

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY

**Minutes of the meeting of the
North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
held virtually (and at Swanspool House, Wellingborough)
on Thursday 20 August 2020**

Those present:

Councillors: Abram, Addison, Allebone, Anslow, Aslam, Beattie P, Beattie R, Beattie T, Beeby, Bell (Chairman), Brackenbury D (Vice-Chairman), Brackenbury W, Brookfield, Brown M, Bunday, Burton, Carr, Carter, Cassidy, Clark, Currall, Dady, Dalziel, Davies, Dearing, Dutton, Edwards, Ekins, Eyles, Farrar, Ferguson, Francis, Gell, Greenwood-Smith, Griffiths, Groome, Hakewill, Hales, Hallam, Harrington, Harrison, Henley, Hollobone, Holloman, Horley, Howell, Howes, Hughes D, Hughes S, Jelley, Jenney B, Jenney D, Keane, Lawman G, Lawman L, Lee, Lewis, Mark, Matthews, Maxwell, McGhee, Mercer A, Mercer G, Mitchell, Morrall, North, O'Hara, Partridge-Underwood, Peacock, Pengelly, Perry, Pinnock J, Reichhold, Riley, Roberts, Rowley, Scanlon, Scarborough, Scott, Scrimshaw, Shacklock, Skittrall, Smithers, Smith-Haynes, Stanbra, Stanton, Stevenson, Tebbutt, Thurland, Titcombe, Tomas, Tye, Walia, Waters M, Waters V, Watts Keli, Weatherill, Wellings, West, Wilkes, Wright and York;

Officers present: Mrs E Elliott, Interim Head of Paid Service (NNSA); Mr B Gill, Interim Monitoring Officer (NNSA); Mrs T Grant, Chief Executive (NCC); Mr G Hammons, Interim Chief Finance Officer/Section 151 officer (NNSA); Mr P Goult, Joint Lead Democratic Services Manager (NNSA); Mrs A Ireson, Democratic Services Manager (KBC), Mrs C A Mundy, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Committees & Members) (BCW), Miss L Tyers, Senior Democratic Services Officer (ENC), Ms F McHugo, Democratic Services Officer (NNSA), Mrs E Robinson, Democratic Services Officer (BCW).

(Also present Mr R Bridge, on Zoom and Miss K Denton, Assistant Director, (BCW) at Swanspool House.)

1. APOLOGIES

RESOLVED to note that apologies were received from Councillors Adams, Bone, C Brown, Caine, de Cappell Brooke, Elliston, Emerson, French, McEwan, Maguire, Patel, Pentland, Pinnock, Sims, Talbot, K Watt.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Groome made a declaration as an employee of Northamptonshire County Council's Library Service.

RESOLVED that this declaration be noted.

3. MINUTES OF THE NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW MEETING HELD ON 4 JUNE 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2020 were received. It was moved by Councillor D Brackenbury and seconded by Councillor I Jelley that the minutes be approved.

The chairman put the proposition to the vote.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 94 votes in favour, zero votes against and zero abstentions.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority held on 4 June 2020 be approved.

4. RECORD OF DECISIONS OF THE SHADOW EXECUTIVE, AND MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

The minutes of the shadow executive decisions and committees held between 11 June 2020 and 6 August 2020 were received.

The Chairman reminded members that any questions about the accuracy of the shadow executive committee minutes or other committee minutes would need to be considered and determined by such committees and not at this meeting. The Chairman proposed the receipt and noting of the minutes.

Councillor Stanbra commented that he had spoken at the shadow executive meeting on 11 June 2020 on Item 5, whilst this was accurately stated in the minutes, he wished to make it clear that he had not left the meeting but had been removed by officers to be readmitted if he needed to speak again; he felt that an appropriate form of words should be used for future minutes. The chairman clarified that this would be referred to Democratic Services.

RESOLVED that the following minutes be noted:

- (i) Shadow Executive Committee meetings of 11 June 2020, 25 June 2020 and 23 July 2020;
- (ii) Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings of 9 July 2020 and 6 August 2020;
- (iii) Shadow Senior Appointments committee of 9 July 2020.

5. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to note that no questions, from the public, to address the meeting had been received under meeting procedure rule 11B.

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

RESOLVED to note that no questions, from members, to address the meeting had been received under meeting procedure rule 11A.

Members raised the issue of receipt of the agenda and reports for the meeting, expressing concern that the timescale for submitting questions for the meeting – which was two days after the date of the agenda publication

date - was insufficient to enable them to have read the reports and to make an informed decision on whether they wished to submit a question. Members also commented that the papers were issued at 5.45 pm on the publication date giving, in reality, only one working day to digest the reports and respond. Many commented that the physical copy of the agenda had not been received until some days after the submission date.

Mrs Grant and Mr Goult responded to members' concerns and explained that the agenda and papers were issued to members electronically, in accordance with publication dates. Each sovereign council then copied and disseminated the agenda and reports to their respective councillors. He apologised to those members who had not received their hard copy in good time, but the requirements to provide the agenda and papers electronically had been fulfilled.

Mrs Grant clarified that the papers had been issued on time within the clear working days electronically and reminded members that paper copies were an added bonus not a requirement.

Members were also reminded that the agenda item, questions from members, did not refer to the agenda, on which members could still ask questions.

7. SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF A PERMANENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE/HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The circulated report of the Chairman of the Shadow Senior Appointments Committee, Councillor Martin Griffiths, was received; this was also supplemented with a verbal statement from Councillor Griffiths, explaining how there had been a competitive national recruitment process. This had been followed by interviews with members, employees, trade unions and external partners. The calibre of the candidates interviewed had been high and the panel was pleased to recommend that Mr Rob Bridge be:

- (i) confirmed as Chief Executive designate for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority;
- (ii) confirmed as the new permanent Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for the North Northamptonshire Council from 1 April 2021; and
- (iii) appointed at a salary of £170,000 (within the advertised salary grade of £170,000 to £180,000).

Councillor Martin Griffiths formally proposed the above and this was seconded by Councillor Steven North.

Members voted on the proposal using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 94 votes in favour, one vote against and five abstentions.

RESOLVED that Rob Bridge be:

- (i) confirmed as Chief Executive for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, with a start date to be agreed;

- (ii) confirmed as the permanent Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for the North Northamptonshire Council from 1 April 2021;
- (iii) appointed on a salary of £170,000 (within the advertised salary grade of £170,000 to £180,000).

The Chairman and members extended their congratulations to Mr Bridge on his appointment and wished him every success with his new position.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The circulated report of the Interim Monitoring Officer, Bhupinder Gill, was received in relation to various proposed amendments to the Shadow Authority's constitution.

Mr Gill presented the report and detailed the particular areas being referenced as follows:

- In-year changes to standing committee membership;
- Substitute members;
- Public and member public participation;
- Delegation of decisions and responsibilities to shadow executive;
- Committee members;
- Reformatting of the meeting procedure rules.

Members debated the proposed changes with many raising concern over the reduction in time limits for questions for members and the removal of more than one question being asked. It was considered that changes would not be democratic or sufficiently transparent. Many members supported the option to allow substitute named members. Members also referred to appendix D with some considering that executive powers should only be exercised by the Shadow Executive, as stipulated in the Structural Change Order (as amended), and not a single lead councillor.

The Interim Monitoring Officer responded to the concerns of members, explaining the necessity for the changes and the benefits that such changes would bring.

Councillor Wilkes proposed the following amendment to appendix C:

‘that reference to a 20 minute period for shadow member questions be increased to 30 minutes’. This was seconded by Councillor Hakewill.

The Chairman put this amendment to the vote.

Members voted on the amendment, using the electronic platform on Zoom. There were 67 votes in favour, 17 votes against and four abstentions.

The amendment was declared carried and became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Wilkes proposed a second amendment, as follows, to appendix C:

'No more than one question per meeting from a shadow member is removed from the suggested amendment'. This was seconded by Councillor Hakewill.

The chairman put the amendment to the vote.

Members voted on the amendment, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 58 votes in favour, 24 votes against and seven abstentions.

The amendment was declared carried and became part of the substantive motion.

A further debate ensued.

Councillor Lesley Thurland proposed the recommendation, including the substantive motions as above, and this was seconded by Councillor Wendy Brackenbury.

The Chairman proposed that for ease, a vote would be taken on each individual recommendation:

Recommendation (i) - Appendix A – Committee membership (in-year changes) – To approve the suggested procedure for in-year changes to committee membership and the filling of any vacant positions of Chairman and/or Vice-Chairman that may arise.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 81 votes in favour, zero votes against and seven abstentions. This was declared carried.

Recommendation (ii) - Appendix B – Substitute committee members – To approve the introduction of substitute members for standing committees as detailed therein.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 85 votes in favour, one against and two abstentions. This was declared carried.

Recommendation (iii) - Appendix C – Member and public participation - To approve the amendments for public and member participation, including the reference to a 20 minute period for shadow members questions being increased to 30 minutes and the removal of no more than one question per meeting from a shadow member.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 75 votes in favour, 12 votes against and two abstentions. This was declared carried.

Recommendation (iv) - Appendix D – amendment to article 7 to allow the Leader to delegate decisions or responsibilities to other members of the executive committee.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 61 votes in favour, 27 votes against and three abstentions. This was declared carried.

Recommendation (v) - Appendix E – Removal of meeting procedure rule 8.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 48 votes in favour, 29 votes against and 12 abstentions. This was declared carried.

Recommendation (vi) - Members were asked to note the intention of the interim monitoring officer to reformat the meeting procedure rules to aid interpretation and recirculate the constitution.

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 75 votes in favour, seven against and six abstentions. This was declared carried.

RESOLVED that approval be given to:

- (i) the in-year changes as detailed at appendix A;
- (ii) the introduction of substitute members as detailed at appendix B;
- (iii) the amendments for public and member participation, as amended above, and as detailed in appendix C;
- (iv) the amendment to Article 7 of the constitution, to allow the Leader of the Authority to delegate decisions or responsibilities to other members of the Executive Committee, as detailed at appendix D;
- (v) the removal of the meeting procedure rule 8, as detailed in appendix E;
- (vi) note the intention of the Interim Monitoring Officer to reformat the Meeting Procedure Rules to aid interpretation, and to recirculate the updated constitution after such reformatting is completed.

9. COMMITTEE PROPORTIONALITY AND APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE

The circulated report of the interim monitoring officer was received to report various changes to the membership of political groups since the inaugural meeting in June 2020.

Mr Gill presented the report and detailed the changes to the number of councillors and the composition of the political groups since the meeting in June, and the allocation of seats thereto taking into account the principles that needed to be followed.

Councillor Tom Beattie proposed the motion, which was seconded by Councillor Gill Mercer.

Members debated the report and proposals, particularly around the Standards Committee membership and how the changes had impacted the membership of the Independent Group. Councillor Stanbra asked that it be noted that the Liberal Democrat seat on Standards would be taken by Councillor Dutton. Councillor A Mercer, who had originally been nominated to sit on overview and scrutiny, had been unable to do so as he was on a task and finish group.

The task and finish group had now concluded and he asked if he could be considered for membership of the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Mr Gill responded and noted the nomination of Councillor Dutton and confirmed that it would be permissible for membership of committees to be revisited by group leaders but that he would need to be notified of such changes.

(Councillor Reichhold left the meeting at 8.45 pm and did not return.)

Members voted, using the electronic poll on the Zoom platform. There were 79 votes in favour, four votes against and four abstentions. This was declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the revised membership of the political groups be noted;
- (ii) approval be given to the revised allocation of places on committees between the political groups; and
- (iii) the revised membership of individual committees be approved.

10. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2020-2021 – REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The circulated report of the Chairman of the Governance Task and Finish group, Councillor Tom Beattie, was received.

The report detailed the findings and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the members' allowance scheme for 2020-2021 for the shadow authority.

Councillor Beattie highlighted the key recommendation of the Panel as follows:

- (i) a basic allowance of £1,000 be allocated to the members of the Shadow Authority;
- (ii) a special responsibility allowance (SRA) of £6,000 be allocated to the Authority's Leader;
- (iii) a special responsibility allowance (SRA) of £4,000 be allocated to the other members of the Executive;
- (iv) A special responsibility allowance (SRA) of £2,000 be allocated to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Appointments Committee;
- (v) A special responsibility allowance (SRA) of £4,000 be allocated to the Chairman of the Shadow Authority;
- (vi) All allowances be backdated to the date of the inception of the Shadow Authority;
- (vii) All travel and subsistence expenses and carers allowances be met by the five participating local authorities;
- (viii) It be noted that under the Structural Changes Order (as amended) that a Shadow Member may receive a basic allowance from the Shadow Authority OR continue to receive a basic allowance from their sovereign council, but cannot receive both; and

- (ix) It be noted under the Structural Changes Order (as amended) that a shadow member may receive one special responsibility allowance from the shadow authority OR where applicable continue to receive a special responsibility allowance from their sovereign council, but cannot receive both.

Councillor Beattie proposed the recommendation within the report and this was seconded by Councillor Gill Mercer.

Members debated the proposal and considered that in moving forward the Independent Remuneration Panel needed to consult with current councillors over allowances and that this be clearly referenced in the remit to the said panel with the Councillor Tom Beattie, the Chair of the Governance Task and Finish Group, emphasising this requirement. Other members felt that recommendations from the experienced Panel members should be listened to and not rejected, whilst also agreeing that the Panel would benefit from speaking with current members when work commenced on the Members' Allowance Scheme for the North Northamptonshire Council.

Councillor Stanbra proposed the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Hakewill:

'that the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel be rejected and that all allowances be set at nil.'

The Chairman put the amendment to the vote.

Members voted on the amendment, using the electronic poll on Zoom. There were 26 votes in favour, 53 votes against and six abstentions. The amendment was declared lost.

The Chairman put the recommendations within the report to the vote.

Members voted, using the electronic poll, on the Zoom platform. There were 66 votes in favour, eight votes against and seven abstentions. The vote was declared carried.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) approval be given to the recommendations contained within the Independent Remuneration Panel's report; and
- (ii) It be noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel will commence work on drawing-up recommendations for a members' allowances scheme for North Northamptonshire Council, as required by the Structural Changes Order (as amended), with a request that all members be consulted by the panel.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION RECEIVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH MEETING PROCEDURE RULE 12

(a) In relation to Shadow Executive functions:

The Chairman referred to the notice that had been received, as detailed on the agenda, and reminded members that in accordance with meeting Procedure Rule 12, a maximum of 15 minutes was allowed for debate on a notice of motion. Such period included any speeches made by the mover, and seconder. Councillor Jason Smithers, Cabinet Member for Highways (NCC), would also have the opportunity to speak. No speeches shall exceed three minutes. No amendments to the motion may be moved. The motion was moved by Councillor Stanbra and seconded by Councillor Dutton as follows:

(i) The recent decision by Northamptonshire County Council to go ahead with arranging and awarding the Highways Maintenance Contract is premature.

The new North Northamptonshire Council should make these decisions as the contract need not start until 2022 and its impact will be felt for years to come.

This shadow council is asked, therefore, to request that Northamptonshire County Council does not adopt a new Highways Maintenance contract covering North Northamptonshire and that approval of any contract is deferred until it can be considered by the new North Northamptonshire Council in 2021 and as part of that process, the option of bringing the maintenance work in-house is thoroughly assessed.

Councillor Smithers responded to the concerns raised. Full details of the procurement process had been shared with the Local Government Reform Programme, the Joint Implementation Executive, district and borough councils as well as the county council, and was also available on the county council website. Work needed to commence on the procurement process to ensure that a new contract was in place before the end of the current contract. He emphasised that the contract would not be completed before 2021 and the two new unitary councils would award such contract. The current work was the starting point and reiterated that the contract would not be awarded prior to the new unitary councils coming into force. The contract would take into consideration options for the provision of in-house or external contractors.

Members debated the motion. Many felt that the county council should not be considering a new contract and that this work should wait until the new unitary council was in place. Concern that commitments to a long contract would be made without full consideration were raised. There were a number of considerations that needed to be worked through such as whether town and parish councils wished to make their own arrangements for highway repairs, whereby they could potentially get smaller local contractors to carry out repairs much quicker than a larger contractor could do. There was some concern raised that the contract would be awarded by the county council, and that any commitment for the two unitary councils would be unfair. It was, however, appreciated that contracts of this size needed preparation and were time consuming and very involved and complex and that work needed to be commenced with a view to this being decided by the two unitary councils after April 2021.

The Chairman concluded the debate and confirmed that the motion would be referred to the Shadow Executive Committee.

(b) In relation to non-Shadow Executive functions:

No motions were received.

12. CLOSE OF MEETING

There being no further business the Chairman, thanked everyone for their attendance, and closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

Councillor Paul Bell

Chairman of North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority