

## **North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee**

At 7:00 pm on Thursday 25th June 2020

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

### **Present:-**

#### Shadow Members

Councillor R Roberts (Leader of the Shadow Authority and Chair)	Councillor M Griffiths (Deputy Leader of the Shadow Authority and Vice Chair)
Councillor I Jelley	Councillor T Beattie
Councillor T Partridge-Underwood	Councillor S North
Councillor J Smithers	Councillor W Brackenbury
Councillor D Jenney	Councillor J Addison

#### Officers

L Elliott – Interim Head of Paid Service	B Gill – Interim Monitoring Officer
P Helsby – Programme Director	G Hammons – Interim Chief Finance Officer
B Smith – North Northamptonshire Democratic Services	K Denton – Borough Council of Wellingborough
P Goult – North Northamptonshire Democratic Services	A Statham – Programme Team Finance Enabler
A Hunkin – Enabling Lead for Legal and Democratic	

#### Also in attendance

Councillor A Dutton (for item 7)  
Councillor A Lee (for item 7)  
Councillor J Hakewill (for item 7)

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

### **2 Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

The draft minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020 had been circulated.

Councillor Jelley MOVED and Councillor Beattie SECONDED that the minutes be approved as a correct record. The recommendation having been MOVED and SECONDED was put to an electronic vote. There were 10 votes FOR, no votes against, and no ABSTENTIONS.

#### **RESOLVED that –**

- (i) The minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **3 Notifications of requests to address the meeting**

The Chair was notified that three requests had been received under the approved Public Participation Procedure to address the Shadow Executive Committee. Under Agenda Item 7 “Future Northants Programme Update”, Councillor Andrew Dutton, Councillor Anne Lee and Councillor Jim Hakewill had requested to speak.

### **4 Change to the Order of Business**

The Chair proposed that as there were three speakers for item 7 on the agenda that item 7 be brought forward for consideration as the first substantive item.

With the consent of members, the Chair proceeded with the remainder of business.

### **5 Members’ Declaration of Interest**

Councillors were invited to declare any matters of interest on items to be discussed during the meeting. No declarations were made.

### **6 Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **7 Future Northants Programme Update**

Mr Paul Helsby (Programme Director) introduced a presentation detailing the progress made to date on the implementation of the Future Northants Programme. The presentation included details of the Mobilisation Plan RAG Status, the Programme Management Structure, an update on the preparation of a blueprint for the new unitary authority, details relating to the assurance approach being undertaken for Day One (Vesting Day), the proposed Change Management Strategy, Communication and Engagement activity, and a Finance Report.

In relation to the Mobilisation Plan, it was noted that all activities on the Plan were GREEN status except Detailed Benefit Realisation and the ICT Plan which were both AMBER. Further detailed work was required on Benefits Realisation due to understandable delays whilst resources were directed to dealing with the current Covid-19 pandemic. In relation to the ICT Plan, this was underway but a number of issues needed to be resolved requiring further activity at district and county level.

In relation to Day One service arrangements, Mr Helsby assured the Committee that planning for the disaggregation of NCC services was well underway, and the majority of services would be disaggregated by Vesting Day. Those services which were not disaggregated by Vesting Day, were likely to be hosted by a lead authority (either North or West) on behalf of both, but would eventually be disaggregated during 2021. It was noted that Children’s Services would remain on a countywide basis, to be undertaken through a Trust. In addition progress was being made on planning for the aggregation of district services. Work on financial planning for the new authority had commenced, and Mr Helsby referenced the activity underway across three Task and Finish Groups. These Groups would report into the Shadow Executive Committee during 2020.

Also in relation to Day One assurance, it was stressed that the primary objective was that the new authority be “safe and legal” on Vesting Day. 50 Day One service requirements had already been identified, across a number of service areas. Mr Helsby explained that a significant amount of work had been undertaken prior to the Covid-19 crisis, and that this work had been utilised during recent weeks to develop further planning and map the critical path for each of the identified 50 Day One requirements.

Included with the agenda was a copy of a Change Management Strategy, which had been developed to assist Members and officers in developing the new unitary authority. Whilst it was a priority that the new authority operated in a “Safe and Legal” framework from Vesting Day, opportunities to improve and transform service delivery would be proposed where it was viable to do so. It was important that Members and officers understood the important role they respectively played in developing the structures and priorities for the new authority. Adoption of the proposed Strategy would assist in ensuring all participants felt valued and to encourage their participation.

It was noted that across the sovereign councils, over 300 staff had already signed-up as “Change Champions”. It was hoped that more staff would become engaged, ensuring that all service areas were appropriately represented.

The Shadow Executive Committee noted that a revised Communications & Engagement Strategy was in place, an online consultation hub had been established, and the Future Northants website was being updated and expanded. In addition, it was noted that the Communications & Engagement Task and Finish Group had been established and had commenced its work.

Members noted that briefings for all Shadow Members were to be scheduled in the near future, in order to update Members on the progress of key issues including the establishment of a Children’s Trust etc.

Mr Helsby concluded his presentation by confirming that the current overall cost of the LGR Programme was c.£44m. This had not changed from the previous report to the former North Northamptonshire Joint Committee earlier in the year. This figure included £2m transformation costs, scheduled over 2021/22 – 2022/23.

Ms Statham (Programme Team Finance Enabler) presented a report setting out the financial position of the LGR Programme based on the revised approach of “safe and legal” on Day One, with the capacity to continue full disaggregation of services and transformation post-Vesting Day.

It was noted that a financial outturn report for 2019/2020 would be presented to the next meeting of the Shadow Executive Committee.

The recommendations were **MOVED** by Councillor Griffiths and **SECONDED** by Councillor Jelley.

The Chair invited Councillor Andrew Dutton to address the Committee. Councillor Dutton acknowledged the financial and operational pressures that the current Covid-19 crisis were placing on sovereign councils, and on the LGR Programme. Councillor Dutton acknowledged the need for the new authority to function in a “safe and legal” manner from Vesting Day, but welcomed the stated intention to continue to seek transformation of services where feasible to do so prior to April

2021. Councillor Dutton felt it was important that the new unitary authority addressed the issue of deprivation in North Northamptonshire, and that all Shadow Members be given the opportunity to contribute in shaping the authority's policies and activities. The Chair thanked Councillor Dutton for his contribution.

The Chair invited Councillor Lee to address the Committee. Councillor Lee raised concern regarding the governance model being adopted by the Shadow Authority, which Councillor Lee felt was "autocratic" in nature. Councillor Lee was concerned that the majority of Shadow Members and officers were not able to fully engage in the development of the new authority. Councillor Lee felt that there was a lack of detail in some of the presentation slides, and cited that further information regarding the 50 Day One activities would have been welcomed. Councillor Lee also expressed concern regarding the lack of detail relating to the ICT Plan. The Chair thanked Councillor Lee for her contribution.

The Chair invited Councillor Hakewill to address the Committee. Councillor Hakewill expressed the view that the timetable for the creation and operation of the new authority was extremely "tight". Councillor Hakewill felt this time-pressure had obviously been exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. Councillor Hakewill also expressed concern regarding his perceived lack of transparency in the operation of the established Task and Finish Groups, and noted that no Group had an Independent Group Shadow Member included in its membership. Councillor Hakewill concluded by raising concerns that the potential impact of the LGR Programme on existing town and parish councils had yet to be discussed or quantified. Councillor Hakewill was concerned that potentially major services or liabilities may be forwarded to town and parish councils, with little notice or consultation, and this would have a significant potential impact on local precepts. The Chair thanked Councillor Hakewill for his contribution.

Following their contributions, Councillors Dutton, Lee and Hakewill left the meeting.

The Chair invited Shadow Executive Committee Members to comment on the presentation and report.

Councillor Beattie sought clarification from Mr Helsby in relation to what the public could expect from local services on Day One of the new unitary authority. Mr Helsby confirmed that there would be no diminution of services. The continuity of service delivery was a key priority, together with ensuring the new authority was "safe and legal" on Vesting Day. Where opportunities for the transformation of services would be considered in the run-up to Vesting Day, these were likely to be "back-office" functions, and would not impact on frontline service delivery. The public should experience a seamless transition from the sovereign councils to the new authority.

Councillor Addison referred to the Mobilisation Plan on page 17 of the agenda, and sought clarification if those activities whose status were GREEN, were "strong" GREEN. Mr Helsby confirmed that they were "strong" GREEN.

Councillor Griffiths welcomed the presentation and report, and highlighted the positive start made by many of the Task and Finish Groups. Mr Helsby acknowledged that the Task and Finish Groups had made a constructive start to their respective tasks.

Councillor Beattie queried Ms Statham regarding reference on page 25 of the agenda to financial risks. Ms Statham stated that the potential impact of the Covid-19 crisis would need to be monitored. The Committee would be kept updated.

Councillor Beattie sought clarification in relation to the reduction of £300k under Shadow Member Appointments on page 26 of the agenda. Ms Statham explained that in the original budget, a full Shadow Allowance Scheme and other costs (£360k) had needed to be budgeted for in advance of the then proposed full elections in May 2020. As the situation had altered, with existing sovereign councillors also now filling Shadow Member positions, and that there was less of a need to backfill staffing costs, this budget element could be reduced to £60k.

Councillor Jenney commented in relation to Councillor Hakewill's earlier comments, that there were no proposals to interfere with town & parish councils' ability to set local precepts; that was a matter for them as sovereign local councils.

The recommendations having been MOVED and SECONDED were put to an electronic vote. There were 9 votes FOR, no votes AGAINST and no ABSTENTIONS.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- (i) The progress being made to mobilise the programme ready for implementation be noted;
- (ii) The Change Management Strategy be approved and adopted; and
- (iii) The finance monitoring report be noted and approved.

**8 The Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification Process**

Mr Andrew Hunkin (Enabling Lead for Legal and Democratic) introduced the report.

The purpose of the report was to consider a process that allowed discussion and consultation in a managed manner, on any proposal from sovereign councils concerning assets, capital schemes and reserves.

It was stressed, that sovereign councils would continue to operate and determine their affairs during 2020/2021, however the proposed process would allow for the Shadow Authority to be notified and consulted on any new significant financial spend or new financial liability being considered by sovereign councils.

A de minimis level of £100k was proposed in order to avoid the process becoming unmanageable. The key areas covered by the process would be the purchase, disposal or transfer of assets, new capital schemes with on-going financial commitments, and the proposed use of reserves above those already set out in sovereign council's approved budgets.

Some exceptions to the process were proposed. These included matters relating to Adult or Children Care Packages, and matters relating to HR and associated issues.

The recommendations were MOVED by Councillor Jelley and SECONDED by Councillor Griffiths.

The Chair invited Shadow Executive Committee Members to comment on the presentation and report.

Councillor Jelley felt that the proposed process represented a sensible safeguarding measure for the new authority, protecting public assets and ensuring the considered spend of public money. Sovereign councils would be able to continue to operate during 2020/2021 but the Shadow Authority would be consulted on proposed significant spend.

The recommendation having been MOVED and SECONDED was put to an electronic vote. There were 10 votes FOR, no votes AGAINST and no ABSTENTIONS.

**RESOLVED that:-**

- (i) The Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification Process set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved and adopted.

**9 Exempt Items**

The Chair informed the meeting that there were no exempt items to be determined on this occasion.

**10 Urgent Items**

The Chair informed the meeting that there were no urgent items to be determined on this occasion.

**11 Close of Meeting**

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 7:59 pm.