- 6.1.5 The evidence gathered highlighted the need for the publicity of facilities available in the town's parks; together with a programme of community events.
- 6.1.6 The evidence gathered also emphasised the need for improved signage and visitor information in the town's parks; in particular the updating of the brown tourist signs.

Observations – Town's Parks

- 6.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that Northampton is proud of its parks, noting their diversity.

6.1.8 The Scrutiny Panel concluded that “one size does not fit all parks within Northampton” and initiatives and ideas from parks could be monitored in order for them to be mirrored in others.

6.1.9 The parks and open spaces detailed in the desktop research exercise are wide-ranging and comprise a number of facilities. A number being similar to those on offer at Northampton’s parks, including:

- Aviary
- Sensory Gardens
- Formal gardens
- Memorial gardens
- Historical features and interpretation boards
- Seating
- Bowling green, tennis, football, cricket
- Pitch and putt
- Play areas
- Tea rooms/ refreshments
- Car parking
- Ponds
- Adventure areas
- Nature reserves

6.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that a lot of the town’s parks have a number of historical features, including one of the town’s parks with a registered battle field, one of only 44 in the country, and another with a registered ancient monument.

6.1.11 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that Northampton Race Course looked pristine.

6.1.12 The Northampton Race Course is used by over 25 local football clubs. The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the introduction of an on-line booking process for sports pitches would be a useful tool for Sports Clubs.

On a Saturday morning, in excess of 2,000 people use the facilities on the Race Course.

- 6.1.13 Perception of Northampton Race Course is that it is not safe. To alleviate such perceptions the need for well-maintained lighting and pathways was highlighted.
- 6.1.14 The Scrutiny Panel was delighted to hear that Delapre Park had been awarded Green Flag status in July 2013.
- 6.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that Bradlaugh Fields, a wildlife park, has won a high number of awards.
- 6.1.16 It was noted that Abington Park is the town's central "show" park.
- 6.1.17 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that Victoria Park, a "through" park has a recently established Friends Group.
- 6.1.18 From the results of the on-line survey, the Scrutiny Panel recognised that the town's three key parks are used most frequently by respondents.
- 6.1.19 The majority of individuals and groups that provided evidence are aware of local play areas in their neighbourhood.
- 6.1.20 The Scrutiny Panel noted that it was felt that the lack of paths and the feeling of insecurity at Eastfield Park are important factors in limiting the use of the park. However, the Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that discussions are taking place with the Friends Group and Enterprise Management Services (EMS).
- 6.1.21 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel observed a wide range of parks and open spaces in Northampton, noting the tranquillity and prettiness of Delapre Abbey and its various features. The special features and attractiveness of the other Parks and open spaces visited was also noted.
- 6.1.22 It was agreed that the responsibility for maintenance of the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park should be clarified.
- 6.1.23 The Scrutiny Panel felt that there is a need for funding for restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments, such as the Hill Fort.

Key facilities in the town's Parks

6.1.24 Key facilities used by respondents to the Scrutiny Panel's core questions include:

- Cafés
- Museum
- Play areas
- Lakes within the town's parks
- Sports equipment
- Skate park at Beckett's Park
- Fitness Trail at Abington Park
- Model Engineers Railway
- Historic attractions
- Using parks for sport and walking

6.1.25 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that users of the town's park require refreshments or a social hub. It is realised that cafes and such facilities make a valued contribution to park life.

6.1.26 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that access and safety are important to park users. Toilets were also highlighted as a key facility. It was felt that a set standard for toilet facilities in the town's parks is required. The Scrutiny Panel noted that a Friends Group manages and maintains the toilets within its local park. However, there is currently some doubt as to whether this arrangement will continue in the future.

6.1.27 The Scrutiny Panel was disappointed that the gents' toilets located in the upper park, Abington Park are not currently open. It also noted that some of the fitness equipment, located in the lower park, requires maintenance work.

6.1.28 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel was disappointed to note the poor condition of the car park located at West Hunsbury Country Park.

Additional Facilities in the Town's Parks

6.1.29 The Scrutiny Panel concluded that it would be an advantage to install picnic areas, such as those with a wooden roof, and brick barbeque areas in some of the town's parks. Brick barbeques (BBQs) could be used to house disposable BBQs. The installation of litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage are seen as imperative if brick BBQs were put in.

- 6.1.30 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that disposable BBQs used in parks can create litter problems and felt that the introduction of a deposit scheme would act as a deterrent. Disposal BBQs that are used directly on the grass can often leave an unsightly black patch. The installation of permanent hard standings for BBQs in the town's parks was suggested.
- 6.1.31 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the provision of additional picnic areas in the town's parks would attract more visitors.
- 6.1.32 The Scrutiny Panel was concerned regarding lidless litter bins in some parks and the problems encountered during windy conditions. It highlighted the need for litter bins with lids in some parks, such as West Hunsbury Country Park, to prevent wildlife from accessing the contents of the bins. General litter and dog waste bins are placed throughout West Hunsbury Country Park, but not together. It was agreed that litter bins located near to the children's play areas are often too small.
- 6.1.33 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that it would be beneficial to users for litter and dog bins to be located next to each other in the town's parks.
- 6.1.34 It was concluded that the mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park should clearly state that the whole area should not be mowed, only the informal walkways.
- 6.1.35 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the need for the Park Rangers to be easily accessible by the provision of either a central office located near to the park or the offer of regular surgeries. The need for their contact details to be widely published was also recognised. The Scrutiny Panel emphasised the need for the Park Rangers Team to be provided with suitable, adequate administrative support.
- 6.1.36 The Scrutiny Panel agreed that the pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park needed to be cleaned out.
- 6.1.37 The Scrutiny Panel considered the hard standing tennis courts, located in Northampton Race Course, could warrant being refurbished.
- 6.1.38 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the responses received to its core questions, noting the suggestions regarding additional facilities and services that might bring people into the town that would not ordinarily use them, including:
- BBQ area / Picnic area
 - Improved Parking / Disabled parking facilities

- Cafes
- Additional seating
- Facilities for disabled people
- Additional sports facilities
- More facilities for older teenagers
- Additional appropriate play equipment
- Nature trails
- Presence of uniformed personnel, such as Police Officers
- Fountains / water features etc. Guided walks / orienteering trails / way-marked walks
- More events
- Improved access and facilities for people with disabilities, for example, walkways suitable for wheelchair use, appropriate changing facilities
- Indoor sports facilities
- Park Ranger's office located on site
- Additional bins and improved litter clearance
- Improved signage
- More toilet facilities, with set opening times

6.1.39 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the perceived barriers that may deter people from using the town's parks, such as:

- Lack of parking and toilets in some parks
- Anti-social behaviour and not feeling safe
- Disabled access
- Insufficient benches/seating
- Maintenance of parks and littering
- Dog fouling and dog control

Role of Park Management Committees

6.1.40 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that when a Friends Group is already in existence there is a danger that a Park Management Committee could duplicate its role. It also acknowledged that a Park Management Committee might be too big for some parks, such as the West Hunsbury Parks and smaller parks.

6.1.41 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the smaller parks and open spaces that do not warrant a Friends Group must not be forgotten.

6.1.42 The Scrutiny Panel supported the scheme called 'Dog Watch' that is organised by Northamptonshire Police recognising that promotion of this scheme would be useful to smaller parks and open spaces.

- 6.1.43 Co-option to Park Management Committees is supported.
- 6.1.44 The Scrutiny Panel noted the usefulness and benefit of an annual Park Forum.
- 6.1.45 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that it is important that Park Management Committees are not lead by Northampton Borough Council and are of an appropriate size to enable decision making to take place. All members of the Park Management Committees should have a good understanding of their park.
- 6.1.46 It was considered that Terms of Reference for the Park Management Committees should be agreed from the outset.
- 6.1.47 From the evidence gathered, the Scrutiny Panel perceived that the key roles of the Park Management Committees should include:
- Producing, implementing and maintaining Management and Action Plans
 - Park management
 - Monitoring role
 - Organising events and activities
 - Oversee the maintenance of parks
 - Provide support to voluntary groups
 - To seek and maintain funding for the parks, where appropriate, work with Friends Groups in securing external funding
 - Promoting of the park and its facilities
 - Create Strategies for the local management of the parks, linking to the Council's wider policies and strategies
 - Debating issues, such as how volunteers in the town's park can work alongside the maintenance contract
 - A listening role
 - Intelligence gathering

Membership of Park Management Committees

- 6.1.48 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to receive responses to its core questions in respect of suggestions for membership of the Park Management Committees:

- Friends Groups
- Ward Councillor(s)
- Park User Group representatives and individuals that manage areas of parks
- Park users
- Park personnel
- Young people representatives
- Representatives from Agencies
- Representative from Enterprise Management Services (EMS); for example, Manager/Team Leader
- Representative from Northampton Borough Council
- Representatives from Sports Clubs
- Residents' Associations

6.1.49 It was acknowledged that it is expected that Friends Groups will run alongside and link into Park Management Committees.

6.1.50 From the desktop research exercise, the Scrutiny Panel noted that Peterborough City Council and the London Borough of Haringey had undertaken surveys asking residents for their views on the city and borough's parks. Headlines are details at paragraphs 4.3.9 and 4.4.8. The results of the surveys informed the management plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations: -

The purpose of this Scrutiny Panel was to improve community engagement within the town's parks.

Scrutiny Panel 1 recommends to Cabinet:

Communication

7.1.1 Communication with Friends Groups is enhanced by improved links with Northampton Borough Council's webpage and Friends Groups' webpages, coupled with improved communications with Enterprise Management Services (EMS); such as the sharing of maintenance schedules for parks.

- 7.1.2 A programme of community events is produced in association with all stakeholders, published on the Council's webpage and promoted to the community.
- 7.1.3 Information relating to facilities available in the town's parks is accessible on the Council's webpage.
- 7.1.4 A uniform on-line booking process for sports pitches and events is introduced.
- 7.1.5 The town's parks are clearly identifiable on Internet search engines, such as Google, and highlighted as points of interest on satellite navigation software, such as Garmin and Tom Tom.
- 7.1.6 Obsolete signs, in place around the town's parks, are removed and all relevant signage and visitor information is in situ and is clearly visible.
- 7.1.7 The Highways Agency is asked to update its brown tourist signage that details points of interest across the town; specifically ensuring that signage for the town's parks is clear.
- 7.1.8 The Scheme "Dog Watch" organised by Northamptonshire Police is promoted.

Town's Parks

- 7.1.9 Cabinet is asked to ensure that where appropriate, initiatives and ideas from parks are monitored in order for them to be mirrored in others.

Park Action Plans

The following recommendations are indicative of the content of the Park Action Plans and the appropriate timescales should be assigned. However, the Scrutiny Panel acknowledges that a number of the recommendations are long term recommendations.

- 7.1.10 Appropriate sources of funding are identified for the restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments.
- 7.1.11 Lighting and footpaths are well maintained in the town's parks and upgraded where necessary.
- 7.1.12 Footpaths are installed in the town's smaller parks to improve disabled access.

- 7.1.13 Responsibility for the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park is clarified.
- 7.1.14 The mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park and Cherry Orchard, Hardingstone, clearly states that the whole area is not be mowed, only the informal walkways.
- 7.1.15 The pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park is cleaned out and the condition of other water features in the town's parks is assessed and appropriate action taken.
- 7.1.16 Where present in the town's parks, hard standing tennis courts are refurbished.
- 7.1.17 Where possible, litter and dog bins are located side by side in the town's parks.
- 7.1.18 Bins with lids/slots are installed in some parks, such as West Hunsbury Country Park, to prevent wildlife accessing the contents of the bins.
- 7.1.19 Picnic areas and permanent hard standings for BBQs are installed in some of the town's parks, together with litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage.
- 7.1.20 A set standard for the provision of toilet facilities within the town's parks is introduced.
- 7.1.21 The opening times of the toilet facilities within the town's parks are advertised.
- 7.1.22 A funding pot is identified to be allocated to Community Groups that maintain toilets within their local park.
- 7.1.23 In order to make contact with the Park Rangers easier, a central office, located close to the town's Parks, or the provision of regular advertised surgeries in the park is provided.
- 7.1.24 Administrative support is provided for the Park Rangers to enable them to spend more time in the town's parks.
- 7.1.25 Contact details and a report of the activities of the Park Rangers are published on the Council's webpage and promoted to all stakeholders.
- 7.1.26 The role of the Park Ranger is clarified and details disseminated to all stakeholders.

Key roles of the Park Management Committees

7.1.27 The key roles of the Park Management Committees includes:

- Producing, implementing and maintaining Management and Action Plans
- Park management
- Monitoring role
- Organising events and activities
- Oversee the maintenance of parks
- Provide support to voluntary groups
- To seek and maintain funding for the parks, where appropriate, work with Friends Groups in securing external funding
- Promoting of the park and its facilities
- Create Strategies for the local management of the parks, linking to the Council's wider policies and strategies
- Debating issues, such as how volunteers in the town's park can work alongside the maintenance contract
- A listening role
- Intelligence gathering

The Scrutiny Panel highlights the need for meaningful and outcome driven terms of reference for the Park Management Committees and has produced a draft terms of reference, as attached at Appendix (i) for Cabinet's consideration.

7.1.28 In addition to Park Management Committees, an annual Park Forum is held.

Membership of Park Management Committees

7.1.29 Membership of the Park Management Committees consists of around ten members, typically drawn from representatives from:

- Friends Groups
- Ward Councillor(s)
- Parish Council representatives where appropriate
- Park User Group representatives and individuals that manage areas of parks
- Park users
- Park personnel
- Young people representatives
- Representatives from Agencies
- Representative from Enterprise Management Services (EMS); for example, Manager/Team Leader

- Representative from Northampton Borough Council
- Representatives from Sports Clubs
- Residents' Associations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7.1.30 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of Scrutiny Panel 1 – Improving the Town’s Parks

1 Purposes

- 1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to improve community engagement within the town’s parks.
- 1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

- 2.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2013/2014, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to include a review of the town’s parks in its work for 2013/2014. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. A short, sharp review commenced in June 2013, concluding in November 2013.
- 2.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Elizabeth Gowen (Chair); Councillor David Palethorpe (Vice Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Geraldine Davies, Brendan Glynane, Phil Larratt, Jamie Lane, Matt Lynch and Sivaramen Subbarayan. Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course, Nicola Hedges, Chair, Friends of Delapre Abbey, Ann Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park and Mavis Wilmshurst, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks were co-opted to the review.
- 2.3 This review links to the Council’s corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority 2 – invest in safer, cleaner neighbourhoods and corporate priority 3 – celebrating our heritage and culture.
- 2.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council’s corporate priorities:
 - Context:
 - Parks and Open Space Strategy for Northampton
 - Evidence from:
 - Cabinet Member for Environment
 - Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
 - Ward Councillors with key parks within their wards

- Friends Groups/User Groups
- Park Rangers
- Enterprise Management Services (EMS)
- Desktop research
- Best practice data
- Site visits

2.5 Parks and open spaces are integral to the cultural life of Northampton; they provide breathing space and are crucial to the successful functioning of Northampton's communities. People pass by open space; walk through it on the way to work or the shops, or stop to enjoy it. Parks offer places to relax and enjoy the natural environment away from the stresses of everyday life, for children to play, and for sport and recreation. In addition they play host to a range of events, festivals and educational activities on both a small and large scale, which attract local and regional audiences.

2.6 The unique geography and historic development of Northampton has created a legacy of parks, open spaces and green areas. The natural and man-made corridors following the Nene Valley its tributaries and the Grand Union Canal is a valuable asset. These corridors together with the legacy of its historical landscapes of Abington Park, Delapre Park, Becketts Park, Hunsbury Hill Country Park and the Racecourse provide a diverse collection of superb green assets, which contribute to a sense of place, ever important in a changing town.

2.7 Northampton's open spaces include 20 identified Parks, 496 Amenity Green spaces, of which over 50 are larger than 1 hectare, 111 Natural or Semi Natural areas, over 100 children or young peoples equipped play spaces, 178 Outdoor Sports Facilities, 23 Allotment Sites and 45 cemeteries and churchyards. These make up over 1,670 hectares of green space. There is significant variation in distribution, quality and accessibility of green spaces, which this Strategy begins to address.

Green Flag Award Scheme

2.8 The Green Flag Award Scheme began in 1996. The reported objective of the Green Flag Award Scheme is to encourage the provision of good quality public parks and green spaces that are managed in environmentally sustainable ways. It is further reported that the Green Flag Award helps to create public recognition of good quality green spaces and in doing so, aims to rebuild people's confidence in them.

- 2.9 Standards for the Green Flag Award are high. Each application is considered on its own merits. It is recognised that every green space has its own unique character and this is reflected in the assessment process. All sites receive a personal visit from highly experienced judges who assess suitability for an Award. Judging is conducted on a points system.
- 2.10 Each site must have a Management Plan for it to be entered into the Award Scheme.
- 2.11 The Green Flag Award Scheme comprises eight assessment criteria which are aimed to represent all aspects of good management within a park. They were developed in consultation with a wide range of organisations to show safer environmental qualities and management together with recognising the social value of a park or green space to its area:
- A Welcoming Place
 - Healthy, safe and secure
 - Clean and well maintained
 - Sustainability
 - Conservation and heritage
 - Community involvement
 - Marketing
- 2.12 Successful parks and green spaces are eligible to fly the 'Green Flag' for one year after which they have to re-apply to retain the Award. A park or green space must maintain and improve on previous standards to be guaranteed a subsequent Award.

3 Evidence Collection

- 3.1 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data

- 3.2 [Parks and Open Space Strategy](#)

3.3 Core Questions

- 3.3.1 The Scrutiny Panel devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a cycle of meetings (Copy at Appendix B).

3.3.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Scrutiny Panel held on 5 August, 4 September and 2 October 2013.

3.3.3 Salient points of evidence:

Cabinet Member for Environment, Northampton Borough Council

- Northampton has the second largest area of parks and open spaces outside London.
- The driver is continuous improvement within the town's parks.
- As part of "Bloom", a three year plan is worked to. Northampton's parks are a key part of Northampton's Bloom entries: international category of Bloom, which Northampton had entered this year and also the British and East Midlands categories, which the town enters annually. International Bloom judging took place in Northampton on Monday 5 August 2013.
- All of Northampton's parks are diverse.
- Delapre Park has been awarded Green Flag status.
- The Alive Concert took place at Delapre Abbey.
- Bradlaugh Fields, which is a wildlife park, has won a high number of awards.
- Abington Park is the town's central "show" park.
- Victoria Park is a "through" park. It has a recently established Friends Group.
- The Cabinet Member for Environment envisaged that Park Management Committees will consist of Friends Groups plus representatives from Agencies. It is hoped that when Park Management Committees are established and successful that due consideration will be given to devolving budgets to them.
- It is expected that Friends Groups will run alongside and link into Park Management Committees.
- Park Management Committees will be set up initially for the town's three key parks. It is intended to roll out the initiative further once Committees are established and successful. Consideration could also be given to trialing shadow arrangements for the other parks.

3.3.4

Park Rangers' Service, Northampton Borough Council

Key points of evidence:

- Britain in Bloom suggested the benefit of introducing an orienting trail in Abington Park.
- Individual Rangers spend most time in their own parks
- (Abington, Delapre and Racecourse) but all know and enjoy all parks
- The facilities most used in the town's parks include:
 - Play areas
 - Lakes
 - All Sports equipment / pitches / exercise equipment / bowling greens /sports courts / MUGAs
 - Formal and informal garden areas
 - Café/Tea Rooms
 - Bandstand
 - Paths and marked walkways
 - Model Engineers Railway
 - Open areas for informal recreation / dog walking / exercise
 - Historic attractions (Delapre Abbey / Abington Museum / Hunsbury Hill Fort etc.)
 - Toilets (where available)
 - Car Parks
 - Use as a thoroughfare
- Facilities and services that might bring people into the town that would not ordinarily use them include:
 - BBQ area / Picnic area
 - Parking / Disabled parking
 - Additional sports facilities such as Basketball court at Abington
 - Additional appropriate play equipment, for example, at Delapre
 - Activities for the older youth / Youth Shelter
 - Fountains / water features etc. - somewhere children can splash about in
 - Guided walks / orienteering trails / way-marked walks
 - More events
 - Improved access and facilities for people with disabilities, for example, walkways suitable for wheelchair use, appropriate changing facilities

- Indoor sports facilities
- Ranger's office / room where they can be contacted and information displayed
- Additional bins and improved litter clearance
- More toilet facilities
- Barriers that could prevent people from using the town's parks:
 - Lack of parking
 - Anti- social behaviour (ASB) and fear of crime
 - Disabled access
 - Lack of toilets in some areas of parks
 - Poor access to public transport routes for some parks
 - Insufficient benches / seating areas
 - Concerns about ASB associated with disused buildings
- Services that park users want from the town's parks:
 - More activities for the youth especially older teenagers
 - Events
 - Disabled access on the play area, for example, swings and roundabouts which they can access and enjoy
 - More bins and benches
 - Picnic area
 - More toilets
 - Additional uniformed presence of Rangers / Wardens / PCSOs / Police to be seen to addressing anti-social behaviour
 - Events for particular groups
 - Improved maintenance of parks – sufficient experienced staff to provide
 - Good level of care to park
- Key representatives to the Park Management Committees could include:
 - Park Ranger
 - Friends of Groups
 - Local Councillor
 - Charge hand
 - Local children's Centre lead
 - Community groups lead
 - Park user group representatives e.g. pony club, model engineers, water ski club, angling club, sports clubs
 - People who manage areas of the park e.g. Angling club at Delapre, Cafe
 - owners / operators
 - Asset management (NBC)
 - Enterprise

- Key roles of the Park Management Committees:
 - Take people's views into account
 - Be objective
 - Key priority be the good of the park and the promotion of it's use
 - Listen to other views

3.3.5 Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection)

Salient points of evidence:

- The Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection) visits Abington Park most frequently as it is one of the closest to her home and also makes visits to a number of other parks including Delapre Abbey, Northampton Racecourse, Victoria Park and Becketts. Most visits to the parks are on foot.
- Facilities that are most used in the town's parks:
 - Play areas
 - Lakes
 - All Sports equipment, pitches, exercise equipment, bowling greens, sports courts, MUGAs
 - Formal and informal garden areas
 - Café and tea rooms
 - Bandstand
 - Paths and marked walkways
 - Model Engineers Railway
 - Open areas for informal recreation, dog walking, exercise
 - Historic attractions (Delapre Abbey, Abington Museum, Hunsbury Hill Fort etc.)
 - Toilets (where available)
 - Car Parks
 - Use as a thoroughfare
- Facilities and services that might bring people into the town's parks that would not otherwise use them:
 - BBQ and picnic area
 - Parking and disabled parking
 - Additional sports facilities e.g. basketball court at Abington
 - Additional appropriate play equipment e.g. at Delapre
 - Activities for the older youth such as a Youth Shelter
 - Improved promotion and marketing of what is available
 - Guided walks / orienteering trails / way-marked walks
 - Bigger events /events

- Improved access and facilities for people with disabilities e.g. walkways suitable for wheelchair use, appropriate changing facilities
- Indoor sports facilities
- Ranger's office or room where they can be contacted and where information can be displayed
- Wider community use of facilities
- Improved signage
- Additional bins and improved litter clearance
- More toilet facilities
- Barriers that might stop people from using the town's parks:
 - Lack of parking
 - Anti- social behaviour (ASB) and fear of crime
 - Disabled access
 - Lack of toilets in some areas of parks
 - Poor access to public transport routes for some parks
 - Insufficient benches / seating areas
 - Concerns about ASB associated with disused buildings
- Services that Park users want from the parks include:
 - More activities for the youth especially older teenagers
 - Events
 - Disabled access on the play area e.g. swings and roundabouts which they can access and enjoy
 - More bins and benches
 - Picnic area
 - More toilets
 - Additional uniformed presence of Rangers ,Wardens, PCSOs and Police Officers to be seen to addressing ASB
 - Events for particular groups and active consultation to ensure that community needs are delivered
 - Improved maintenance of parks with sufficient experienced staff to provide good level of care to park
- Key representatives to the Park Management Committees should include:
 - Local Councillor
 - Charge hand
 - Local Children's Centre lead
 - Community groups lead
 - Park user group representatives e.g. pony club, model engineers, water ski club, angling club, sports clubs
 - People who manage areas of the park e.g. Angling club at Delapre Café - owners and operators
 - Asset management (NBC)

- Enterprise
 - It is envisaged that Park Management Committees will have the ability to co-opt as required. Park Management Committees should comprise a wide representation and membership, limited to around ten. It would be useful for an annual Park Forum to be held
 - It is very important that the groups are of the appropriate size to enable decisions to be made. The groups should not be dominated by NBC
 - NBC voting power should be limited so that it less than that of representative groups
 - In order to obtain wider representation an annual park users' forum should be held to consult on action plans and involve the full range of park users
 - It is important that both people who use the parks and people who have responsibility for the management of part of parks are represented on management committees
- The role of the Management Committees should include producing action plans and implemented them.
 - It is important for representatives to the Park Management Committees to have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the Groups that they were representing.
 - Appropriate Terms of Reference should be agreed from the outset.
 - It is important that all involved are prepared to take a fair share of responsibility
 - It is important that NBC provides on-going support to the groups
 - Park Management Committees should be objective and listen to other views
 - The key priority should be the good of the park and the promotion of its use.

3.3.6 Partnership Manager, Partnership Unit

Key point of evidence:

- Northampton Borough Council sets the standard required and Enterprise Management Services allocate resources

Grounds Maintenance Contract

- Three elements to the grounds maintenance contract:
 - Grass cutting
 - Shrub/flower bed maintenance
 - Tree maintenance
- These operations are carried out in all parks and open spaces throughout the borough

Grass cutting

- Grass cutting normally takes place between the months of April and October, although weather may influence the start and finish of the mowing season
- All grass areas are litter picked before mowing takes place
- Target frequency for cuts is every four weeks
- All mowing carried out by large mowers is backed up by small pedestrian mowers and strimming, where necessary
- On completion of the mowing, all grass is blown or swept from the footpaths onto the grassed areas

Shrub and flower bed maintenance

- All shrubs are maintained to the same specification
- Shrub beds are visited on an annual basis as part of the winter works programme and receive full containment pruning operations
- The main period of shrub and shrub bed maintenance takes place between October/November until the end of March/April
- Shrub bed maintenance includes the removal of litter and weeds. Weed control includes a combination of chemical treatment and manual removal
- Shrub beds are litter picked every six to nine weeks
- Shrub maintenance includes the removal of self-set trees and shrubs from grassed areas and around the curtilage of NBC owned properties
- During the growing season, shrubs are maintained to ensure that they do not cause obstruction or damage, or present health and safety implications
- All flower beds are planted with spring and summer bedding plants

- In the autumn, all flower beds are dug, weeded, topped up with soil and manured
- Spring preparation involves digging and weeding prior to planting

Tree maintenance

- All trees are maintained to the same standards
- The standards/policies and inspection regimes relating to the trees are those which were in place prior to Enterprise Management Service (EMS) taking over the services
- Continuity is achieved by two officers at EMS who manage the trees, being the same officers that previously managed the trees on behalf of NBC
- EMS has internally allocated the same level of budgets to tree maintenance as those allocated when NBC managed the trees
- The contract deals with the general maintenance of the existing trees, which are the responsibility of NBC or maintained on behalf of NCC
- Any maintenance requested to be carried out that would not be deemed to be general maintenance would be outside the scope of the contract

Tree maintenance - NBC trees

- All arboriculture works is carried out in accordance with recognised good arboriculture practice
- Tree maintenance will only be undertaken where there is a requirement to do so
- A programme of inspections and surveys is in place
- A Tree Officer, EMS, is on call 24 hours
- There are some time restrictions on when maintenance work can be carried out, due to nesting birds and protected species
- Any complaints from residents about individual trees will be investigated by the Tree Officers and the resident informed of their findings

Tree maintenance - NCC trees (Highways)

- Highways trees on strategic and main distributor roads are inspected and work undertaken on safety grounds and to ensure visibility and prevent obstructions
- Only reactive and emergency work will be carried out on trees on other roads

Other maintenance

Play Equipment

- Equipment is inspected weekly, and includes an inspection of the equipment, plus a wider environmental inspection of the area immediately around the equipment
- Inspections include checking that all fixings and fastenings are in place, correctly fitted and tightened, lubricated as per the manufacturer's instructions and where necessary replaced where missing, damaged or worn
- Playgrounds and their surrounds are cleansed of all litter and debris including special attention being paid to dog fouling and glass

Sports Pitches

- All sports pitches are maintained to the particular governing body's standards

Aviaries

- Aviaries are maintained to the national animal welfare standards for aviaries
- Birds are fed daily with appropriate food
- Water receptacles are cleaned out daily and refilled with fresh water
- Food containers are cleaned out on a daily basis
- Daily inspections are carried out on the birds and the aviary structure
- Twice yearly inspections are carried out by a Veterinary Surgeon

3.3.7 Assets Director and Operations Manager, Enterprise Management Services (EMS)

- Abington Park is perceived the most used park within Northampton. The park offers a wide variety of attractions which ensures that a broad spectrum of the community utilise the park. Contrasting environments within the park make the site somewhat unique and a pleasurable experience for visitors.
- Facilities that are provided in the town's parks that are used the most:
 - Children's play areas

- The skate park at Becketts Park is particularly popular with teenagers
 - Fitness trail at Abington Park
- Facilities and services that would bring people into parks that might otherwise not use them:
 - Good toilet provision
 - Adequate parking
 - Adult gym equipment
 - Refreshment stands
 - Reduction in anti-social behaviour
- Barriers that might stop people from using the town's parks:
 - Anti-social behaviour
 - Lack of facilities e.g. toilets
 - Out of date and unattractive play equipment
 - Lack of parking provision can be a barrier to families with young children, the elderly or disabled people
- Services that park users want from the town's parks:
 - Public events, shows, fairs and public entertainment
- All major stakeholders should be represented on the Park Management Committees including Sports Clubs
- Key roles of the Park Management Committees:
 - Forge strategies for the local management of the parks linking to the Authority's broader policies and strategies
 - Form an important "eyes and ears on the ground" method of intelligence gathering for Officers and contractors
- The maintenance of the parks is based on a quality specification rather than a traditional set number of visits identified by the Council. The principle behind the maintenance regimes is to deploy resource as and when it is required in order to meet the desired standard. Conditions for the maintenance of the parks is attached at Appendix C
- The grass cutting schedule is flexible
- The schedule for emptying litter bins in the town's parks is once a week for the outer parks. More frequently for busier parks

- Play equipment is robust by its nature however, newer, state of the art, adventure equipment comes onto the market. The cost associated with such equipment was appreciated

3.3.8 Northampton Friends' Group Forum

3.3.8.1 Representatives from the Northampton Friends' Group Forum provided responses to the Panel's core questions. Key points:

- The responses received, in the main, made reference to the specific parks – Delapre Abbey, Eastfield Park and West Hunsbury Parks.
- General comments received regarding the town's parks referred to the fact that some parks have a number of facilities and others just a few. The importance of access and safety was highlighted.
- The need for more public toilets was suggested but it was recognised there would be a need for set opening hours. Litter bins, picnic areas and nature trails were also suggested.
- More community based events, keep fit, exercise courses, additional litter bins and seating were suggested as other services that park users would like. Respondents are aware of local play areas and felt that they are well used but, on occasions, there can be problems with vandalism and abuse of the equipment.
- Local Councillors, Council Officers, contractors responsible for maintaining the parks, Friends Groups and park users, along with different interest Groups should make up the membership of the Park Management Committees.
- All members of Park Management Committees should have a good understanding of their park.
- Friends Groups are successful. It is important that Park Management Committees do not duplicate the work of the Friends Groups. The work of the Friends Groups should be promoted.
- The role of the Park Management Committees should include the production of short, medium and long-term park-specific management plans. Progress against the plans should be monitored and revised annually.
- Park Management Committees should work closely with Friends Groups in securing external funding and should ensure that an ethos is established which is supportive and achievable.

Individuals

3.3.8.2 Individuals addressed the Scrutiny Panel regarding their views and observations regarding the management of parks within Northampton. .
Key points:

- Friends Groups have no formal recognition of their role in the parks; where appropriate the active Friends Group in a park should have their role formally acknowledged by the Council.
- Closer co-operation with the Council and Enterprise Management Services (EMS) is welcome and a number of groups are already coming to local arrangements, most groups are reluctant to formalise the structure into a 'Committee'. They instead prefer to be part of a 'Park Liaison Group', with the composition and other matters being agreed between the Council and Friends.
- Parks comes under the remit of Environment and Culture but other departments also have an interest and degree of control. An "Oversight" Panel would be useful, with representatives of Friends Groups making up the membership of Panel. The Panel should have responsibility for developing individual parks management within the borough.
- Smaller parks and open spaces that do not warrant a Friends Group must not be forgotten. Northamptonshire Police runs a scheme called 'Dog Watch' which encourages people to look out for problems whilst out walking. A recruitment drive related to this Scheme could be considered to sign up interested members of the public to keep an eye on their open spaces and report problems appropriately.
- A Parks Forum comprising Councillors, Officers, Friends Groups, Residents Associations and other interested parties, meeting twice a year would be useful.

Friends of Northampton Race Course

3.3.8.3 The Friends of Northampton Race Course provided written evidence to the Scrutiny Panel. Key points:

- The Friends Group would like to review the master plan early in 2014 to enable it to agree a clear route with all stakeholders to achieve many of the original aspirations contained within it. The support of Northampton Borough Council was requested.

- The Friends Group has devised issues regarding Northampton Race Course in relation to :
 - Maintenance
 - Aesthetics
 - Parking
 - Security (MAPS)

- **Maintenance** poor state of the Racecourse Pavilion and various outbuildings
 - “Patchy” maintenance on the play equipment
 - Vandalism to a number of the trees
 - Damage to some of the playing pitches due to parking on them
 - Cleaning of signage
 - Graffiti
 - Derelict toilets

- **Aesthetics** Poor state of the Racecourse Pavilion and various outbuilding
 - Lack of common identity around the park
 - Fencing protects the Bowling Green but also acts as a barrier to access the Pavilion and car park
 - Lighting
 - More flowers need around the key entrances
 - Co-ordination over location of facilities

- **Parking** Unauthorised parking on the park is damaging grassed areas
 - Pavilion car park is inadequate and poorly organised

- **Security** Perception is that the Racecourse is unsafe
 - A need for well-maintained lighting and clear pathways
 - Drinking of alcohol and anti-social behaviour in the Racecourse is a concern
 - Facilities that are used most in the Racecourse include:
 - Running/Jogging and general fitness
 - Football pitches
 - Bowling Greens
 - Rugby (practice) pitch, cricket pitches and tennis courts
 - Table tennis

- Additional facilities and services that would bring people into the park that might not otherwise use them:
 - Improving facilities to a higher standard
 - Updating signage and visitor information
 - Clearer fitness trails
 - Cafes
 - Clearer use of cycling and demarcation with pedestrian routes
 - Additional seating and planted areas
 - Re-instating organised cricket
- Potential barriers:
 - Lack of publicity of facilities available
 - Clearer signage at access points
 - Perception that the area is unsafe
 - Lack of co-ordination of events taking place on the park
- Other services that park users want from the town's parks:
 - More information about what is available
 - Public toilets and cafes
 - Programme of community events
- The Friends of Northampton Racecourse facilitated the creation of the Dragon Mounds and Adventure Play areas on the Racecourse. Both are well used and a real asset to the park. They appeal to different age ranges and are different from standard play areas.
- Key representatives to the new Park Management Committees:
 - Football and sport clubs users
 - Friends of Northampton Racecourses
 - Umbrella Fair Organisation
 - Local Schools
 - University of Northampton and Bosworth College
- Two key roles of the Park Management Committees:
 - Day to day management of issues such as MAPS
 - Update, maintain and progress the Racecourse Master plan
- The Park Management Committees could lead to the end of some Friends Groups

- Support needs to be provided to voluntary groups if they are contributing to Park Management Committees
- Council services need to be better co-ordinated
- New capital funded projects need to have on-going funding available for maintenance

West Hunsbury Parish Council

3.3.8.4 West Hunsbury Parish Council provided written evidence. Key points:

- Ladybridge/Wootton Brook Open Spaces have been improved recently; with the addition of new play equipment and two footpaths which have replaced the old oak bridges. The improvements to the open spaces have attracted people from a wider area. The lake and its beach are considered to be a popular area.
- Further suggested improvements include:
 - More sport facilities
 - Improvements to the car park
- The improvements to Hunsbury Hill Country Park, such as newly installed play equipment and the café are recognised. The park is more widely used, with around 50% visiting from outside the area.
- The panoramic view of the town from the old trig point, West Hunsbury Country Park, is obscured by an overgrown hedgerow.
- There is a need for more maintenance work to be undertaken in the park and the replacement of broken benches.
- The Iron Age Hill Fort, located in the centre of West Hunsbury Country Park, is currently on the Ancient Monument at Risk Register. More could be done with the Fort Hill, there is the potential to turn the park into an educational resource.
- West Hunsbury Parish Council commended the work of the Friends Group, highlighting the improvements that it has made to the Country Park.
- Should the trials of Park Management Committees be successful, the initiative should be extended to include Hunsbury Hill Country Park; so that its potential as a recreation and education resource can be promoted. West Hunsbury

Parish Council proposed that it is a member of that Park Management Committee should it be established.

3.3.9 Variety of User Groups

3.3.9.1 A variety of community groups and organised were invited to provide a response to the core questions of the Scrutiny Panel. Additionally, an on-line survey was produced via Survey Monkey using similar core questions to that that had been distributed to various expert witnesses and community groups. The link to survey was sent to the Residents' Panel, Parish Councils, a number of primary schools and a variety of Community Groups and organisations. The survey was promoted on the Overview and Scrutiny [webpage](#). A press release was issued regarding the on-line survey. The survey ran from 15 July 2013 to 12 September 2013. 88 individual responses to the survey were received.

Key findings:

- The town's three key parks are used most frequently by respondents. A number of the town's other parks are used regularly too, including Becketts park, Bradlaugh Fields, Dallington park, Grangewood park, Hunsbury park and the park at Hardingstone. 5% of respondents frequent parks outside the borough.
- The main facilities available in the town's parks that are used by respondents include:
 - Café
 - The museum
 - Play areas
 - Walking around the park
 - Sports
- 13% of respondents did not use facilities in the town's parks.
- Respondents felt that the main potential barriers that stop people using the town's parks are:
 - Anti-social behaviour and not feeling safe
 - Lack of toilet facilities
 - Park maintenance
 - Littering
 - Dog fouling and lack of dog control

- The majority of respondents are aware of a local play area in their neighbourhood. A number of responses referred to the good provision of equipment and children's activities provided. The area is clean and safe.
- Respondents felt that the membership of the Park Management Committees should include:
 - Local people and park users
 - Friends Groups
 - Ward Councillors
 - Park personnel
 - Police, Neighbourhood Wardens and other professionals/experts
 - Residents' Associations
 - Young people representatives
 - Representatives from sports organisations, such as football
- Respondents perceived the role of the Park Management Committees to include:
 - Park management
 - Improvements to the town's parks
 - Promoting the town's parks
 - Organising events and activities
 - Monitoring role
 - Overseeing the maintenance of parks
 - To seek and maintain funding
 - To ensure that the town's parks cater for all sections of the community
 - A listening role
- General comments received regarding the town's parks include:
 - Northampton Race Course is used by over 25 local football clubs.
 - The pavilion at Northampton Race Course (NRC) was supported by the county Football Association (FA) for Football Foundation funding.
 - Pitches at NRC are used every weekend during the season and on Wednesday afternoons.

- The Northamptonshire Football Association suggested the introduction of an on-line booking process for sports pitches that includes the provision of paying by credit and debit cards.
- Problems with litter are often associated with unaffiliated football matches. Park wardens would discourage users from littering.
- The car park at NRC could warrant some maintenance work.

3.3.10 Northampton Community Forums

3.3.10.1 Members of the Scrutiny Panel attended various meetings of the Northampton Community Forums and asked attendees for their responses to the core questions. Key points:

- The work of the various Friends Groups was commended.
- The introduction of Park Management Committees for the town's larger parks was welcomed, but it was felt they were not required for the smaller parks.
- There should be more organised activities in the town's parks.
- The needs of disabled users to the town's parks should be recognised.
- The opening hours of toilet facilities in the parks should be extended and details of the opening times advertised.
- The need for improved lighting and footpaths was highlighted.
- The need for improved parking facilities was suggested.
- The need for facilities for disabled people was emphasised.
- More S106 monies should be spent on the town's parks.
- More play equipment, sporting facilities and designated youth meeting points was suggested.
- Visible presence of Park Rangers and the promotion of their roles.

3.4 Site Visits

3.4.1 Six site visits took place to a selection of parks and open spaces in Northampton; the purpose of which was to assess the park and open space and the facilities available.

General Findings

- All of the town's parks have unique features.
- Effective signage is required, such as the tourist signs that identify points of interest
- The town's parks are not promoted on search engines or on satellite navigation software

Delapre Abbey

3.4.2 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Delapre Abbey on 7 August 2013. Key findings:

- The Tea Rooms are open daily from 10am to 5pm.
- The walled gardens are used by a variety of groups including:
 - ECO kids
 - Richmond Retirement Village
 - St Andrews
 - Olympus Care Services
 - Pleydell Allotment Association has a mini allotment within the walled gardens.
- Various pieces of art work are located in the walled gardens:
 - The lovers
 - Lady with a fish
 - Lady with a cat
- One full time gardener and an apprentice cover Delapre Abbey.
- Toilet facilities are provided and these are maintained by Friends of Delapre Abbey.
- The water feature provides a tranquil area. The stream runs through the water garden.
- A location sign is in situ in grounds, along with a number of benches, litter and dog bins.
- 800 oak trees (Charter Wood) were planted in 1988 for the 800th Anniversary of Charter of Northampton.
- The grounds of Delapre Abbey are also home to a lake which is used by the Water Skiing Club and a local Anglers Club.

- A footpath runs all the way around the perimeter of the lake.
- The pathway from Avon to Hardingstone runs through the grounds of the Abbey.
- Cottages located in the grounds are occupied.

Ecton Brook Pocket Park

3.4.3 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Ecton Brook Pocket Park on 7 August 2013. Key findings:

- Ecton Brook Pocket Park is one of 162 green spaces in Northampton. A stream runs alongside it.
- There are a number of trees and shrubs within the Pocket Park, along with a pond.
- A footpath runs along the length of the Pocket Park, which has a number of outdoor lights situated along it.

Northampton Race Course

3.4.4 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Northampton Race Course on 13 August 2013. Key points:

- The car park was well used.
- Northampton Race Course comprises approximately 117 acres of land which is predominantly open space and sports areas:
 - Football pitches
 - Basketball courts
 - Cricket pitches
 - Bowls greens
 - Tennis courts
 - Table Tennis tables
- The Umbrella Fair Organisation is currently refurbishing the café area with anticipated opening over the next few months.
- A fun fair is held twice annually at the Race Course.
- There are two children’s play areas located at the Race Course and a “Dragon Mound” for imaginative play.
- The old Pavilion is now a restaurant.
- Domes detailing maps of the Race Course are placed in a few locations.
- Three gardeners cover Northampton Race Course.
- The Race Course is frequently used as a thoroughfare from the town centre to Kingsley and Kingsthorpe. The footpath is lit over-night.

- Benches litter and dog bins are placed in various locations. There is no seating near to the sports pitches.
- The toilets are not in use.
- Dog bins are widely used by dog walkers.

Abington Park

3.4.5 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Abington Park on 13 August 2013. Key points:

- The Park is known as the upper and lower parks. The upper park is also referred to as the ornamental park which comprises the museum, aviaries, café and ornamental flower beds.
- Toilet facilities located in the upper park have been refurbished.
- Abington Park comprises approximately 47 hectares of land.
- Most cottages situated in the park are occupied. One is currently vacant.
- Two gardeners cover Abington Park.
- The Parish Church of Abington is located in the park.
- The museum is located in the upper park.
- A number of benches are placed throughout the park.
- The café located in the upper park is very well used.
- The upper park houses a band stand together with well-maintained bowls green, tennis courts, Memorial Rose garden, Sensory Garden and table tennis tables.
- The play area, located on the lower park, is very well used comprising a number of play equipment and two bouncy castles/slides.
- The lower park also has the provision of fitness trails. The lower park is an activity based park.
- ECO Kids Lottery Heritage Funding has been acquired for a project in Abington Park.
- Plans are being drawn up for the Entrance Plaza for the lower park.
- Plans are also being worked on to refurbish the old rose gardens into an open air theatre.
- A natural play area is located near to the lake. Mini beast events, such as pond dipping, are often organised.
- A number of sports groups and community groups use the park for regular organised events.
- The breadth of users at the park is vast.

West Hunsbury Country Park

3.4.6 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited West Hunsbury Country Park on 13 August 2013. Key points:

- A location map is situated on the entrance to the Park.
- The Park is well used.
- Located by the car park is a café, Drivers Return.
- Entrances to the Park have been secured, preventing vehicular access.
- The Park comprises a number of historical features, such as the Iron Age Hill Fort. The Fort is a designated Schedule Ancient Monument. Banbury Lane (an ancient Drover's Road) runs alongside the Fort and through the park.
- A panoramic view of the town can be seen during the late autumn/winter months when the trees have shed their leaves.
- Northampton Ironstone Railway Trust opens the old railway over bank holiday weekends. During these events, the crossing that is situated in the Park is manned.
- General litter and dog waste bins are placed throughout the park, but not together. The bins are emptied once a week.
- A local primary school uses the Park as part of the Forest Schools initiative. Students from Moulton College have assisted in the maintenance work of the bridge.
- There are two small play areas in the Park. A number of benches are situated close to the play areas.
- A nursery of trees was planted a number of years ago. The majority of the trees survived.

Bradlaugh Fields and Barn Community Wildlife Park

3.4.7 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Bradlaugh Fields and Barn Community Wildlife Park on 2 September 2013. Key points:

- Bradlaugh Fields is a 60-hectare site.
- A third of the British butterfly species can be found in the Fields. The Fields is also a protected area for badgers.
- The Fields attracts a wide range of visitors each year from education groups to local community activities.
- A number of benches and seating areas are situated in the Fields.
- Litter and dog waste bins are located side by side.

- The Fields does not have parking facilities and can be accessed on foot via a number of accesses. One entrance can be accessed by vehicles.
- Natural walkways are mowed throughout the Fields.
- A well-used, lit, pathway runs through the Fields.
- A Sensory Garden is located within the Fields.
- The Fields is home to five ponds of varying size and shape. A water feature leading to one of the lakes is another attractive feature within the Fields.
- The Barn is open for refreshments on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.30am to 11.30am and Wednesdays from 1pm to 3pm. CCTV cameras are in situ on the Barn. A local nursery uses the Barn on Wednesdays, during term time.
- A lake is situated close to the Barn, with a wooden walkway around its perimeter.

Castle House

3.4.8 Key points:

- Castle House is a vacant two storey office building fronting onto Marefair, adjacent to Doddridge Car Park.
- Northamptonshire County Council is leading on the potential acquisition of this property, to support the Heritage Gateway project.
- The building is relatively modern and consideration is being given to the potential demolition of the property, as part of the overall vision for the locality.

3.4.9 Appendix D provides comprehensive findings from the site visits.

4 Desktop Research

4.1 As part of its evidence gathering process for this review, desktop research was undertaken regarding details of parks external to Northampton that have been noted as best practice. Comparable districts were also contacted regarding the provision of their parks.

Appendix E provides comprehensive findings from the desktop research exercise.

Comparable Districts

4.2 Desktop research was undertaken and contact was made with the following regarding the provision of their parks:

- Peterborough City Council
- Norwich City Council
- Milton Keynes Council

4.3 Peterborough

Central Park

4.3.1 Central park holds a Green Flag award.

4.3.2 The following facilities are available:

- paddling pool
- sunken garden
- sensory garden
- aviary
- bowling greens
- putting green
- tennis (grass and synthetic)
- bowling
- children's play area
- picnic area
- paddling pool
- sandpit
- formal gardens
- Buttercross Tearooms (open all year-round)

4.3.3 A number of events take place in the Park.

4.3.4 There is a Park Ranger service for the Park.

Bretton Park

4.3.5 Facilities provided include a large children's play area within the main part of the park, a smaller play area and a BMX track. There are tennis courts, football pitches and one cricket pitch. A number of benches are situated under trees. The annual Community Summer Festival takes place in Bretton Park

Itter Park

- 4.3.6 Facilities at Itter Park include a refurbished play area, hard and grass tennis courts, a bowling green and a putting green, two football pitches, a sensory garden feature, table tennis tables and toilet facilities.

Nature Reserves and Wildlife areas

- 4.3.7 There are nine nature reserves and wildlife areas in the Peterborough area.

Playgrounds

- 4.3.8 There are more than 200 play areas in and around Peterborough. The equipment ranges from pre-school doorstep facilities to activity areas for young people. Initiatives to enhance play opportunities are undertaken through a programme of improvements and by providing new facilities within new housing developments. A number of Skate Parks, BMX tracks and Multi-use Games Areas (MUGA's) are provided.

Survey

- 4.3.9 Officers at Peterborough undertook a survey in two of the Council's parks, Central Park and Itter Park. A precis of the findings is attached at Appendix F.

Norwich

- 4.3.10 There are 23 formal parks in Norwich with over 40 open spaces. There are in excess of 40 natural areas, which includes Nature Reserves and more than 80 equipped play areas.

- 4.3.11 Examples of parks in Norwich:

Eaton Park

- 4.3.12 Eaton Park is the largest of Norwich's historic parks which covers over 80 acres. The park comprises bowling and croquet greens, tennis courts and a miniature railway located near to the entrance. The park also has a Café, changing rooms and toilet facilities. There is a lily pond and model boating pond. A number of pitches are used for football, lacrosse and cricket. There is a children's play area and a cycle speedway track. The park is traffic free.

Chapelfield Gardens

4.3.13 Chapelfield Gardens is situated in the city centre. The gardens consist of a toddler and juniors' play area, a place for teens to meet and areas for games of petanque, giant chess and draughts.

Mousehold Heath

4.3.14 Mousehold Heath is a 184 acre area made up of heathland, woodland and recreational open space. It is the largest local nature reserve managed by Norwich City Council.

Milton Keynes

4.3.15 Open space in Milton Keynes currently covers approximately 2,895 hectares over 20% of the total City area.

4.3.16 In Milton Keynes, there are:

- 565 play areas
- 1,200 hectares open space (Managed by Milton Keynes Council)
- 1,800 hectares open space (Managed by the Parks Trust)
- 250 hectares accessible woodland

The Parks Trust

4.3.17 The Parks Trust is an independent charity that owns and cares for much of Milton Keynes parks and green space including river valleys, woodlands, lakesides, parks and landscaped areas alongside the main roads. This equates to around 25 per cent of the new city area. The Parks Trust is self-financing.

4.3.18 The range of open spaces and the areas they serve in Milton Keynes are reported:-

- Incidental open space
- Play Areas
- Local Parks
- District Parks
- Linear Parks
- Country Parks

4.3.19 Examples of parks in Milton Keynes:

Chepstow Drive Local Park

4.3.20 Chepstow Drive Local Park is a large informal area. It consists of around four hectares.

4.3.21 Features of the park include:

- Sufficient mown grassed area to provide for informal recreational use
- Contribution to landscape structure
- Allotments
- Equipped play provision
- Some youth provision including a youth shelter
- Pond feature
- Areas to promote wildlife

Willen Lake South

4.3.22 South Willen Lake attracts more than one million visitors each year to take part in water sports, golf, high ropes, special events, or to jog, picnic, walk, play, etc.

4.3.23 Facilities provided in the park include:

- Public toilets
- Trim trail
- Cycle hire
- Fishing
- Mini golf
- Miniature railway
- Aerial Extreme
- Picnic tables
- Seating
- Play area
- Refreshments

Leon Recreation Ground

4.3.24 Leon Recreational Ground is a large formal area of just over 4.5 hectares. The majority of the centre of the park is grassed. Pathways along the sides

of the area run through avenues of mature trees. Various recreational facilities are located in the northern half of the park. Facilities at the Recreation Ground include:

- Sufficient mown grassed area to provide for informal recreational use
- Equipped play provision including skate ramps
- Some youth provision
- Fitness Equipment
- Areas to promote wildlife
- Mature woodland trees

Examples of best practice

4.4 The following Councils have been noted as best practice for their parks:

- London Borough of Haringey
- Chelmsford City Council
- Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale

London Borough of Haringey

4.4.1 Haringey has more over 600 acres of parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. Fifteen of its parks have been awarded Green Flag status. There are 61 spaces in total, equating to 382.87 hectares, ranging from a regional park to small local parks and open spaces. The parks' Friends Groups have a key role in achieving and maintaining these high standards.

4.4.2 There are a number of conservation areas, local nature reserves and ancient woodland in the borough.

4.4.3 Haringey has a number of service standards that it works to which helps to monitor performance and maintain standards.

4.4.4 Two of Haringey's QEII parks have won prizes at the Fields in Trust Awards Ceremony at Lords Cricket Ground.

4.4.5 Haringey's parks have benefitted from various pots of funding that have been successfully awarded. A number of groups have worked together to improve the borough's parks. Playbuilder has enabled many existing play areas to be improved and new ones created.

4.4.6 Funding has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore three of the borough's parks and also providing modern day facilities.

Chestnuts Park

4.4.7 Chestnuts Park has an avenue of plane trees marking out the western, southern and northern boundaries. An open playing field covers the majority of the western side of the Park with a café and picnic terrace overlooking the new playground for various ages. The eastern half of the park has newly refurbished tennis courts, basketball area, and a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The Park's first Green Flag was awarded in July 2008.

Survey of the London Borough of Haringey's Parks

4.4.8 Throughout January 2013 people were invited to tell Officers at the London Borough of Haringey what they thought of the borough's parks and open spaces. 833 responses were received, with over 80% of respondents telling the Council that they used a Haringey managed park, an increase of 10% since 2009. Headline results are reported at Appendix G.

Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale

4.4.9 The Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle Award in 2012 under the award category most improved Council of the year. The Council has eight green flags for its parks and green spaces. In July 2013 the following parks were awarded Green Flag Status:

- The Memorial Gardens
- Broadfield Park and Packer Spout Gardens in the town centre
- Hare Hill Park and Milnrow Memorial Park in Pennines
- Heywood's Queen's Park and
- Middleton's Truffett Park
- Boarshaw Cemetery

4.4.10 Examples of parks in Rochdale:

Hare Hill Park

4.4.11 Hare Hill Park is a traditional Victorian Park that houses the town's library. A number of its original features offer a wide range of leisure facilities. The Park is located at the gateway to the Pennines and is regarded as the "Jewel in the Pennines crown". The Park has a well-established Friends Group.

4.4.12 Many original heritage features have been restored. The Park is reported to be well maintained and clean, offering recreational opportunities to a variety of groups and individuals.

4.4.13 The main features of the park include:

- Formal gardens
- Fixed play areas
- Skateboard park
- Toddlers play area
- Sports pitch area
- 2 bowling greens
- Historical features including a listed water wheel and the bandstand
- Town library and information centre (formerly Hare Hill House), where people can make general enquiries and access council services
- LEAP standard play area

Middleton Truffet's Park

4.4.14 Truffet Park achieved Green Flag status for the first time in 2009 after extensive improvements and ongoing maintenance. Truffet Park covers an area of 3.0 hectares. The Bowling Green is reported as a key feature of the Park and attracts a lot of local residents and visitors from further afield. The Park has a new circular footpath, which incorporates the new play area.

4.4.15 Other facilities include:

- Herbaceous beds
- Shrub areas
- Sensory Garden
- Wooded area
- Grassland areas
- Mini Arboretum
- LEAP standard play area
- Multi use events area
- Tennis courts
- Car park
- Wetland and wildlife areas
- Wildlife walk
- Floodlit crown green bowling greens and pavilion
- Toilets
- Circular footpath around the site

- Site based park warden
- Site based maintenance staff
- Secure fully fenced site

4.4.16 The Friends of Truffet Park are involved in helping to improve its facilities and set up events to attract the community to the area.

Chelmsford City Council

4.4.17 The city of Chelmsford has been awarded ten Green Flag awards for its parks: Central Park, Hylands Estate, Coronation Park, Compass Gardens with Saltcoats Park, Chelmer Park, Boleyn Gardens in Beaulieu Park, Admirals Park/Tower Gardens (including West Park), and Melbourne Park with Chancellor Park and Brook End Gardens.

4.4.18 The city has also received Green Heritage Awards for Oaklands Park, Hylands Park and for Admirals Park, Tower Gardens and West Park. In addition Green Flag Community Awards were given to Marconi Ponds and Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserves.

4.4.19 Some of the parks and open spaces within Chelmsford:

Coronation Park

4.4.20 This is reported to be a popular park specialising in sporting activities. This park regularly wins awards for the quality of its rugby and cricket pitches. It is also the home of:

- Chelmsford Rugby Club
- Springfield Cricket Club
- Springfield Striders Running Club

4.4.21 There is the provision of a new innovative play area for juniors up to 12 years old. There are also places to picnic. The Park recently received the nationally acclaimed a Green Flag Award award.

Admirals Park and Tower Garden

4.4.22 Admirals Park leads to Tower Gardens and West Park. It is one of Chelmsford's most popular parks. The park has a wide range of attractions and facilities such as:

- Car park
- Children's play area
- Cricket and football pitches
- Tennis courts (hard surface)
- Changing rooms
- Small woodland area
- Ancient wooded track covered in wild violets in spring
- Picnic tables
- Home of Chelmsford Bowls Club

4.4.23 There is a network of footpaths and cycleways linking the parkland with surrounding areas. Visitors can walk along the River Can which travels through the park.

4.4.24 Research of the history of Admirals Park has recently been carried out. Information, images and contributions from local residents have been collected. These details have been used to design a number of interpretation boards which are located throughout the park.

Hylands Park

4.4.25 Hylands Park comprises over 574 acres which includes ancient woodland, grassland, ponds, lakes, formal gardens and an Adventure Castle play area. Car parking is free. The main Adventure Castle has two large sections of castle wall, one of which is fully inclusive and suitable for wheelchairs. The Castle Hamlet, located by the main Castle area, is suitable for children aged 6. Castle Kiosk Café sells snacks, hot and cold drinks and ice creams. Toilets and changing rooms are available. Seating is located within the main play area along with a large picnic area, which includes some picnic tables suitable for use with wheelchairs.

5 Equality Impact Assessment

5.1 Overview and Scrutiny ensures that it adheres to the Council's statutory duty to provide the public with access to Scrutiny reports, briefing notes, agendas, minutes and other such documentation. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels are widely publicised, i.e. on the Council's website, copies issued to the local media and paper copies are made available in the Council's One Stop Shop and local libraries.

- 5.2 The Scrutiny Panel was mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking this scrutiny activity so that any recommendations that it made could identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. This was borne in mind as the Scrutiny Panel progressed with the review and evidence gathered.
- 5.3 So that the Scrutiny Panel obtains a wide range of views, a number of key witnesses provided evidence as detailed in section 3 of this report.
- 5.4 Details of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken can be located on the Overview and Scrutiny [webpage](#).

6 Conclusions and Key Findings

- 6.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Communication

- 6.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that Friends Groups consist of volunteers and communication is key. Communication could be enhanced by improved links with Northampton Borough Council's website and Friends Groups' websites, coupled with improved communications with Enterprise Management Services (EMS). The Scrutiny Panel noted and welcomed the good communication mechanisms that the Friends of West Hunsbury Parks had with EMS.
- 6.1.2 It was highlighted that the Friends of West Hunsbury Parks currently has excellent communication mechanisms with Northampton Borough Council and various local groups.
- 6.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel realised that the town's parks are not identifiable on Internet search engines, such as Google or on satellite navigation software. The usefulness of adding parks as points of interest was emphasised.
- 6.1.4 The work undertaken by the various Friends Groups is pivotal in the success in many of the Council's parks. The contribution from Friends Groups is also recognised with various different external funders which plays a key part in whether a park acquires funding from external Agencies.

6.1.5 The evidence gathered highlighted the need for the publicity of facilities available in the town's parks; together with a programme of community events.

6.1.6 The evidence gathered also emphasised the need for improved signage and visitor information in the town's parks; in particular the updating of the brown tourist signs.

Observations – Town's Parks

6.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted that Northampton is proud of its parks, noting their diversity.

6.1.8 The Scrutiny Panel concluded that "one size does not fit all parks within Northampton" and initiatives and ideas from parks could be monitored in order for them to be mirrored in others.

6.1.9 The parks and open spaces detailed in the desktop research exercise are wide-ranging and comprise a number of facilities. A number being similar to those on offer at Northampton's parks, including:

- Aviary
- Sensory Gardens
- Formal gardens
- Memorial gardens
- Historical features and interpretation boards
- Seating
- Bowling green, tennis, football, cricket
- Pitch and putt
- Play areas
- Tea rooms/ refreshments
- Car parking
- Ponds
- Adventure areas
- Nature reserves

6.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that a lot of the town's parks have a number of historical features, including one of the town's parks with a

registered battle field, one of only 44 in the country, and another with a registered ancient monument.

- 6.1.11 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that Northampton Race Course looked pristine.
- 6.1.12 The Northampton Race Course is used by over 25 local football clubs. The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the introduction of an on-line booking process for sports pitches would be a useful tool for Sports Clubs. On a Saturday morning, in excess of 2,000 people use the facilities on the Race Course.
- 6.1.13 Perception of Northampton Race Course is that it is not safe. To alleviate such perceptions the need for well-maintained lighting and pathways was highlighted.
- 6.1.14 The Scrutiny Panel was delighted to hear that Delapre Park had been awarded Green Flag status in July 2013.
- 6.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that Bradlaugh Fields, a wildlife park, has won a high number of awards.
- 6.1.16 It was noted that Abington Park is the town's central "show" park.
- 6.1.17 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to note that Victoria Park, a "through" park has a recently established Friends Group.
- 6.1.18 From the results of the on-line survey, the Scrutiny Panel recognised that the town's three key parks are used most frequently by respondents.
- 6.1.19 The majority of individuals and groups that provided evidence are aware of local play areas in their neighbourhood.
- 6.1.20 The Scrutiny Panel noted that it was felt that the lack of paths and the feeling of insecurity at Eastfield Park are important factors in limiting the use of the park. However, the Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that discussions are taking place with the Friends Group and Enterprise Management Services (EMS).

- 6.1.21 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel observed a wide range of parks and open spaces in Northampton, noting the tranquillity and prettiness of Delapre Abbey and its various features. The special features and attractiveness of the other Parks and open spaces visited was also noted.
- 6.1.22 It was agreed that the responsibility for maintenance of the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park should be clarified.
- 6.1.23 The Scrutiny Panel felt that there is a need for funding for restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments, such as the Hill Fort.

Key facilities in the town's Parks

- 6.1.24 Key facilities used by respondents to the Scrutiny Panel's core questions include:
- Cafés
 - Museum
 - Play areas
 - Lakes within the town's parks
 - Sports equipment
 - Skate park at Beckett's Park
 - Fitness Trail at Abington Park
 - Model Engineers Railway
 - Historic attractions
 - Using parks for sport and walking
- 6.1.25 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that users of the town's park require refreshments or a social hub. It is realised that cafes and such facilities make a valued contribution to park life.
- 6.1.26 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that access and safety are important to park users. Toilets were also highlighted as a key facility. It was felt that a set standard for toilet facilities in the town's parks is required. The Scrutiny Panel noted that a Friends Group manages and maintains the toilets within its local park. However, there is currently some doubt as to whether this arrangement will continue in the future.
- 6.1.27 The Scrutiny Panel was disappointed that the gents' toilets located in the upper park, Abington Park are not currently open. It also noted that some

of the fitness equipment, located in the lower park, requires maintenance work.

- 6.1.28 During its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel was disappointed to note the poor condition of the car park located at West Hunsbury Country Park.

Additional Facilities in the Town's Parks

- 6.1.29 The Scrutiny Panel concluded that it would be an advantage to install picnic areas, such as those with a wooden roof, and brick barbeque areas in some of the town's parks. Brick barbeques (BBQs) could be used to house disposable BBQs. The installation of litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage are seen as imperative if brick BBQs were put in.
- 6.1.30 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that disposable BBQs used in parks can create litter problems and felt that the introduction of a deposit scheme would act as a deterrent. Disposal BBQs that are used directly on the grass can often leave an unsightly black patch. The installation of permanent hard standings for BBQs in the town's parks was suggested.
- 6.1.31 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the provision of additional picnic areas in the town's parks would attract more visitors.
- 6.1.32 The Scrutiny Panel was concerned regarding lidless litter bins in some parks and the problems encountered during windy conditions. It highlighted the need for litter bins with lids in some parks, such as West Hunsbury Country Park, to prevent wildlife from accessing the contents of the bins. General litter and dog waste bins are placed throughout West Hunsbury Country Park, but not together. It was agreed that litter bins located near to the children's play areas are often too small.
- 6.1.33 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that it would be beneficial to users for litter and dog bins to be located next to each other in the town's parks.
- 6.1.34 It was concluded that the mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park should clearly state that the whole area should not be mowed, only the informal walkways.
- 6.1.35 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the need for the Park Rangers to be easily accessible by the provision of either a central office located near to the park or the offer of regular surgeries. The need for their contact details to

be widely published was also recognised. The Scrutiny Panel emphasised the need for the Park Rangers Team to be provided with suitable, adequate administrative support.

6.1.36 The Scrutiny Panel agreed that the pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park needed to be cleaned out.

6.1.37 The Scrutiny Panel considered the hard standing tennis courts, located in Northampton Race Course, could warrant being refurbished.

6.1.38 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the responses received to its core questions, noting the suggestions regarding additional facilities and services that might bring people into the town that would not ordinarily use them, including:

- BBQ area / Picnic area
- Improved Parking / Disabled parking facilities
- Cafes
- Additional seating
- Facilities for disabled people
- Additional sports facilities
- More facilities for older teenagers
- Additional appropriate play equipment
- Nature trails
- Presence of uniformed personnel, such as Police Officers
- Fountains / water features etc. Guided walks / orienteering trails / way-marked walks
- More events
- Improved access and facilities for people with disabilities, for example, walkways suitable for wheelchair use, appropriate changing facilities
- Indoor sports facilities
- Park Ranger's office located on site
- Additional bins and improved litter clearance
- Improved signage
- More toilet facilities, with set opening times

6.1.39 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the perceived barriers that may deter people from using the town's parks, such as:

- Lack of parking and toilets in some parks
- Anti-social behaviour and not feeling safe
- Disabled access

- Insufficient benches/seating
- Maintenance of parks and littering
- Dog fouling and dog control

Role of Park Management Committees

- 6.1.40 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that when a Friends Group is already in existence there is a danger that a Park Management Committee could duplicate its role. It also acknowledged that a Park Management Committee might be too big for some parks, such as the West Hunsbury Parks and smaller parks.
- 6.1.41 The Scrutiny Panel felt that the smaller parks and open spaces that do not warrant a Friends Group must not be forgotten.
- 6.1.42 The Scrutiny Panel supported the scheme called 'Dog Watch' that is organised by Northamptonshire Police recognising that promotion of this scheme would be useful to smaller parks and open spaces.
- 6.1.43 Co-option to Park Management Committees is supported.
- 6.1.44 The Scrutiny Panel noted the usefulness and benefit of an annual Park Forum.
- 6.1.45 The Scrutiny Panel emphasised that it is important that Park Management Committees are not lead by Northampton Borough Council and are of an appropriate size to enable decision making to take place. All members of the Park Management Committees should have a good understanding of their park.
- 6.1.46 It was considered that Terms of Reference for the Park Management Committees should be agreed from the outset.
- 6.1.47 From the evidence gathered, the Scrutiny Panel perceived that the key roles of the Park Management Committees should include:

- Producing, implementing and maintaining Management and Action Plans
- Park management
- Monitoring role
- Organising events and activities
- Oversee the maintenance of parks
- Provide support to voluntary groups
- To seek and maintain funding for the parks, where appropriate, work with Friends Groups in securing external funding
- Promoting of the park and its facilities
- Create Strategies for the local management of the parks, linking to the Council's wider policies and strategies
- Debating issues, such as how volunteers in the town's park can work alongside the maintenance contract
- A listening role
- Intelligence gathering

Membership of Park Management Committees

6.1.48 The Scrutiny Panel was pleased to receive responses to its core questions in respect of suggestions for membership of the Park Management Committees:

- Friends Groups
- Ward Councillor(s)
- Park User Group representatives and individuals that manage areas of parks
- Park users
- Park personnel
- Young people representatives
- Representatives from Agencies
- Representative from Enterprise Management Services (EMS); for example, Manager/Team Leader
- Representative from Northampton Borough Council
- Representatives from Sports Clubs
- Residents' Associations

6.1.49 It was acknowledged that it is expected that Friends Groups will run alongside and link into Park Management Committees.

6.1.50 From the desktop research exercise, the Scrutiny Panel noted that Peterborough City Council and the London Borough of Haringey had undertaken surveys asking residents for their views on the city and borough's parks. Headlines are details at paragraphs 4.3.9 and 4.4.8. The results of the surveys informed the management plans.

7 Recommendations

7.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to improve community engagement within the town's parks.

Scrutiny Panel 1 recommends to Cabinet that:

Communication

7.1.1 Communication with Friends Groups is enhanced by improved links with Northampton Borough Council's webpage and Friends Groups' webpages, coupled with improved communications with Enterprise Management Services (EMS); such as the sharing of maintenance schedules for parks.

7.1.2 A programme of community events is produced in association with all stakeholders, published on the Council's webpage and promoted to the community.

7.1.3 Information relating to facilities available in the town's parks is accessible on the Council's webpage.

7.1.4 A uniform on-line booking process for sports pitches and events is introduced.

7.1.5 The town's parks are clearly identifiable on Internet search engines, such as Google, and highlighted as points of interest on satellite navigation software, such as Garmin and Tom Tom.

7.1.6 Obsolete signs, in place around the town's parks, are removed and all relevant signage and visitor information is in situ and is clearly visible.

7.1.7 The Highways Agency is asked to update its brown tourist signage that details points of interest across the town; specifically ensuring that signage for the town's parks is clear.

7.1.8 The Scheme "Dog Watch" organised by Northamptonshire Police is promoted.

Town's Parks

- 7.1.9 Cabinet is asked to ensure that where appropriate, initiatives and ideas from parks are monitored in order for them to be mirrored in others.

Park Action Plans

The following recommendations are indicative of the content of the Park Action Plans and the appropriate timescales should be assigned. However, the Scrutiny Panel acknowledges that a number of the recommendations are long term recommendations.

- 7.1.10 Appropriate sources of funding are identified for the restoration and contingency of scheduled monuments.
- 7.1.11 Lighting and footpaths are well maintained in the town's parks and upgraded where necessary.
- 7.1.12 Footpaths are installed in the town's smaller parks to improve disabled access.
- 7.1.13 Responsibility for the bridle way that runs through West Hunsbury Country Park is clarified.
- 7.1.14 The mowing schedule for West Hunsbury Country Park and Cherry Orchard, Hardingstone, clearly states that the whole area is not be mowed, only the informal walkways.
- 7.1.15 The pond in Ecton Brook Pocket Park is cleaned out and the condition of other water features in the town's parks is assessed and appropriate action taken.
- 7.1.16 Where present in the town's parks, hard standing tennis courts are refurbished.
- 7.1.17 Where possible, litter and dog bins are located side by side in the town's parks.
- 7.1.18 Bins with lids/slots are installed in some parks, such as West Hunsbury Country Park, to prevent wildlife accessing the contents of the bins.
- 7.1.19 Picnic areas and permanent hard standings for BBQs are installed in some of the town's parks, together with litter bins and measures to prevent fire and damage.

- 7.1.20 A set standard for the provision of toilet facilities within the town's parks is introduced.
- 7.1.21 The opening times of the toilet facilities within the town's parks are advertised.
- 7.1.22 A funding pot is identified to be allocated to Community Groups that maintain toilets within their local park.
- 7.1.23 In order to make contact with the Park Rangers easier, a central office, located close to the town's Parks, or the provision of regular advertised surgeries in the park is provided.
- 7.1.24 Administrative support is provided for the Park Rangers to enable them to spend more time in the town's parks.
- 7.1.25 Contact details and a report of the activities of the Park Rangers are published on the Council's webpage and promoted to all stakeholders.
- 7.1.26 The role of the Park Ranger is clarified and details disseminated to all stakeholders.

Key roles of the Park Management Committees

- 7.1.27 The key roles of the Park Management Committees includes:
- Producing, implementing and maintaining Management and Action Plans
 - Park management
 - Monitoring role
 - Organising events and activities
 - Oversee the maintenance of parks
 - Provide support to voluntary groups
 - To seek and maintain funding for the parks, where appropriate, work with Friends Groups in securing external funding
 - Promoting of the park and its facilities
 - Create Strategies for the local management of the parks, linking to the Council's wider policies and strategies
 - Debating issues, such as how volunteers in the town's park can work alongside the maintenance contract
 - A listening role
 - Intelligence gathering

The Scrutiny Panel highlights the need for meaningful and outcome driven terms of reference for the Park Management Committees and has produced a

draft terms of reference, as attached at Appendix (i) for Cabinet's consideration.

7.1.28 In addition to Park Management Committees, an annual Park Forum is held.

Membership of Park Management Committees

7.1.29 Membership of the Park Management Committees consists of around ten members, typically drawn from representatives from:

- Friends Groups
- Ward Councillor(s)
- Parish Council representatives where appropriate
- Park User Group representatives and individuals that manage areas of parks
- Park users
- Park personnel
- Young people representatives
- Representatives from Agencies
- Representative from Enterprise Management Services (EMS); for example, Manager/Team Leader
- Representative from Northampton Borough Council
- Representatives from Sports Clubs
- Residents' Associations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7.1.30 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

DRAFT PARK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Objectives

- 1.1 To produce, maintain and oversee the implementation of a Park Management Plan for the relevant park.
- 1.2 To encourage the active participation of the local community and Park users, such as sports clubs and other local organisations, in the discussion of issues and the dissemination of information relating to the park.
- 1.3 To meet at least four times a year to discuss the issues that affect the Park.
- 1.4 To provide an active line of communication for local groups, organisations and sports clubs with an interest in the wellbeing and future enhancement of the Park.
- 1.5 To deal with issues of mutual interest to all users and not with specific issues between individuals or parties.
- 1.6 To create strategies for the local management of the Park, providing a listening role and gathering intelligence to link to the Council's wider policies and strategies.
- 1.7 To develop strategies for the integration of work of volunteers alongside others undertaking practical work in the Park
- 1.8 To identify and pursue sources of funding for parks, where appropriate completing appropriate funding applications

2. Membership

- 2.1 The Management Committee may involve some or all of the following, District Councillors representing local wards, Parish Councillors, Members of Friends of the Park Groups, representatives of park users groups, officers of Northampton Borough Council, in particular the Park Ranger for the relevant park, , a representative Enterprise. (no more than one representative from each group at any meeting).

3 Chairmanship

- 3.1 The Chairman will be elected from the voting membership and shall hold the role for one year.

4 Voting

- 4.1 Formal voting should not normally take place, the aim being to achieve a consensus view in developing and delivering Park Plans, Where voting is unavoidable elected councillors and one representative from each organisation shall be entitled to vote.

5 Venue for Meetings

- 5.1 Meetings will normally take place on site, if facilities are not suitable the Guildhall shall be used.

Appendices



Appendix A

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – Improving the Town's Parks

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To improve community engagement within the town's parks

2. Outcomes Required

- To make recommendations for the improvement within the town's parks that better meet the needs of the community
- To ensure that every park and open space within the town achieves its potential
- To inform the terms of reference and membership of the Park Management Committees

3. Information Required

- Background data
- Background reports
- Best practice data
- Desktop research
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from expert external witnesses
- Site visits

4. Format of Information

- Background reports such as:

Improving Northampton's Parks and Open Spaces Report
(Cabinet 12 June 2013)
Parks and Open Space Strategy for Northampton

- Background data to inform the terms of reference and membership of the Park Management Committees
- Evidence from the Cabinet Member for Environment
- Evidence from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
- Evidence from ward Councillors with key parks within their wards

- Evidence from Friends Groups/User Groups
- Evidence from the Park Rangers
- Evidence from Enterprise Management Services (EMS)
- Desktop research identifying best practice elsewhere
- Site visits to the town's three key parks:

Abington Park
Delapre Abbey
Racecourse

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Site visits
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-

➤ Key witnesses as detailed in section 4 of this scope

6. Co-Options to the Review

- Nicola Hedges, Chair, Friends of Delapre Abbey, Brian Stevens, Chair, Friends of Abington Park, Mavis Wilmshurst, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks and Sean Silver, Chair, Friends of the Racecourse, to be approached suggesting that they are co-opted to this Review for its life.

7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

8 Evidence gathering Timetable

June 2013 to November 2013

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| • 6 June 2013 | - Scoping meeting |
| • 1 July 2013 | - Evidence gathering |
| • 5 August 2013 | - Evidence gathering |
| • 4 September | - Evidence gathering |
| • 2 October | - Evidence gathering |
| • 25 November | - Approval final report |

Various site visits will be programmed during this period if required.

Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

9. Responsible Officers

Lead Officers Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities
Steve Elsey, Head of Public Protection

Co-ordinator Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

10. Resources and Budgets

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, and Steve Elsey, Head of Public Protection, to provide internal advice.

11. Final report presented by:

Completed by 25 November 2013. Presented by the Chair of the Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

12. Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (June/July 2014)

APPENDIX B

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – IMPROVING THE TOWN’S PARKS

CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a Review looking at improving the town’s parks and is focussing on improving community engagement within the town’s parks. A series of key questions have been put together to inform the Panel’s evidence base.

- Which park do you use most often and why?
- Which of the facilities provided in the town’s parks are used the most?
- What facilities and services do you feel would bring people into parks that might otherwise not use them?
- Do you feel there are any barriers that stop people from using the town’s parks?
- What other services do park users want from the town’s parks?
- Are you aware of, and do you use, a local play area in your neighbourhood? Do you know how well this is used and why do you think this is? Additional question to community groups/users

It is initially proposed that Park Management Committees are established in Abington Park, Delapre Abbey and the Racecourse, however it is suggested that this initiative is extended further if there is strong evidence of community support. It is proposed that membership of Park Management Committees will be drawn from elected Members, representatives from key community groups (including Friends Groups) and members of the public who are recognised as being active in each of the parks.

- Who should be a key representative on the new Park Management Committees and why?
- In your opinion, what should be the key roles of the Park Management Committees?

Enterprise Management Services (EMS)

Maintenance of Parks - Conditions

Grass cutting

Grass cutting shall be in line with the environmental strategy of the park

Hedge maintenance

Hedges are to be maintained in accordance with the management plan for hedges. And no work should be undertaken which affects the habitat or wildlife appropriate to the species of plant and hedge

Maintenance of furniture

Any unsafe Bench should be repaired or removed and the area made safe

Notice boards

Once during each month all notice and information boards should be inspected and all vandalism repaired and all graffiti removed. If prior to the inspection damage or graffiti is observed then remedial action will be taken and not wait for the inspection to take place

Sweeping and litter collection

All paths within the park should be swept on a weekly basis and kept free of all refuse and litter. The park should be inspected daily to remove all litter and refuse all litter and dog bins should be emptied within the park twice per week.

During leaf fall all leaves that fall on paths, roads and grassed areas will be removed.

Play area management

The surface of the play area to be kept clear of all litter and refuse

All pieces of play equipment will be inspected on a weekly basis



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix D

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – IMPROVING THE TOWN’S PARKS

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS TO A VARIETY OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN NORTHAMPTON

1 SITE VISITS

1.1 DELAPRE ABBEY

1.1.1 On Wednesday 7 August 2013, Councillor Tony Ansell, Councillor Phil Larratt, Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course (co-optee), Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger, Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, and Max Lang representing Friends of Delapre Abbey visited Delapre Abbey.

1.1.2 The Site Visit convened at 10.30am in the main car park at Delapre Abbey. The car park was well used. At the entrance to the Abbey the model engineers is located. Delapre Abbey comprises approximately 240 hectares of land.

1.1.3 It was noted that phase one of refurbishing the Ha Ha is now complete. Plans are being worked up for phase two.

1.1.4 The Tea Rooms are open daily from 10am to 5pm. Friends of Delapre Abbey (FODA) run the tea rooms, which are located in the picturesque walled gardens. The Site Visit observed a number of visitors using the tea rooms.

1.1.5 The walled gardens are used by a variety of groups including:

- ECO kids
- Richmond Retirement Village
- St Andrews

- Olympus Care Services
- Pleydell Allotment Association has a mini allotment within the walled gardens and this was observed as part of Britain in Bloom judging 2013. The theme for 2013 was edible plants.



1.1.6 Various pieces of art work are located in the walled gardens:

- The lovers
- Lady with a fish
- Lady with a cat



1.1.7 FODA has raised funds to refurbish two of the greenhouses located in the walled gardens and is currently fundraising to refurbish the third one.

1.1.8 One full time gardener and an apprentice cover Delapre Abbey.

1.1.9 Toilet facilities are provided and these are maintained by FODA.

1.1.10 The water feature provides a tranquil area. The stream runs through the water garden. Water is recirculated and mains topped up. Improvement works has taken place in this area over the past three years. A Volunteer Task Group carries out a Pond Dipping Survey on the first Wednesday of every month.

1.1.11 A location sign is in situ in grounds, along with a number of benches, litter and dog bins.

- 1.1.12 800 oak trees (Charter Wood) were planted in 1988 for the 800th Anniversary of Charter of Northampton. Funding for the purchase of the trees had been one of the Mayor's charities during this period.



- 1.1.13 The grounds of Delapre Abbey are also home to a lake which is used by the Water Skiing Club and a local Anglers Club. Various fishing boards are located around the lake. Swimming is prohibited. A footpath runs all the way around the perimeter of the lake. The Site Visit noted areas BBQs had been placed, leaving the grass burnt.
- 1.1.14 The pathway from Avon to Hardingstone runs through the grounds of the Abbey.
- 1.1.15 Cottages located in the grounds are occupied.
- 1.1.16 An informal gathering of women exercising was observed, there were a number of people walking their dogs around the grounds, a family out on a bike ride was seen and a further group of women and children had put up a bouncy castle, goal posts and picnic equipment in the meadow part of grounds.

1.2 ECTON BROOK POCKET PARK

- 1.2.1 On Wednesday 7 August 2013, at approximately 12 noon, Councillor Tony Ansell, Councillor Phil Larratt, Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course (co-optee), Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited Ecton Brook Pocket Park.



1.2.2 Ecton Brook Pocket Park is one of 162 green spaces in Northampton. A stream runs alongside it. There are a number of trees and shrubs within the Pocket Park, along with a pond which the Site Visit felt needed clearing out. A footpath runs along the length of the Pocket Park, which has a number of outdoor lights situated along it. A bench was observed near to the pond, along with a litter and a dog bin.

1.3 NORTHAMPTON RACE COURSE



1.3.1 On Tuesday, 13 August 2013, Councillor Tony Ansell, Anne Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park, Mavis Wilmshurt, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited Northampton Race Course.

1.3.2 The Site Visit convened in the car park at around 10.30am. The car park was well used. Northampton Race Course comprises approximately 117 acres of land which is predominantly open space and sports areas:

- Football pitches
- Basketball courts
- Cricket pitches
- Bowls greens
- Tennis courts
- Table Tennis tables

1.3.3 Table Tennis tables were installed as part of a Sport England Initiative.



- 1.3.4 The Site Visit noted that the Umbrella Fair Organisation is currently refurbishing the café area with anticipated opening over the next few months. The Umbrella Fair is scheduled to take place on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 August 2013, with a number of community events, live music and stalls. Northampton Borough Council will be manning a stall.
- 1.3.5 A fun fair is held twice annually at the Race Course.
- 1.3.6 There are two children's play areas located at the Race Course and a "Dragon Mound" for imaginative play.
- 1.3.7 The old Pavilion is now a restaurant.
- 1.3.8 Domes detailing maps of the Race Course are placed in a few locations.



- 1.3.9 Three gardeners cover Northampton Race Course.
- 1.3.10 The Race Course is frequently used as a thoroughfare from the town centre to Kingsley and Kingsthorpe. The footpath is lit over-night.
- 1.3.11 Benches, litter and dog bins are placed in various locations, there isn't any seating near to the sports pitches. The toilets are not in use. The Umbrella café will have toilet facilities which will be available for use during its opening hours. It is evident that the dog bins are widely used by dog walkers.
- 1.3.12 The Site Visit noted that the hard standing tennis courts could warrant being refurbished and that the trees had not been lopped this year. Areas of graffiti and damage to the railings were observed.



1.4 ABINGTON PARK

1.4.1 On Tuesday 13 August 2013, at approximately 11:30am, Councillor Tony Ansell, Anne Stevens, Secretary, Friends of Abington Park, Mavis Wilmshurt, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger, Vikkie Maloney, Abington Park Ranger, and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, together with Brian Hoare, Brian Stevens, John Taylor and Bill Crane, representing Friends of Abington Park, visited Abington Park.

1.4.2 The Park is known as the upper and lower parks. The upper park is also referred to as the ornamental park which comprises the museum, aviaries, café and ornamental flower beds. The toilet facilities located in the upper park have been refurbished.

1.4.3 Abington Park comprises approximately 47 hectares of land.

1.4.4 Most cottages situated in the park are occupied. One is currently vacant.

1.4.5 Two gardeners cover Abington Park.

1.4.6 The Parish Church of Abington is located in the park.

1.4.7 The museum is located in the upper park. It is open from Thursday to Sunday, 1pm to 5pm, during April to October.



1.4.8 There is a wide variety of species of trees and an abundance of flower beds which the Site Visit felt were very pretty this year.

- 1.4.9 A number of benches are placed throughout the park, some of which contain “in memory of” plaques.
- 1.4.10 The café located in the upper park is very well used and the Site Visit observed a number of families enjoying the aviaries.
- 1.4.11 The upper park houses a band stand together with well-maintained bowls green, tennis courts, Memorial Rose garden, Sensory Garden and table tennis tables, which are very well used.
- 1.4.12 Toilet facilities have been refurbished in the upper park. The Site Visit was disappointed that the gents’ toilets are not currently open.
- 1.4.13 The play area, located on the lower park, is very well used comprising a number of play equipment and two bouncy castles/slides. There is also a snack van. The lower park also has the provision of fitness trails. The lower park is an activity based park. The Site Visit noticed that some of the fitness equipment requires maintenance work.
- 1.4.14 ECO Kids Lottery Heritage Funding has been acquired for a project in Abington Park. Three tree trails are being put together and a ‘phone app. developed so that all trees can be identified. There will also be an historical trail which will identify, for example, the medieval housing platform and the old fishponds.
- 1.4.15 Plans are being drawn up for the Entrance Plaza for the lower park.
- 1.4.16 Plans are also being worked on to refurbish the old rose gardens into an open air theatre.



- 1.4.17 The Site Visit observed some ‘blank’ wooden plaques that should identify which Mayoress planted that tree. Plans are in place to refurbish some of the tarmac areas of the park.
- 1.4.18 Refurbishment of the lake area was completed in 2011/2012. The Site Visit was disappointed that the banks had not been tidied after the work had been completed. It was noted that Enterprise Management Services (EMS) had seeded the banks but the seeds had been eaten

by birds. Local Angler Groups frequently use the upper lake and the Model Boat Club uses the top small lake at weekends.



- 1.4.19 2,500 bulbs were planted by the Friends of Abington Park alongside the walkway to the lake which looked very picturesque over the spring months. There is a natural play area located near to the lake. Mini beast events, such as pond dipping, are often organised. Friends of Abington Park recently received an offer of free water lilies, together with free maintenance. Discussions regarding the offer are taking place. Since the site visit has taken place, it has been confirmed that the water lilies have now been installed.
- 1.4.20 Organised cross country events, such as runs hosted by the Heart Foundation, Race for Life, Race for Life for men are held at the Lower Park. A number of running groups also utilise the park for training.
- 1.4.21 Fifa Football Club uses the pitches regularly during the school holidays. Military Fitness groups take place five times a week, cricket and football is held during the season, a number of formal and informal groups and gatherings use the park on a regular basis, for activities such as buggy walks.
- 1.4.22 The breadth of users at the park is vast. A lot of parked cars were observed along the road to the entrance to the park, as were two ice cream vans.

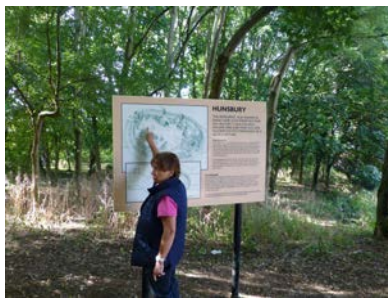
1.5 WEST HUNSBURY COUNTRY PARK

- 1.5.1 On Monday 2 September 2013 Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course, Mavis Wilmshurt, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, together with Anne Jones and Diana Timms, representing Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, visited West Hunsbury Country Park.

- 1.5.2 The Site Visit convened in the car park of the Country Park at 10.30am. The car park was well used but the Site Visit observed that the surface could make access difficult for those with limited mobility.



- 1.5.3 A location map is situated on the entrance to the Park.



- 1.5.4 The Park is well used, particularly by people walking their dogs.
- 1.5.5 Located by the car park is a café, Drovers Return, which had a number of customers using the outside seating.
- 1.5.6 Entrances to the Park have been secured, preventing vehicular access.
- 1.5.7 The Park comprises a number of historical features, such as the Iron Age Hill Fort. The Fort is a designated Schedule Ancient Monument. Banbury Lane (an ancient Drover's Road) runs alongside the Fort and through the park. A panoramic view of the town can be seen during the late autumn/winter months when the trees have shed their leaves. During the summer months the view is obscured by trees.



- 1.5.8 Northampton Ironstone Railway Trust opens the old railway over bank holiday weekends. During these events, the crossing that is situated in the Park is manned.



- 1.5.9 A nursery of trees was planted a number of years ago. The majority of the trees survived and the Site Visit observed that this area appeared rather crowded.



- 1.5.10 General litter and dog waste bins are placed throughout the park, but not together. The bins are emptied once a week. The Site Visit felt that the litter bins located near to the children's play area are too small. Litter bins with lids would be a useful feature in the Park to prevent wildlife from accessing the contents of the bins.
- 1.5.11 A local primary school uses the Park as part of the Forest Schools initiative.
- 1.5.12 Students from Moulton College have assisted in the maintenance work of the bridge.
- 1.5.13 Representatives of Friends of Hunsbury Parks confirmed that natural walkways were now mowed but previously the whole area had been mowed.



- 1.5.14 There are two small play areas in the Park and the Friends of Hunsbury Parks are seeking funding to install further play equipment. A number of benches are situated close to the play areas. The play areas were being used during the site visit.



- 1.5.15 The Site Visit confirmed that it felt that the responsibility for maintenance of the bridle way that runs through the park should be clarified.

1.6 BRADLAUGH FIELDS AND BARN COMMUNITY WILDLIFE PARK

- 1.6.1 On Monday 2 September 2013, at approximately 12 noon, Alan Borrell, Vice Chair, Friends of Northampton Race Course, Mavis Wilmshurt, Chair, Friends of West Hunsbury Parks, Ruth Austen, Environmental Health Manager (Environmental Protection), Jason Toyne, Park Ranger and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, visited Bradlaugh Fields and Barn Community Wildlife Park.
- 1.6.2 Developed from a former golf course, Bradlaugh Fields is a 60-hectare site. It opened in 1998 and was designed by the local community for the local community.
- 1.6.3 A third of the British butterfly species can be found in the Fields. The Fields are also a protected area for badgers.
- 1.6.4 The Site Visit found the Fields to be a tranquil area.
- 1.6.5 The Fields attracts a wide range of visitors each year from education groups to local community activities.
- 1.6.6 The Site Visit observed a number of people using the Fields, mainly walking or walking with dogs. A number of benches and seating areas are situated in the Fields.
- 1.6.7 Litter and dog waste bins are located side by side.
- 1.6.8 The Site Visit noted a number of signs to the entrances to the Fields, some of which had been vandalised.



1.6.9 The Fields does not have parking facilities and can be accessed on foot via a number of accesses. One entrance can be accessed by vehicles.

1.6.10 Natural walkways are mowed throughout the Fields.



1.6.11 A well-used pathway runs through the Fields. Lighting is situated along the pathway.

1.6.12 The Friends of Bradlaugh Fields installed a Sensory Garden which is a beautiful feature of the Fields.



1.6.13 The Fields is home to five ponds of varying size and shape. A water feature leading to one of the lakes is another attractive feature within the Fields.



- 1.6.14 The Barn is open for refreshments on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.30am to 11.30am and Wednesdays from 1pm to 3pm. CCTV cameras are in situ on the Barn. A lake is situated close to the Barn, with a wooden walkway around its perimeter. A local nursery uses the Barn on Wednesdays, during term time.



- 1.6.15 A striking view of the town can be seen from the Fields.



1.7 CASTLE HOUSE

- 1.7.1 Details were obtained from the relevant department regarding the status and future use of this area.
- 1.7.2 Castle House is a vacant two storey office building fronting onto Marefair, adjacent to Doddridge Car Park. Northamptonshire County Council is leading on the potential acquisition of this property, to support the Heritage Gateway project. The building is relatively modern and consideration is being given to the potential demolition of the property, as part of the overall vision for the locality.

Brief Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – IMPROVING THE TOWN’S PARKS

**BRIEFING NOTE: DESKTOP RESEARCH
EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE ELSEWHERE**

1 INTRODUCTION

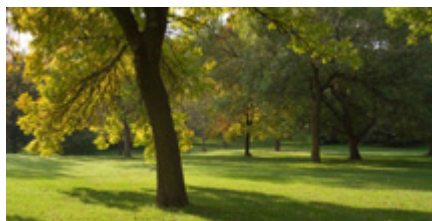
- 1.1 At its inaugural scoping meeting, Scrutiny Panel 1 (Improving the Town’s) agreed that it would receive details of parks external to Northampton that have been noted as best practice.
- 1.2 Comparable districts were also contacted regarding the provision of their parks.

2 COMPARABLE DISTRICTS

- 2.1 Desktop research was undertaken and contact was made with the following regarding the provision of their parks:
 - Peterborough City Council
 - Norwich City Council
 - Milton Keynes Council

2.2 Peterborough

Central Park



- 2.2.1 Central park holds a Green Flag award.
- 2.2.2 The following facilities are available:
 - paddling pool

- sunken garden
- sensory garden
- aviary
- bowling greens
- putting green
- tennis (grass and synthetic)
- bowling
- children's play area
- picnic area
- paddling pool
- sandpit
- formal gardens
- Buttercross Tearooms (open all year-round)

2.2.3 It is reported that a number of events take place in the park ranging from concerts, open air theatre productions, sports courses, teddy bears' picnics and fun days.

2.2.4 There is a Park Ranger service, whose community-based projects includes educational visits, wildflower planting, installation of school-built bat boxes, local sponsorship for the formal flower beds and continued development with the Friends of the Park Group.

Bretton Park

2.2.5 Bretton Park is reported to be one of the Peterborough City Council's largest green open spaces. Facilities provided include a large children's play area within the main part of the park, a smaller play area and a BMX track which is found to be very popular with young people. There are tennis courts, football pitches and one cricket pitch which are all reported to be very well used all year round. A number of benches are situated in the shade of the trees. The annual Community Summer Festival takes place in Bretton Park which includes fairground rides, a number of stalls and music.

Itter Park



2.2.6 Facilities at Itter Park include a refurbished play area, hard and grass tennis courts, a bowling green and a putting green. There are also two football pitches which are used by a local team in the winter season.

There is also a sensory garden feature, table tennis tables and toilet facilities.

Nature Reserves and Wildlife areas

2.2.7 There are nine nature reserves and wildlife areas in the Peterborough area, an example being Cuckoo's Hollow:

Cuckoo's Hollow

2.2.8 In the late 1970's Cuckoo's Hollow was redesigned. A lake was created, the site shaped, trees and shrubs planted, footpaths constructed and bridges built. There is an island in the centre of the lake which is used by ducks, swans and other waterfowl. Bats frequent the area too.

2.2.9 The 'Friends of Cuckoo's Hollow' is reported to be a very pro-active local group.

3.2.10 The area can be accessed by cycle routes and footpaths. There is also the provision of a car park.

Playgrounds

2.2.11 Peterborough City Council provides over 200 play areas in and around Peterborough. The equipment ranges from pre-school doorstep facilities to activity areas for young people. Initiatives to enhance play opportunities are undertaken through a programme of improvements and by providing new facilities within new housing developments. Many of the old play areas have been removed and replaced with new, modern play areas with sturdy equipment on soft surfacing. A number of Skate Parks, BMX tracks and Multi-use Games Areas (MUGA's) are provided.

Survey

2.2.12 Officers at Peterborough undertook a survey in two of the Council's parks, Central Park and Itter Park. Although not extensive surveys, they offer some insight into these two public parks. A precis of the findings is detailed below:

2.2.13 Tennis and bowling remain popular facilities plus Central Park's paddling pool and Bretton Park's water parks. MUGAs are popular with young people and are flexible enough to suit them and meet their needs. Skateparks and play areas that offer real play value are popular.

2.2.14 The Neighbourhood and Events Co-Ordinator felt that a good café brings people into parks that would not usually use them and out of the ordinary attractions. Peterborough offers drive-in film shows that are proving popular. An Eid in the Park faith service is held Central Park.

2.2.15 Possible barriers that might deter people using the city's parks include green spaces that are poorly maintained and have little to offer. Dog fouling and anti-social behaviour. People often invest in their own gardens to create an enjoyable outdoor room on their property.

2.2.16 The Neighbourhood and Events Co-Ordinator advised that Friends Groups which are supported by the Local Authority, with a visible acknowledgement that their thoughts and opinions are valued, are very useful.

2.3 Norwich

2.3.1 There are 23 formal parks in Norwich with over 40 open spaces. There are in excess of 40 natural areas, which includes Nature Reserves and more than 80 equipped play areas.

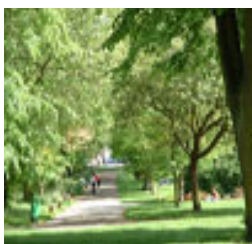
2.3.2 Examples of parks in Norwich are detailed below:

Eaton Park



2.3.3 Eaton Park is the largest of Norwich's historic parks which covers over 80 acres. It is reported to be one of the City's finest green spaces with stunning trees and many facilities for use by the public. The park comprises bowling and croquet greens, tennis courts and a miniature railway located near to the entrance. The quadrant pavilions in the centre of the park enclose a rotunda surrounded by seating on a gravelled space. The park also has a Café, changing rooms and toilet facilities. There is a lily pond and model boating pond. A number of pitches are used for football, lacrosse and cricket. There is a children's play area and a cycle speedway track. A Community Centre is situated at the park; the rooms are often hired by several groups. It is located close to a pitch and putt course, skateboard/BMX park and netball court. The park is traffic free.

Chapelfield Gardens



2.3.4 Chapelfield Gardens is situated in the city centre and is reported to be a popular meeting place. The gardens consist of a toddler and juniors' play area, a place for teens to meet and areas for games of petanque, giant chess and draughts. The gardens are used, particularly in the summer months, for different outdoor events hosted by Norwich City Council including bandstand concerts and an annual music festival and funfair.

Toddler and juniors' play area – Chapelfield Gardens

2.3.5 It is reported that this play area is very popular with younger children and their families. It was refurbished in 2011-12. Examples of the equipment are pictured below:



Adventure area for older children and teens – Chapelfield Gardens

2.3.6 The Adventure area was designed particularly to give teens an extra place to meet up and chat to friends. It has two pieces of equipment, a comet tail to climb and sit on and hang off, and a basket swing.



Mousehold Heath



2.3.7 Mousehold Heath is a 184 acre area made up of heathland, woodland and recreational open space. It is the largest local nature reserve managed by Norwich City Council.

2.3.8 Officers at Norwich City Council feel that that Eaton park and Chapelfield Gardens are the most often used, Eaton because of its size and the variety of facilities on offer (basketball, skate park, cycle speedway, football, cricket, tennis, bowls, croquet, model boating, miniature railway, play area, pitch and putt, putting, bandstand, lily pond and water feature) and Chapelfield mainly because of its central location as well as the grassy areas and attractive trees and planting.

2.3.9 The skate park at Eaton is reported to be very popular, as well as the park run event. The splash park at Waterloo Park, the pitch and putt at Eaton Park and Mousehold Heath and football pitches are well used generally across the city. Chapelfield Gardens does not have so many facilities; Officers felt that city centre people are satisfied with grass and trees in a welcoming environment.

2.3.10 In response to the question regarding the facilities and services that would bring people into parks that might otherwise not use them, Officers advised that this depends on the type of park and the location, for example: a multi-use games area can be popular in some places but not so well used in others. Other ideas are: coaching sessions, fitness classes, community events such as summer playdays organised by the City Council or events organised by local organisations.

2.3.11 Barriers that might stop people from using the City's parks are reported to be around dog control, either too restrictive or not restrictive enough, lack of nearby parking, perceived fear of crime or anti-social behaviour.

2.3.12 Other facilities that people want from the City's parks include casual football goals (junior and adult), outdoor gym equipment, clean toilets, nice cafes, better dog enforcement, park keepers, improved security, wildlife friendly environments, clean and well maintained spaces.

2.3.13 The Parks and Open Spaces Officer advised that there is a well-run Friends group at Eaton Park who are an asset to the park raising funds and carrying out small maintenance tasks, organising small events and raising the profile of the park on Facebook and twitter.

2.4 Milton Keynes

2.4.1 Open space in Milton Keynes currently covers approximately 2,895 hectares over 20% of the total City area, which is reported to place it among the highest local authorities in terms of open space per resident.

2.4.2 In Milton Keynes, there are:

- 565 play areas
- 1,200 hectares open space (Managed by Milton Keynes Council)
- 1,800 hectares open space (Managed by the Parks Trust)

- 250 hectares accessible woodland

The Parks Trust

2.4.3 The Parks Trust is an independent charity that owns and cares for much of Milton Keynes parks and green space including river valleys, woodlands, lakesides, parks and landscaped areas alongside the main roads. This equates to around 25 per cent of the new city area.

2.4.4 It is reported that the city's founders wanted to be sure that such a unique green landscape would be managed and protected forever, without having to compete for funds with other council priorities. Therefore, the Parks Trust was created in 1992 to care for most of the city's green space and was endowed with a substantial property and investment portfolio. The income from this portfolio pays for the vital work of nurturing and enhancing the landscape. The Parks Trust is self-financing.

2.4.5 The range of open spaces and the areas they serve in Milton Keynes are reported:-

- Incidental open space
- Play Areas
- Local Parks
- District Parks
- Linear Parks
- Country Parks

2.4.6 Chepstow Drive Local Park was first awarded its Green Flag award in 2007, New Bradwell Park achieve Green Flag status in 2008 and Eaglestone Local Park in 2009. Leon Recreation Ground achieved Green Flag accreditation in 2011.

2.4.7 Examples of parks in Milton Keynes are detailed below:

Chepstow Drive Local Park



2.4.8 Chepstow Drive Local Park is a large informal area. It consists of around 4 hectares.

2.4.9 Features of the park include:

- Sufficient mown grassed area to provide for informal recreational use
- Contribution to landscape structure
- Allotments
- Equipped play provision
- Some youth provision including a youth shelter
- Pond feature
- Areas to promote wildlife

Willen Lake South



2.4.10 South Willen Lake is reported to be the busiest park in the region, attracting more than one million visitors each year to take part in water sports, golf, high ropes, special events, or to jog, picnic, walk, play, etc.

2.4.11 A new attraction, Aerial Extreme, has been installed in the park. It comprises adventure rope courses for all ages.

2.4.12 A miniature railway operates at summer weekends and some school holidays.

2.4.13 South Willen Lake is part of an orienteering course used by a local club.

2.4.14 A variety of events are held in the park including the dragon boat festival and the Santa jog.

2.4.15 The Park is reported to be home to a variety of birdlife.

2.4.16 Facilities provided in the park include:

- Public toilets
- Trim trail
- Cycle hire
- Fishing
- Mini golf
- Picnic tables
- Seating
- Play area
- Refreshments

Leon Recreation Ground

- 2.4.17 Leon Recreational Ground is a large formal area of just over 4.5 hectares.
- 2.4.18 The majority of the centre of the park is grassed. Pathways along the sides of the area run through avenues of mature trees.
- 2.4.19 Various recreational facilities are located in the northern half of the park.
- 2.4.20 Facilities at the Recreation Ground include:
- A contribution to landscape structure
 - Sufficient mown grassed area to provide for informal recreational use
 - Equipped play provision including skate ramps
 - Some youth provision
 - Fitness Equipment
 - Areas to promote wildlife
 - Mature woodland trees
- 2.4.21 A wildflower meadow is located in Leon Recreation Ground.



EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICE

- 3.1 The following Councils have been noted for their best practice parks:
- London Borough of Haringey
 - Chelmsford City Council
 - Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale

3.2 London Borough of Haringey

- 3.2.1 Haringey has more over 600 acres of parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. Fifteen of its parks have been awarded Green Flag status. There are 61 spaces in total, equating to 382.87 hectares, ranging from a regional park to small local parks and open spaces.
- 3.2.2 It is reported that the parks' Friends Groups have a key role in achieving and maintaining these high standards.

- 3.2.3 There are a number of conservation areas, local nature reserves and ancient woodland in the borough.
- 3.2.4 Haringey has a number of service standards that it works to which helps to monitor performance and maintain standards. Dog Control Orders were introduced in April 2013 with the aim of encouraging responsible dog ownership.
- 3.2.5 Two of Haringey's QEII parks won prizes at the Fields in Trust Awards Ceremony at Lords Cricket Ground recently. Albert Road Recreation Ground won the 'Getting Active' park award and was joint runner up in the 'Most Loved Park' category. Lordship Recreation Ground was joint runner up for 'Most Improved' Park.
- 3.2.6 The Getting Active Award, supported by Sport England, rewards a QEII Field showing a marked increase in participation in outdoor activity.
- 3.2.7 Albert Road Recreation Ground was rewarded for its extensive programme of activities planned to include as much of the diverse local community as possible. The activities include toddler tennis, Aussie Rules football, tennis, football, basketball on award winning courts and an annual family sports day.
- 3.2.8 Lordship Recreation Ground, which won QEII status in 2012, was awarded Most Improved Park after a £4 million Heritage Lottery Grant, managed by Haringey Council and the Lordship Recreation Ground Users' Forum, brought major renovation to the park. The improvements included a new course for the River Moselle, an orchard and wildlife, a state of the art bike track, a model traffic area, landscaping and new children's play areas.
- 3.2.9 It is reported that Haringey parks have benefitted from various pots of funding that have been successfully awarded and have had many groups working together to improve the borough's parks. Playbuilder has enabled many existing play areas to be improved and new ones created.
- 3.2.10 Funding has been awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore three of the borough's parks and also providing modern day facilities.



Chestnuts Park

- 3.2.11 Chestnuts Park has an avenue of plane trees marking out the western, southern and northern boundaries. An open playing field covers the majority of the western side of the Park with a café and picnic terrace overlooking the new playground for various ages.
- 3.2.12 The eastern half of the park has newly refurbished tennis courts, basketball area, and a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).
- 3.2.13 Park Pavilion is home to Chestnuts pre-school playgroup and play centre. The community centre is also located in the Park.
- 3.2.14 The Park's first Green Flag was awarded in July 2008.
- 3.2.15 During the autumn of 2008, consultation was carried out to find out how local people would like to see Chestnuts Park improved further. A masterplan was produced and Haringey Council, in partnership with the Friends of Chestnuts Park, is currently looking for funding to carry out these changes. This is a long term plan for the park.

Survey of the London Borough of Haringey's Parks

- 3.2.16 Throughout January 2013 people were invited to tell Officers at Haringey what they thought of the borough's parks and open spaces.
- 3.2.17 833 responses were received, with over 80% of respondents telling the Council that they used a Haringey managed park, an increase of 10% since 2009.
- 3.2.18 Headline results revealed:
- 70% of respondents felt the condition of their local park was either the same or better than it was before the budget reductions happened in 2011
 - 88% of respondents either feel safe or very safe when they use their local park
 - Finsbury Park was the park that received the most responses followed equally by Downhill's Park, Priory Park and Albert Road Recreation Ground
 - People are using the parks less to relax and more for family outings, playing with friends and to observe wildlife
 - four times as many people said they were volunteering on projects in parks
 - The frequency and time when people used the park remained broadly the same
 - People felt that the facilities within the park were either Good or Fair

3.2.19 Individual park results were then fed into management plans to inform any future improvements.

3.3 Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale

3.3.1 The Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle Award in 2012 under the award category most improved Council of the year. The Council has eight green flags for its parks and green spaces. In July 2013 the following parks were awarded Green Flag Status:

- The Memorial Gardens
- Broadfield Park and Packer Spout Gardens in the town centre
- Hare Hill Park and Milnrow Memorial Park in Pennines
- Heywood's Queen's Park and
- Middleton's Truffett Park
- Boarshaw Cemetery

3.3.2 Detailed below are examples of parks in Rochdale:

Memorial Gardens

3.3.3 It is reported that the Memorial Gardens are a key feature of the town centre landscape.

3.3.4 The consequences of time has meant that the gardens fell into a state of decline. This decline is currently being reversed through the re-introduction of quality horticultural features, flowerbeds, sensory garden, wildlife planting areas, improvements to paved surfaces, benches, litter bins and lighting.

3.3.5 A play area has also been created, designed to fit in with the original purpose and layout.



3.3.6 Facilities provided include gardens, a play area and seating.

3.3.7 Bird and animal life within the gardens is wide-ranging, many species being common garden birds. Squirrels frequent the gardens. Bats are often seen in the tree areas in the early evening. Butterflies and moths are also present.

Hare Hill Park



3.3.8 Hare Hill Park is reported as a traditional Victorian Park that houses the town's library. A number of its original features offer a wide range of leisure facilities.

3.3.9 The Park is located at the gateway to the Pennines and is regarded as the "Jewel in the Pennines crown".

3.3.10 The Park has a well-established Friends Group. It is noted that the Friends Group has been instrumental in restoring the Park and has attracted over £250,000 for its renovation.

3.3.11 Many original heritage features have been restored. The Park is reported to be well maintained and clean, offering recreational opportunities to a variety of groups and individuals making it once again a safe and inviting place which is used and valued by the local community.

3.3.12 The main features of the park include:

- Formal gardens
- Fixed play areas
- Skateboard park
- Toddlers play area
- Sports pitch area
- 2 bowling greens
- Historical features including a listed water wheel and the bandstand
- Town library and information centre (formerly Hare Hill House), where people can make general enquiries and access council services
- LEAP standard play area

3.3.13 It is reported that plans are being worked up to restore the water wheel and new facilities for young people, such as a skateboard park. A new toddlers play area has been built.

Middleton Truffet's Park



3.3.14 Truffet Park achieved Green Flag status for the first time in 2009 after investment paved the way for extensive improvements and ongoing maintenance. The Park first opened in 1966 and features a number of recent improvements and provides a community focal point for leisure, recreation and relaxation.

3.3.15 Truffet Park covers an area of 3.0 hectares.

3.3.16 The Bowling Green is reported as a key feature of the Park and attracts a lot of local residents and visitors from further afield to take part in bowling for both pleasure and competition.

3.3.17 The Park has a new circular footpath, which incorporates the new play area.

3.3.18 The newly refurbished events area provides a site for organised events and sport. There are also areas of trees and grassland, in addition to the more formal and planted areas.

3.3.19 Other facilities include:

- Herbaceous beds
- Shrub areas
- Sensory Garden
- Wooded area
- Grassland areas
- Mini Arboretum
- LEAP standard play area
- Multi use events area
- Tennis courts
- Car park
- Wetland and wildlife areas
- Wildlife walk
- Floodlit crown green bowling greens and pavilion
- Toilets
- Circular footpath around the site
- Site based park warden
- Site based maintenance staff

- Secure fully fenced site

3.3.20 The Friends of Truffet Park are involved in helping to improve its facilities and set up events to attract the community to the area.

3.4 Chelmsford City Council

3.4.1 The city of Chelmsford has been awarded ten Green Flag awards for its parks: Central Park, Hylands Estate, Coronation Park, Compass Gardens with Saltcoats Park, Chelmer Park, Boleyn Gardens in Beaulieu Park, Admirals Park/Tower Gardens (including West Park), and Melbourne Park with Chancellor Park and Brook End Gardens.

3.4.2 The city has also received Green Heritage Awards for Oaklands Park, Hylands Park and for Admirals Park, Tower Gardens and West Park. In addition Green Flag Community Awards were given to Marconi Ponds and Chelmer Valley Local Nature Reserves.

3.4.3 Provided below are details of some of the parks and open spaces within Chelmsford:

Coronation Park

3.4.4 Coronation Park is home to Springfield Cricket Club and Chelmsford Rugby Club. This is reported to be a popular park specialising in sporting activities.

3.4.5 It is further reported that this park regularly wins awards for the quality of its rugby and cricket pitches. It is also the home of:

- Chelmsford Rugby Club
- Springfield Cricket Club
- Springfield Striders Running Club

3.4.6 There is the provision of a new innovative play area for juniors up to 12 years old. There are also places to picnic.



3.4.7 The Park recently received the nationally acclaimed a Green Flag Award award.



Admirals Park and Tower Garden



3.4.8 Admirals Park leads to Tower Gardens and West Park. It is reported that Admirals is one of Chelmsford's most popular parks where visitors can experience many different features, from landscaped garden areas to more natural spaces that encourage wildlife.

3.4.9 The park has a wide range of attractions and facilities such as:

- Car park
- Children's play area
- Cricket and football pitches
- Tennis courts (hard surface)
- Changing rooms
- Small woodland area
- Ancient wooded track covered in wild violets in spring
- Picnic tables
- Home of Chelmsford Bowls Club

3.4.10 There is a network of footpaths and cycleways linking the parkland with surrounding areas. Visitors can walk along the River Can which travels through the park.

3.4.11 Essex Boot Camp runs an exercise programme in the park on several days each week.

- 3.4.12 Research of the history of Admirals Park has recently been carried out. Information, images and contributions from local residents have been collected. These details have been used to design a number of interpretation boards which are located throughout the park.

Hylands Park

- 3.4.13 Hylands Park comprises over 574 acres which includes an ancient woodland, grassland, ponds, lakes, formal gardens and an Adventure Castle play area.



- 3.4.14 Car parking is free, including disabled spaces.



- 3.4.15 The main Adventure Castle has two large sections of castle wall, one of which is fully inclusive and suitable for wheelchairs. There are ladders, scramble nets and boards with lots of opportunity to climb and run around the ramparts. There are also three slides at varying heights, sensory equipment, a musical wall and spinning games discs. The main Castle area is reported to be suitable for children aged 6 years and older.
- 3.4.16 The Castle Hamlet, located by the main Castle area, is suitable for children aged 6 and under and has a lookout tower, wobble bridge and climbing net. There is a cradle swing, a living willow tunnel and three bears' houses to play in.
- 3.4.17 Castle Kiosk Café sells snacks, hot and cold drinks and ice creams. Toilets and changing rooms are available.
- 3.4.18 Seating is located within the main play area along with a large picnic area, which includes some picnic tables suitable for use with wheelchairs.

3.4.19 Picnic tables are located outside the fence for use by dog owners as all Council play areas are dog free zones.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Elizabeth Gowen, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 – Improving the town's parks

Precis of the findings of the survey undertaken regarding the Parks in Peterborough

Tennis and bowling remain popular facilities plus Central Park's paddling pool and Bretton Park's water parks. MUGAs are popular with young people and are flexible enough to suit them and meet their needs. Skateparks and play areas that offer real play value are popular.

The Neighbourhood and Events Co-Ordinator felt that a good café brings people into parks that would not usually use them and out of the ordinary attractions. Peterborough offers drive-in film shows that are proving popular. An Eid in the Park faith service is held Central Park.

Possible barriers that might deter people using the city's parks include green spaces that are poorly maintained and have little to offer. Dog fouling and anti-social behaviour. People often invest in their own gardens to create an enjoyable outdoor room on their property.

The Neighbourhood and Events Co-Ordinator advised that Friends Groups which are supported by the Local Authority, with a visible acknowledgement that their thoughts and opinions are valued, are very useful.

Headline Results from the Survey regarding Haringey's Parks

Headline results revealed:

- 70% of respondents felt the condition of their local park was either the same or better than it was before the budget reductions happened in 2011
- 88% of respondents either feel safe or very safe when they use their local park
- Finsbury Park was the park that received the most responses followed equally by Downhill's Park, Priory Park and Albert Road Recreation Ground
- People are using the parks less to relax and more for family outings, playing with friends and to observe wildlife
- four times as many people said they were volunteering on projects in parks
- The frequency and time when people used the park remained broadly the same
- People felt that the facilities within the park were either Good or Fair

Individual park results were then fed into management plans to inform any future improvements.



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 JANUARY 2014

BRIEFING NOTE:

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – IMPACT OF THE WELFARE REFORM ACT

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake a review regarding the impact of the Welfare Reform Act, the rationale being “to evaluate the effect of the Welfare Reform Act on the public and Council employees”.
- 1.2 At the inaugural meeting of the Scrutiny Panel, Councillors agreed the scope of the review; a copy is attached at Appendix A, for the Committee’s approval.
- 1.3 Membership of the Scrutiny Panel comprises Councillor Lee Mason (Chair); Councillors Joy Capstick, Elizabeth Gowen, Beverley Mennell, Dennis Meredith, David Palethorpe, Brian Sargeant and Danielle Stone. It was proposed by the Chair and agreed by the Scrutiny Panel that a Vice Chair be elected. It was agreed that Councillor Danielle Stone be elected Vice Chair of this Scrutiny Panel.

2 UPDATE

- 2.1 In discussing the rationale for the review, the Scrutiny Panel felt that the required outcome should be:

- To make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on the most appropriate approaches to take to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform in Northampton.

- 2.2 The schedule of meetings comprises:-

January 2014 to July 2014

- 9 January 2014 - Scoping meeting
- 3 February - Evidence gathering
- 20 March - Evidence gathering
- 14 April - Evidence gathering

- 8 May - Evidence gathering
- 30 June - Evidence gathering
- 21 July - Approval of the final report

2.3 Meetings of the Scrutiny Panel will commence at 6.00 pm and will be held in the Jeffery Room, at the Guildhall.

2.4 In accordance with the Scrutiny Panel Protocol, the Chair of this Scrutiny Panel will provide written progress reports to future meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information.

3 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee approves the scope of the Scrutiny review – The Impact of the Welfare Reform Act, as attached at Appendix A.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Lee Mason, Chair,
Scrutiny Panel 1 – Impact of the Welfare Reform Act

10 January 2014



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – Impact of the Welfare Reform Act

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To evaluate the effect of the Welfare Reform Act on the public and Council employees.

2. Outcomes Required

- To make informed recommendations to all relevant parties on the most appropriate approaches to take to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform in Northampton.

3. Information Required

- Background data
- Background reports and presentation
- Best practice data
- Desktop research
- Evidence from expert external witnesses
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from residents

4. Format of Information

- Background data:
 - Presentation setting the Scene: - The policy context and timetable for change.
 - Presentation - An overview of the national Welfare Reforms: Setting a baseline position and measuring impacts
- Centre for Public Scrutiny's Policy Briefing 19– Welfare Reform (September 2012)

- Centre for Public Scrutiny's briefing Paper - The local impacts of the introduction of Universal Credit and the wider welfare reforms (August 2013)
- Kensington and Chelsea Social Council's report – Change for Children - A study of local families in Kensington and Chelsea (2013)
- Various relevant published papers from organisations such as, Rowntree Trust, Child Poverty Action Group, SHELTER
- Witness Evidence:
 - Cabinet Member for Housing, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
 - Housing Advice Service, NBC
 - Head of Benefits and Revenues, NBC
 - Cabinet Member for Finance, NBC
 - Head of Customer and Cultural Services, NBC
 - Community Law
 - Citizen's Advice Bureau, Northampton
 - Northamptonshire Credit Union Ltd
 - Home-Start, Northampton
 - Thorplands Sure Start Centre, Northampton
 - Blackthorn Good Neighbours, Northampton
 - SIL Officers, Northamptonshire County Council/Charity Link
 - Northampton Food Banks via Community Foundation
 - Oasis House, Northampton, including organisations: Midland Heart, NAASH
 - Northampton Salvation Army
 - St Vincent de Paul Society
 - Case studies from a variety of residents
 - Case studies from a variety of constituents via ward Councillors
- Best practice examples from a range of local services and other Local Authorities, in particular, a Local Authority that is piloting Universal Credit

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Questionnaires (completion by residents)

- Core questions (expert advisers)
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-

➤ Key witnesses as detailed in section 4 of this scope

6. Co-Options to the Review

None identified for this review.

7 Community Impact Assessment

- A Community Impact Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

8 Evidence gathering Timetable

January 2014 - July 2014

- 9 January 2014 - Scoping meeting
- 3 February - Evidence gathering
- 20 March - Evidence gathering
- 14 April - Evidence gathering
- 8 May - Evidence gathering
- 30 June - Evidence gathering
- 21 July - Approval of the final report

Various site visits will be programmed during this period if required.

Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

9. Responsible Officers

Lead Officers Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities

Co-ordinator Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

10. Resources and Budgets

Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities, to provide internal advice.

11. Final report presented by:

Completed by 21 July 2014. Presented by the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

12. Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (March 2015)



**NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

28 January 2014

BRIEFING NOTE:

**SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – MANAGEMENT AND REGULATION
OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING (INCLUDING HIMOs)**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Since the last meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, two further evidence gathering meetings have taken place with another scheduled for 23 January 2014.

2 UPDATE

- 2.1 At the meeting held on 18 November 2013, the Scrutiny Panel received background data:

- A presentation setting the context of the private sector housing market:
 - Changes over the last ten years
 - Future Trends
- Existing legislation in relation to private sector housing and the options available to local Councils for additional legislation.
- The Empty Homes Programme.

- 2.2 At its meeting held on 5 December 2013, the Scrutiny Panel received responses to its core questions from two key expert advisers:

- Cabinet Member for Housing, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)
- Interim Private Sector Housing Manager, NBC

- 2.3 The Affordable Housing Strategy Interim Statement was also presented to the Scrutiny Panel.

- 2.4 An evidence gathering meeting is scheduled for 23 January 2014, at which the Scrutiny Panel will receive evidence from further expert advisors. A final evidence gathering meeting is set for 13 February, at which the Scrutiny Panel will receive additional evidence from a variety of expert advisors.
- 2.5 It is expected that the Scrutiny Panel will consider the Chair's draft report at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for 30 April 2014.
- 2.6 It is envisaged that the Chair of Scrutiny Panel 2 will present the final report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 9 June 2014.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the update is noted.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Joy Capstick, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2 – Management and Regulation of Private Sector Housing (Including HIMOs)

6 December 2013



Northampton Borough Council

(Section 5 & 9 of The Local Authorities – (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012)

Decision Maker: [Cabinet](#)

Directorate:	Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Report of:	Director of Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning
Public or Private	PUBLIC
Expected Date of Decision:	12 February 2014
Title of Expected Decision	Nene Meadows Supplementary Planning Document
Record of the expected decision to be made:	<p>Cabinet is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the responses made to the public consultation exercise for the above document and Officer responses • Approve the proposed changes to the SPD as set out in the Consultation Statement • Approve the adoption of the SPD

Directorate:	Chief Executive
Report of:	Chief Executive
Public or Private	PUBLIC
Expected Date of Decision:	12 February 2014
Title of Expected Decision	Finance and Performance Report to the end of December
Record of the expected decision to be made:	That Cabinet note the contents and recommends action to be taken, if any, to address the issues arising.

Where indicated a decision or part of a decision may be made in Private – details regarding this can be found by [clicking here](#). Anyone wishing to make representations that this matter should be discussed in public, should do so by not later than 12 Calendar Days prior to the meeting, using the details below:
 The Monitoring Officer c/o The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE or
 email: democraticservices@northampton.gov.uk

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