



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Our LGR Journey Workforce and Engagement

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The Brief

We have been asked to share our LGR experience across three workforce topics:

Managing Change

**Staff Recruitment
and Retention**

**Creating Effective
New Cultures**



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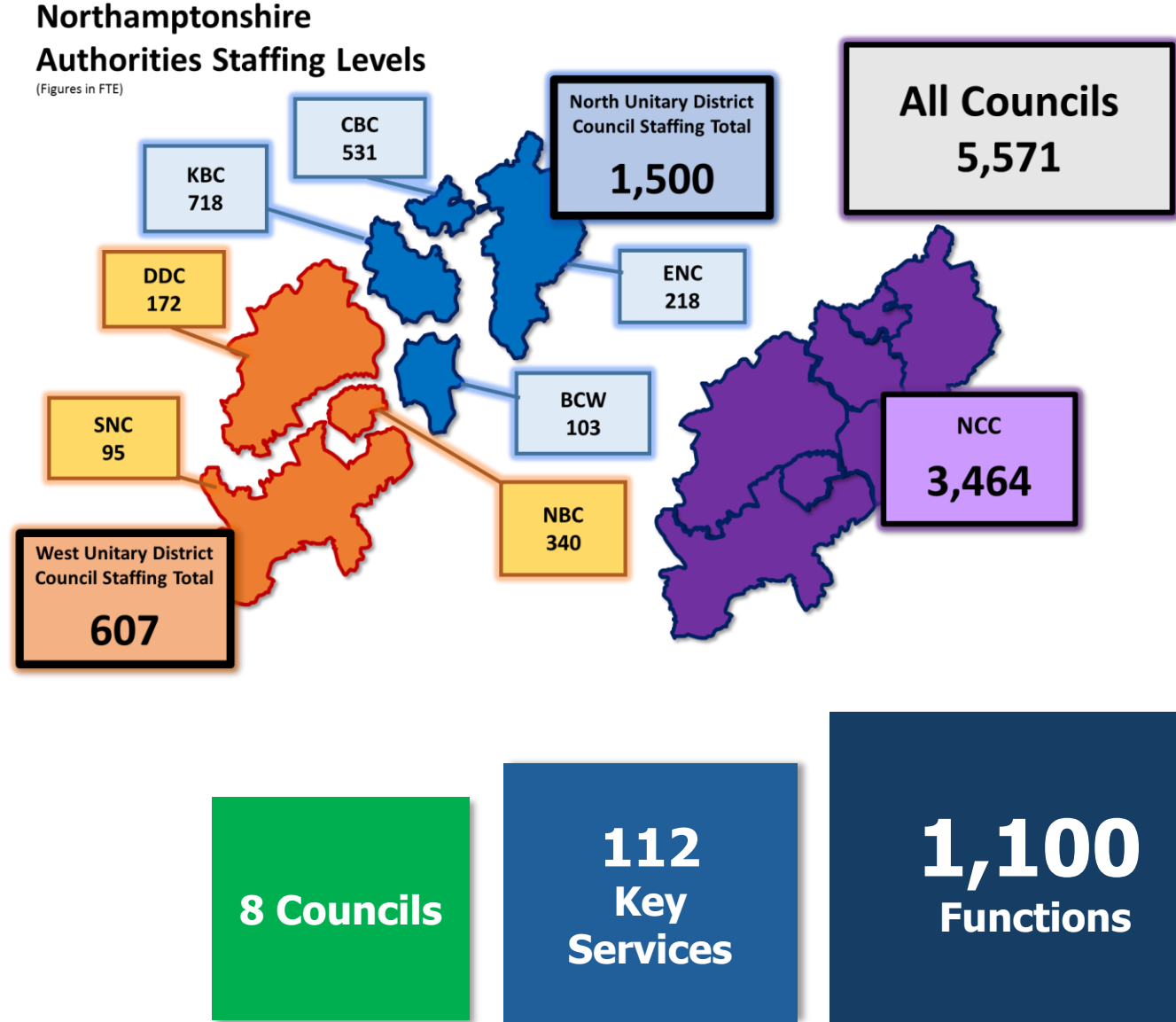
First ...Our Context



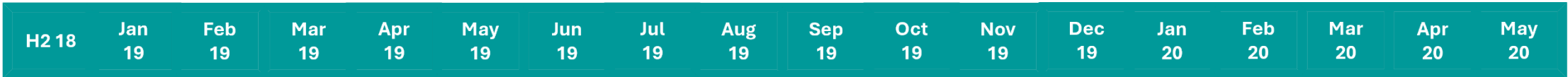


The scale of the task

- Over £1bn of services
- Over 5,500 staff
- 600 systems
- 1000s of contracts to transfer
- Over 300 elected members
- 8 head Office locations
- Creation of two large unitary councils
- Creation of a separate Children’s Trust
- Integration of health and social care
- Repatriation of external back-office services
- Implementation of four core IT systems
- **£85m Transformation and efficiency savings**



Our original plan....



Business Case Submission | Public Consultation | Final SoS decision | Draft SCO before Parliament | Joint Committee agree Constitution | Interim Officers appointed | SCO before Parliament | First Shadow Council meeting | Chief Officers appointed

Phase 1 - Create New Unitary - foundations

- Initiation
- Disaggregation Agreement
- Baseline Data
- TUPE Principles
- ICT Principles
- Parliamentary Orders
- Prepare for the Shadow Councils

Phase 2 – Delivering Day 1

- Initiation
- Discovery
- Detailed Planning
- Day 1 Preparation
- Mobilisation

Phase 3 - Designing a New Authority

- Design Principles
- Interim Vision
- Interim Target Operating Model
- Culture, Values, Organisational Design
- Develop Transformation Plan
- Development of new Corporate Plan

Brexit debate & snap general election



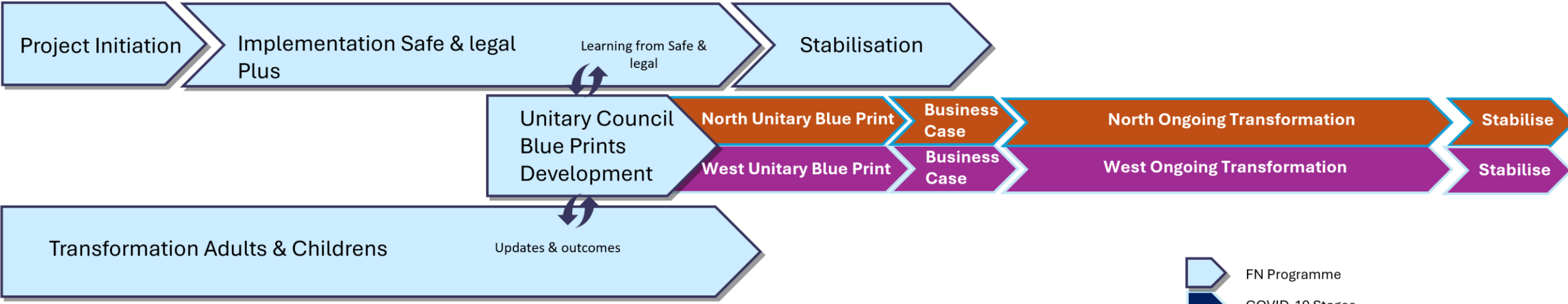
New Authority Go Live | Elections

Gateway 1 Discovery Complete | Gateway 2 Operational Readiness | Gateway 3 Post Go-Live

Our revised plan

April 20 Jul 20 Sept 20 Dec 20 Mar 21 May 21 Q2 21 Q3 21 Q4 21 Q1 22

Relaunch Integrating Transforming Normalising



-  FN Programme
-  COVID-19 Stages
-  North Programme
-  West programme

Our core plan had 500 actions **for safe and legal** Day 1 delivery and number of “must do’s”



BUDGETS & FINANCE

To oversee the budget preparations and Medium-Term Financial Plan for each unitary authority.



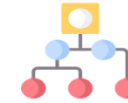
COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION

to develop a process whereby within an agreed period, council tax rates in all areas within a unitary authority will become the same.



DISAGGREGATION

to determine how Northamptonshire County Council services and their related budgets will be split to the new unitary authorities.



COUNCIL GOVERNANCE

To oversee the development and delivery of the governance arrangements for both the shadow and unitary councils, including committee structures.



DAY 1 ACCOMMODATION

To ensure the unitary authorities have the required accommodation to meet their safe and legal responsibilities from Day One.



DAY 1 STRUCTURE & TOM

Creation of a blueprint setting out the staffing and functions that would come together and where they would sit



SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

To ensure that agreed leadership structures and statutory officer appointments are in place for the unitary authorities.



COMMS & ENGAGEMENT

To oversee the development and development of an engagement plan for staff, union, customers and stakeholder .



VISION & CULTURE

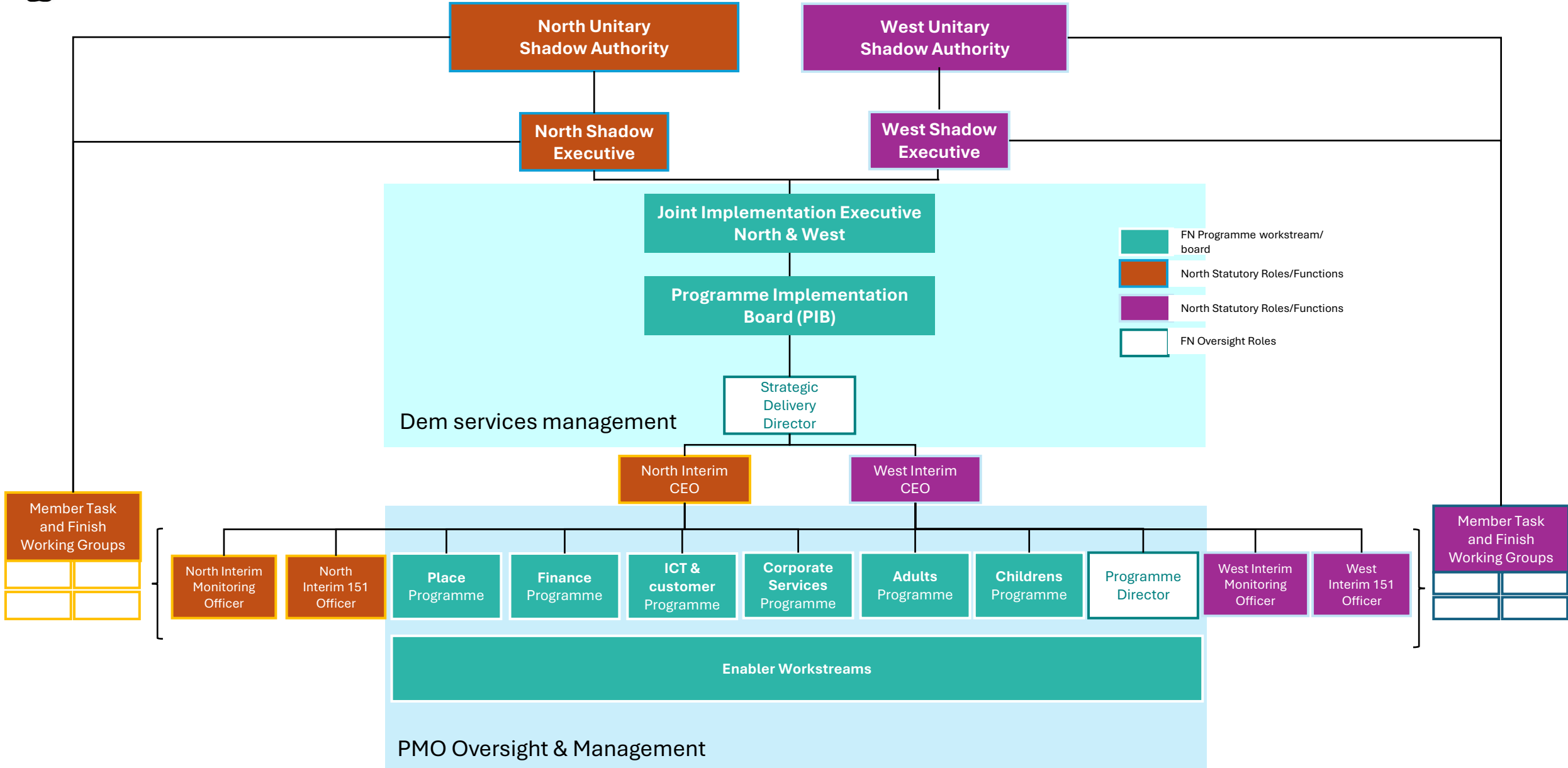
to establish a high-level vision and values statement for each unitary authority..



TRANSFORMATION

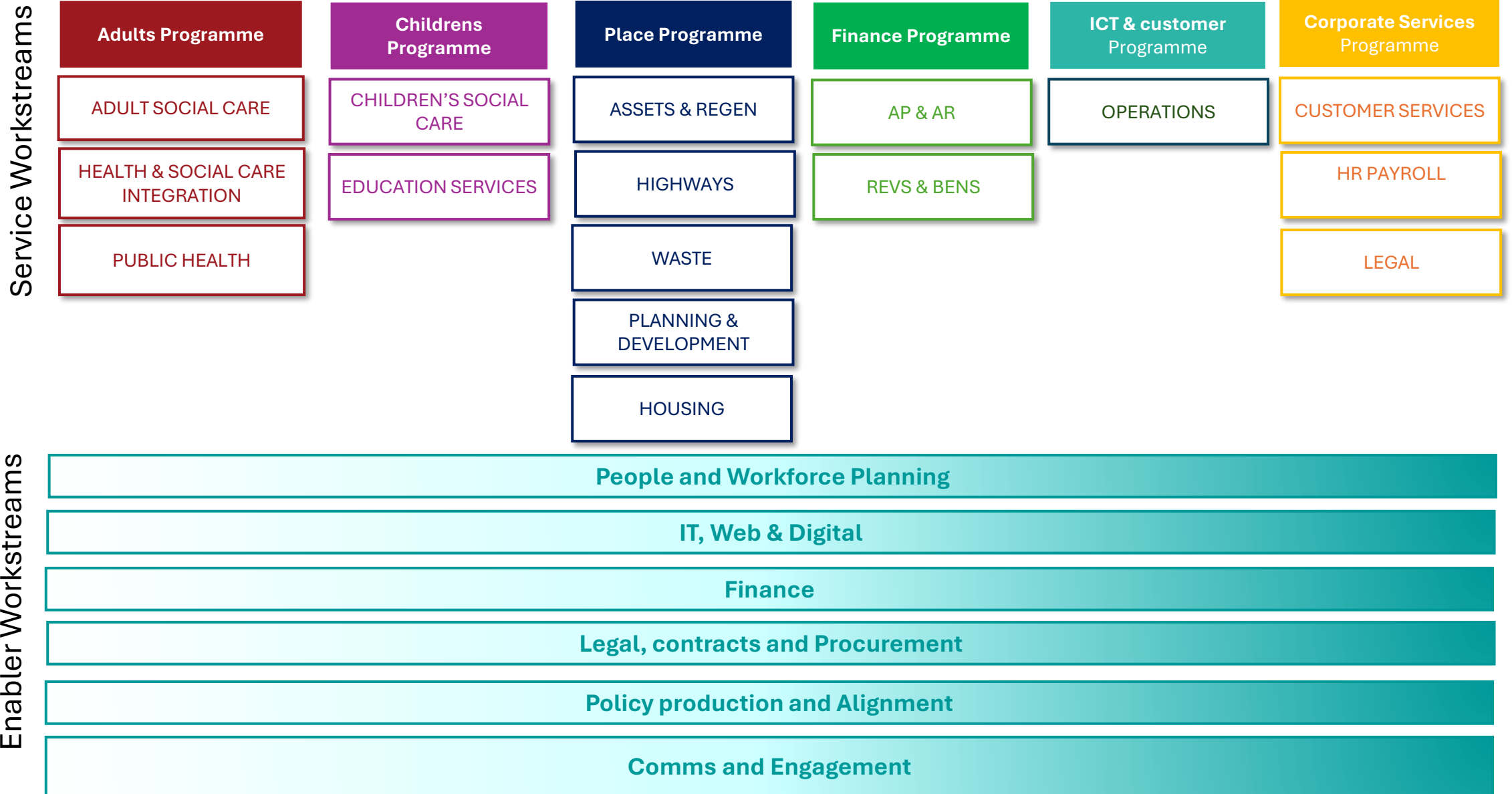
To develop a programme to drive transformation that’s embedded in officers’ and members’ day jobs in the new organisations.

Key Task Creating a strong foundations for a successful high performing future unitary



Creating Buy-in

Day 1 Delivery Programme – EACH WITH A CHIEF EXECUTIVE AS SRO





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Managing Change

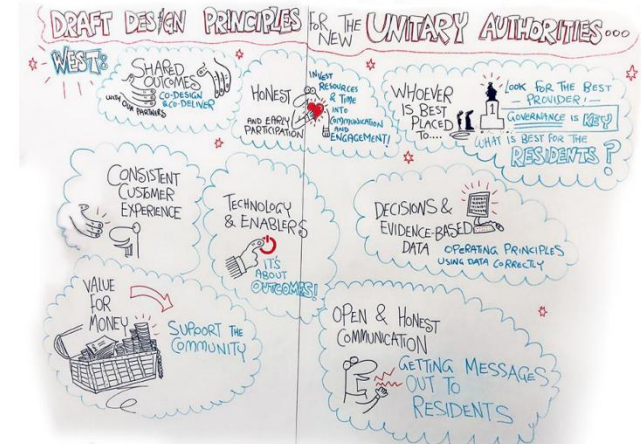
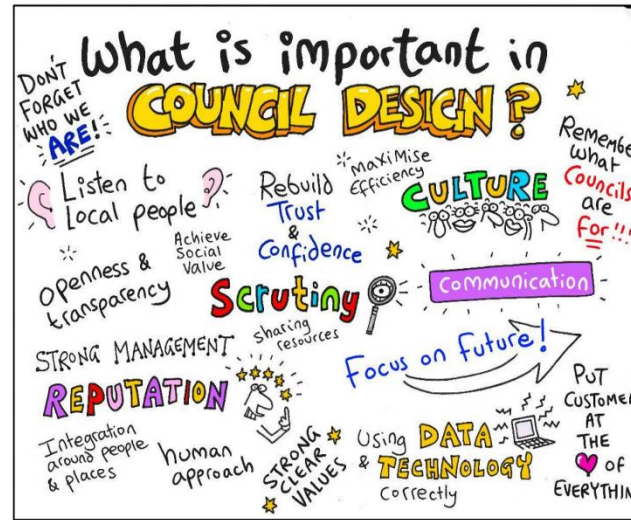


Change is emotional and structural

- **Recognise where everyone starts their journey**
- District & Borough council staff and members were resentful
- County staff fatigued by s114, commissioners and Council cuts
- Different locations
- Different ways of working and modernisation stages
- Different pay & conditions and perks
- Some people **longing for change**
- Some **longing for nothing to change**

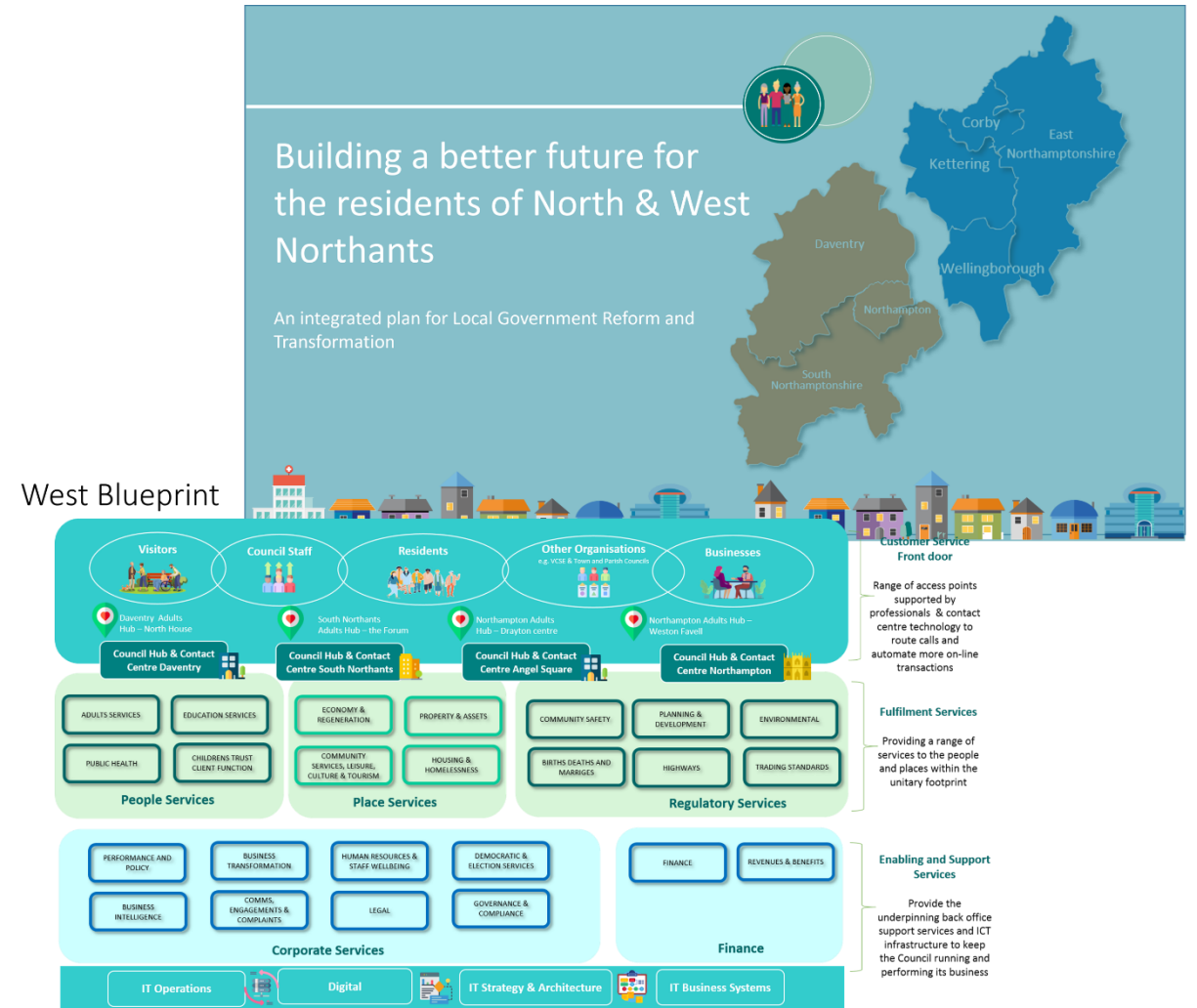
A clear and shared vision

- Regardless of why you are there – create a sense of purpose, ambition and understanding of what its all for
- **Members will set the tone for public and staff**
- 200-member workshop – “what a good council looks like” visioning and design principles
- Member involvement was sustained throughout our journey – Leaders board, members workshops and working groups



A clear and shared vision

- Create early understanding of where we were heading, what will be different and better and plan of how we will get there
- Our **prospectus for change** – shared case for stakeholders on why, what, how and the outcomes we wanted to achieve in the new councils
- Our new **Council Blueprints** – how we would operate, and services would come together
- Service Blueprints – how our services would operate, what would change on Day 1 and transformation route map
- Staff involvement throughout



Managing change from within

- Early decision to staff and lead the programme with internal staff
 - Greater ownership
 - Being part of exciting change
 - Less cost
- External consultants kept to minimum
- Strategic Delivery director from County – no future aspiration
- Each programme workstream headed by a chief executive of districts & boroughs
- Front-line staff heavily engaged to ensure two-way feedback via 100+ Change Champions
- Senior staff stepped up to lead specialist areas in the programme – ownership of the future – Backfill in the day job
- Tier 3 managers critical role in the last 3 months before vesting day, they will be needed to work on the detail and preparing their services to go live.

Ongoing Comms and Engagement

- Consistency and co-ordination key
- Familiarity + visibility = reassurance
- Cascade comms through existing channels where possible
- Communicate the timeline and milestones
- Make change feel good
- Involve and engage to bring people on the journey
- Avoid the transformation jargon
- You can never have too many FAQs!



Reflections

- We couldn't do roadshows because of Covid/home working – get out and meet
- Vital you have lines of communication and set the tone – blogs, vlogs and news – we still do this today
- Staff from districts and boroughs felt a loss – smaller councils felt more personal, it was a big adjustment
- Co-locate staff as early as possible to build teams
- Our blueprint is still referenced 4 years on



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Retention & Recruitment



Retention and Recruitment

- Uncertainty and change not for everyone but some thrive on it
- You will need your most experienced people – have a conversation about a role to Vesting Day, including Programme SROs.
- You need to recruit throughout right up to Day One – but consider a change freeze as you near
- Clarity on TUPE protection – a lot of staff don't know
- Work with unions on Day One terms and conditions – new staff and what can you offer existing staff
- Engagement is everything – turnover at the start c17% – now 9%
- Recruit early for Tier 1 & 2 for the new unitary council(s) and don't underestimate the time and workload to find good people and for them to onboard.
- Ensure there is clarity in decision making and delegations as things change.

Structures and selection

- Transformation likely to be around systems and rationalisation initially, not restructures, except Tiers 1 and 2
- Districts and Boroughs staff will generally assimilate to same services
- The County services or shared service disaggregate
- Disaggregation is complex assigning staff to functions, teams and services – work does not always relate to geography
- Preferencing may be needed – this means some people may not get their first choice
- Some services may stay shared in the short, medium or long term

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- Vital you have lines of communication and set the tone – blogs, Vlogs and news – we still do this today
- Staff from Districts and Boroughs felt a loss – smaller councils felt more personal, it was a big adjustment
- Members have views on selections of senior staff – can get difficult
- Co-locate staff as early as possible to build teams
- Our blueprint is still referenced 4 years on!

Communicate early and often

- Be consistent and co-ordinated
- Forged links among lead enablers as early as possible – Comms, HR, Finance, Legal, IT
- Involved and engaged trade unions early on
- Used comms to tackle assumptions – particularly made by D&Bs
- Always consider tone and language – you're not merging, you're starting afresh
- Fill the comms vacuum, reduce the rumour mill
- Communicate what staff want to know not what you think they need to know
- Transformation jargon will disengage colleagues

Reflections

- Where we are today
- What we might do differently
- Questions to consider/food for thought comments



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Creating Effective New Cultures



Creating a new brand and identity

- A simple, collective LGR identity that can evolve with your journey
- Dedicated comms channels supported by all councils
- Major rebranding exercise delivered in-house – involved members and established principles
- Comms build-up to Day One – shifted the focus to resident need-to-knows: seamless service continuity, all services under one roof, customer signposting
- Regular Day One prep updates through existing councils comms channels then closed down at 'go live' and switched to new unitary feeds



Developing our Vision and Values

- Started development as early as possible before Day One
- Cross-party member task and finish group engaged focus groups of staff, members, community groups and young people
- Build the values into the one council culture early on – eg staff awards, performance framework, employer branding
- Engage and empower colleagues in building the culture by setting up staff networks for Day One
- Embed the vision and values in all your comms messaging

A great place to **live**,
work, **visit** and **thrive**.



Our West Way of Working

- Set out from the start to create something new & positive
- Best companies – Baseline & Pulse surveys
- Dropped references to “legacy” labels and HQ names
- **West Way of working** - Our two-way contract with staff:

- Behaviours
- Values
- Performance conversation – VIPs
- Worker types and Office plans
- New Workforce strategy
- New workforce terms and conditions and early Pay and Grading



West Northamptonshire Council

Our West Way:
Defining the basics of good management at WNC



Managing People	Managing Resources	Expected Behaviours	Communication	Org Systems & Processes	Quick Links
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You apply the continuous performance conversations approach, ensuring every member of staff receives regular 1:1s (every 4-6 weeks). ✓ You encourage and promote active engagement with wellbeing initiatives, and you consider individuals' personal growth. You promote a culture of learning by regularly reviewing training and development needs and provide networking opportunities. ✓ You act within and 'bring to life' all WNC policies and procedures for the benefit of your team. This includes providing appropriate induction, managing sickness, signposting to wellbeing support and managing performance. ✓ You set clear objectives, you review, you provide feedback and you re-establish direction where required to promote collective high performance. ✓ You create a safe space across your team where people feel able to share new ideas and innovates. ✓ You recognise and celebrate team and individual successes. ✓ You ensure that you actively manage your establishment, by reviewing it regularly on ERP Gold, removing unused posts and ensuring reporting lines are accurate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You comply with finance & contract procurement rules which form part of the constitution. ✓ All Budget Managers are required to submit a monthly management budget, Monitoring Forecast with adherence to the published timescale. ✓ You uphold your responsibilities to deliver value for money for our residents, you identify efficiencies where they exist and you do not waste resources, including colleagues/other services time. ✓ You adhere to all Purchase to Pay rules with regards to requisitioning and paying for goods and services. ✓ You are required to ensure that spending is contained within its allocated budget, income is invoiced on a timely basis, and any debt is actively followed up. ✓ You provide review and challenge on the cost of service provision to ensure a realistic budget. ✓ You adhere to the statutory closure of accounts guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You demonstrate to your team that you care about their job satisfaction and wellbeing by how you ask, listen and respond. ✓ You act within the standards set out within the Council's Code of conduct. ✓ You understand and promote our organisational values, demonstrate these yourself and constructively challenge the behaviour of others where it is contrary to the values. ✓ You are a positive role model and promote pride in the work of WNC. ✓ You encourage a culture which is positive and has a focus on continuous improvement. You listen, you reflect, and you are open to new ways of doing things to improve services for residents. ✓ You treat customers, colleagues and your teams how you would expect to be treated, inclusive, fair and using open, honest, timely communication. ✓ You demonstrate personal responsibility for your own wellbeing and work-life balance, in addition to your teams. ✓ You take time personally to learn and reflect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You ensure that your team and other teams who you engage with know who is who and how they can be contacted - you share & publish a visual of your structure. ✓ You understand how your activities align to the WNC Corporate Plan and you ensure that your team understands how they contribute to the achievement of the priorities. ✓ You continuously communicate and re-enforce key corporate & directorate messages. You discuss them in team meetings, you check understanding, you listen and you feedback upwards where necessary helping to re-enforce organisational clarity and wider understanding. ✓ You ensure face to face contact takes place regularly by bringing your teams and other teams together to increase networking, team interaction and the sharing of ideas and best practice. ✓ You respect your team's work/life balance and their wellbeing by ensuring that your team can fully disconnect during non working hours. You can do this by not emailing them over weekends or evenings or using the delay email delivery facility. 	<p>Finance & HR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You carry out all manager functions on ERP Gold: ✓ Raising and approving invoices ✓ Recording sickness ✓ Managing your establishment and verifying vacancies ✓ Managing payroll changes ✓ New starters, leavers & movers & agency workers ✓ Managing annual leave ✓ Approving claims, overtime, additional hours ✓ Approving mileage & expenses ✓ Completing exit interviews <p>Legal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You understand that data protection is everyone's responsibility ✓ You ensure the standards of conduct (see code of conduct) are understood and adhered to by every member of the team. <p>Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You ensure your teams have the IT equipment, to do their role, ordering new equipment and retrieving it when a contract ceases. ✓ You ensure you provide, and revoke where not needed, access to service specific systems and shared mailboxes. <p>Customers & Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You respond promptly to queries, comments and complaints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Budget Management - Guidance is available on the Intranet and online learning is available through the Learn portal. ✓ Code of Conduct/Conflict of Interest/Gifts and Hospitality ✓ Corporate Plan: ✓ Strategy, vision and priorities. ✓ Our THRIVE VALUES ✓ ERP Gold: ✓ Lots of resources including the checklist for managers. ✓ Human Resources: ✓ HR policies and links to Learning & Development, Recruitment, Payroll and managers hub. ✓ Induction ✓ Information Governance ✓ Mandatory Learning. ✓ Procurement rules and best practice ✓ The WNC Constitution. ✓ Wellbeing Support

Reflections

- We have built an open, transparent and positive culture
- Thrive Values are held dear – staff awards, shout outs and news
- We should have co-located sooner
- Restructuring is hard but do it early will help to create single cultures & processes
- Some people will never change and don't want to do things differently – let them go
- Districts and Borough staff reflections – it's better on the other side!

The last word(s)

What has been achieved in the past four years is nothing short of phenomenal... You picked up the biggest pile of rubble and ashes and managed to create a cohesive organisation with the three D&Bs – four completely different cultures. You were firm, but fair, and weren't hostage or pandered to any of the “less attractive” traits of any of the legacy cultures.

We have pulled this together literally from ground zero and built an organisation we can be proud of on solid foundations (really, I do speak proudly of our policies and work). *Council programme manager September 25*

There is a positive culture across the council, with a tangible upbeat energy Staff told us that they are keen to work at WNC and that its growing, positive reputation as a new organisation means new people are keen to join the council, both from other local authorities and from the wider employment market

Council Corporate Peer review LGA Mar 2024

Questions?

