

North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee

At 7:00 pm on Wednesday 3rd February 2021

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

Item:

04

Present: -

Shadow Members

Councillor R Roberts (Leader of the Shadow Authority and Chair)

Councillor J Addison

Councillor T Partridge- Underwood

Councillor D Jenney

Councillor S North

Councillor J Smithers (Deputy Leader of the Shadow Authority)

Councillor W Brackenbury

Councillor T Beattie

Councillor I Jelley

Councillor M Griffiths

Officers

R Bridge – Chief Executive

A Wylie – Monitoring Officer

C Hadley – Director of Children’s Services

G Candler – Executive Director Place & Economy

I Smith – Head of Service, Planning & Development, CBC

B Gordon – Service Development Officer, KBC

M Devlin- Hogg, HR Enabler, Future Northants

F McHugo– North Northamptonshire Democratic Services

J Gotts – Executive Director Finance

D Watts – Director of Adult Services

M Dickenson – Head of Service – Resources KBC

J Conway – Head of Housing KBC

C Hohn –Housing Solutions Manager KBC

J McKinnon – Principal Leisure Officer, CBC

T. Smith – Asset Manager, CBC

K Purnell – Assistant Director Corporate & Community Services, NCC

B Smith – North Northamptonshire Democratic Services

Also in attendance – Councillor A Henley.

The Chair welcomed members and the viewing public to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence received.

2. **Notifications of requests to address the meeting**

The Chair informed the meeting that no request to address the meeting had been received.

3. Members' Declarations of Interest

A personal interest was declared by Chief Executive, Rob Bridge, in item 11 of the agenda and it was indicated that he would leave the meeting for the duration of that item. Councillor North declared a personal interest in item 9 in relation to green waste.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2021

The draft minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 7th January 2020 had been circulated.

Councillor W Brackenbury MOVED, and Councillor I Jelley SECONDED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 7th January 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Urgent Item – to receive budget consultation feedback from the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor A Henley, Chairman of the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Budget Task and Finish Group was welcomed to the meeting and presented Scrutiny's consultation feedback in respect of the draft budget for 2021-22.

Members noted that the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed at its meeting on 10th December 2020 to the formation of a Budget Task and Finish Group to assist it in considering the draft budget proposals for 2021-22.

The Task and Finish Group had agreed to focus on four key areas for scrutiny, including three of the most significant areas of expenditure. These included considering the Housing Revenue Account (Revenue and Capital) on 13th January 2021, Children's and Educational Services on 18th January 2021, Adult Services on 21st January 2021 and Fees and Charges on 26th January 2021.

It was noted that some of the key areas raised by the Group was as follows:-

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- The HRA currently consisted of two Neighbourhood Accounts for Corby Borough Council (CBC) and Kettering Borough Council (KBC) and the amalgamation of these accounts was a priority for future years. This could present opportunities for transformation, service improvement and cost efficiencies. It was noted that general management costs for CBC were higher than for KBC.
- Significant capital funding for development and new build, but currently there was a lack of programme detail regarding the timing of the build and therefore this was not yet reflected in the proposed revenue budget. This would be clarified in the final HRA report.
- Differential void times between CBC and KBC, due to the type and nature of the units involved. This would continue to be monitored closely.

- Concern over the level of bad debt provision and collection rates with reference to direct and indirect consequences of COVID-19 pandemic.
- CBC and KBC had different strategies for repayment of HRA borrowing. Both systems were working, and no current risks were identified. As with any borrowing, the impact of interest rates needed to be monitored.

Children's Services

- The two new Unitary Councils for North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire respectively would need to review and negotiate the contract with the Children's Trust for 2022-23 onwards.
- The impact of COVID-19 on children's services would need to be continually monitored. It was noted that £720k had been retained by the Council as a specific contingency.
- Clear governance structure in place for dispute resolution and consideration of in-year budget changes.
- The importance of training for new Members was emphasised.

Adult Services

- Through redesign, Adult Services had achieved significant savings over recent years. Within the budget these savings were forecast to continue from 2021/22 under North Northamptonshire Council. This was included within the budget assumptions.
- The opportunity for cross-service/agency working, particularly with Public Health and NHS/CCG, provided opportunities for greater efficiency and service improvements.
- NCC Adult Services scored 25th out of 26th in the Budget Benchmarking Group for 2018/19 with other County Councils relating to spend.
- The impact of COVID-19 was noted. The service continued to monitor impact.
- The Target Operating Model (TOM) had been established and to date had been successful.

Fees and Charges

- Standardisation of pre-application Planning fees was welcomed.
- There was significant concern expressed regarding the harmonisation of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Fees from 1st April 2021, and that trade organisations had not been directly consulted. There was a strong recommendation that this element of the Fees & Charges proposals be reviewed.
- It was noted that in relation to cemetery fees and charges there would be a negative impact for Corby Borough residents and that in general Corby's fees and charges across several service areas were historically lower than other Councils within North Northamptonshire.
- The impact of increased bulky waste charges needed to be closely monitored, alongside the levels of fly tipping and associated costs to NNC.

General Comments

- The impact of COVID-19 during 2020-21 and into the new financial year was noted in all cases. Provision had been made but this needed to be closely monitored and trends identified.
- There were significant challenges in future years to ensure the Council maintained a balanced budget.
- There were significant opportunities for transformation, efficiency, and innovation within services. Opportunities for "joined-up" service delivery existed to maximise value for money and efficiency.
- The need for robust budget monitoring and scrutiny were of utmost importance. Even minor percentage variations in expenditure and/or income could have significant impact, particularly within service areas such as Adult Services and Children's Services.
- There would be legacy issues i.e., contracts which would need to be considered, and options identified for the future arrangements.

- There was a need to ensure that the Council Members received appropriate training and information to fulfil their role in the new authority.
- Throughout the year the financial position would be monitored and reported identifying any forecast movements from the budget. Looking ahead there would be a developed, approved budget-setting process for 2022/23, which would include the involvement of the public, Overview and Scrutiny and the wider membership.

Councillor Henley highlighted that fees and charges remained the cause for most concern and it was considered still needed work, particularly in relation to harmonisation. The Shadow Executive and full Shadow Authority was urged to further review these fees and charges and that a full consultation be undertaken before action was taken on this.

The Leader of the Shadow Authority and Executive Director of Finance thanked Cllr Henley for his presentation and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the work it had undertaken. The comments were duly received by the Shadow Executive Committee which in particular noted that:

- A number of the specifics raised in the comments such as in relation to the Housing Revenue Account, and use of the Capital Programme would be referenced in the final draft of the budget report, to be considered by the Shadow Executive on 10th February 2021.
- The more significant concerns around fees and charges were also recognised and these would also be considered for review prior to the final budget report being issued.
- The Children's Trust was aware of the financial constraints within which it would operate, noting that it would have a close relationship with the shared Director of Children's Services and the two member portfolio holder's for the North and West Councils. The requirements of the Trust both in respect of its budget and broader requirements would be met, and closely monitored.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee response to the budget be noted.

(Reasons for Decision – to enable Overview and Scrutiny recommendations to be incorporated into the consultation responses for the 2021/22 budget process.)

6. TRANSFORMATION TASK & FINISH GROUP UPDATE

The Chair invited Councillor S North, Chair of the Transformation Task & Finish Group to introduce this report.

Councillor North outlined the 9 months of work carried out by the group and suggested that transformation was a key opportunity for savings in the new authority. Members were directed to the broad spectrum of principles proposed in 4.6 and endorsement for the programme was sought

Members noted that the recommendations were contained in 4.6 not 2.6 as stated in some copies of the report.

Councillor M Griffiths MOVED and Councillor D Jenney SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- i) The Task & Finish Group recommendations for the principles for the Transformation programme, as outlined in 4.6 of the report be noted and endorsed.

7. Blueprint Change Requests

The Chief Executive introduced the report and outlined the change requests detailed in Appendix A1 and A2.

Members had been presented with the proposed changes that amend the Blueprint to ensure a robust change management and recording process for the Blueprint for the new unitary authorities.

Councillors Griffiths and W Brackenbury expressed support for the report.

Councillor M Griffiths MOVED, and Councillor W Brackenbury SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The changes requested to the Blueprint outlined in Appendix A be endorsed

Reason for Decision – To ensure a robust change management and recording process for the Blueprint for the new unitary authorities.

8. Private Sector Housing Policy

The Chair advised that as item 7 had been withdrawn from the agenda by officers, the meeting would move straight to agenda item 8.

9. North Northamptonshire Housing Allocations Policy

Head of Housing at KBC, J Conway to introduced the report. Officers recapped the background to the report which included the endorsement of the draft scheme by the Shadow Executive Committee at its meeting held 29 October.

Officers delivered a presentation which summarised the background, consultation response, exclusions and bands for the new housing allocations scheme.

Paragraph 6.4.14 highlighted a response to consultation concerns over suitable homes being outside of current sovereign areas where current support networks could exist.

Officers provided reassurance that local lettings policies allowed for case by case basis assessments and that policies would be subject to annual review.

Officers offered reassurance to Councillor North that although reregistration would be required for East Northamptonshire residents, reference numbers could be used in uploading evidence for previous applicants and existing waiting times would be honoured.

Councillor Griffiths commended the clear guidance on qualifications and noted the officer response on focused partnership working to support residents in accessing the private sector when a housing need is not identified.

Officers responded to Councillor Beattie's query for the 555 CBC residents that would not be eligible for the scheme and offered evidence, through the historic uptakes for B and E residents, that the impact would be minimal.

Officers assured Councillor Smithers that a flexible policy would ensure fair assessments of ASB issues would be undertaken.

Members also raised concerns over the use of existing sovereign boundaries beyond 1 April and the term 'local'. It was felt that this could lead to confusion when getting used to the new local authority boundary and clarity was needed for residents. It was noted that supplementary work on a case by case basis would ensure suitability for residents.

Councillor Jelley expressed confidence in the scheme and supported the clear guidance of the scheme which would provide an upgraded service for residents.

Councillor I Jelley MOVED and Councillor J Smithers SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The final draft housing allocation scheme for North Northamptonshire contained in Appendix A to the report be approved.
- (ii) The aim to launch the new scheme on vesting day, 1 April 2021 be supported.

Reasons For Decision – The alignment of housing allocation schemes will create equality of opportunity to access social housing across North Northamptonshire and bring cost savings and wider benefits to North Northamptonshire Council and its customers.

10. North Northamptonshire Household Waste & Recycling & Street Cleaning Policy

Head of Service, Planning & Development at CBC, Iain Smith, presented the report which summarised the work that had been undertaken by key officers across North Northamptonshire which defined a set of policies for the waste, recycling and street

cleansing services to be delivered from 1 April 2021. It presented a harmonised set of standards to be implemented within North Northamptonshire where possible.

Officers summarised the need to provide reassurance to residents, cost implications, prohibited items, item sizes as some services that would not be harmonised on day 1.

Councillor North queried the household waste policy on sack collections outlined in 1.2 and queried the 5 item collection limit on bulky items. The proposed policy outlined in paragraph 4.2 to only maintain and empty council bins was questioned in relation to the service currently provided to town and parish councils.

Officers reassured members that individual situations would be honoured and reviewed to ensure the most suitable service was offered for the resident's need. The regular review programmes for assisted collections were also to be continued including feedback from waste collection crews.

Councillor W Brackenbury asked for reassurance that any changes in timing for collections would be widely advertised. It was noted that an agreed communications campaign was in place and ready to be rolled out to households.

Councillor I Jelley MOVED and Councillor D Jenney SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Household Waste and Recycling Policy be approved.
- (ii) The Street Cleansing Policy be approved.
- (iii) The future polices in relation to the delivery of garden waste and food waste service be reviewed.

Reasons for Decision - To ensure North Northamptonshire has an agreed set of waste and recycling and street cleansing policies to ensure clarity for residents on the service standards to be delivered and provide harmonised policies where possible from 1 April 2021. To enable enforcement action to be taken where appropriate and allow a review of services where harmonisation is not currently possible and provide future recommendations on the delivery of these services.

11. Borough Council of Wellingborough Street Scene Service – Future Strategic Level Options

Head of Service, Planning & Development at ,CBC, Iain Smith presented the report.

The report presented to members advised that current street scene arrangements within the Wellingborough area were delivered via a joint venture partnership with NORSE as WNORSE. It was stated that the arrangements would expire on 28 February 2022 and a review should be undertaken before that date. Members were asked to authorise the North Northants Waste and Streets Officers Group to undertake a current state assessment, Strategic Case for Change and Options Identification and Appraisal for stages 1-3 and to arrive at a preferred option.

Councillor M Griffiths praised the WNORSE arrangements and urged officers to use best practices from all sovereign councils in future arrangements to ensure best services for North Northamptonshire residents.

Councillors Jelley and Addison welcomed the report and shared support for successful in-house services. It was suggested that the in-house services gave the authority a greater level of control over the service and allowed environmental issues to be more readily considered.

Officers assured Councillor D Jenney that members involvement would be sought and referenced the member key stakeholder group (stage 2). The preferred options would also be returned to the Executive for decision. Councillor Addison highlighted the vital role for member involvement as a key link between the council and service users.

Councillor J Smithers commented that the current standards of service across North Northamptonshire was reassuring and indicated that the great service should be continued.

Councillor J Smithers MOVED and Councillor I Jelley SECONDED the recommendations

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The North Northants Waste and Streets Officers Group be authorised to undertake a current state assessment, Strategic Case for Change and Options Identification and Appraisal (Stages 1-3) to arrive at a preferred option in relation to the future delivery of street scene services within the Wellingborough area, prior to developing a business case for consideration.
- (ii) The potential source of funding for such work be noted.
- (iii) It be noted that a future paper will be brought back regarding a preferred option(s) following completion of stages 1-3 with a suggested approach to stage 4 (outline/full business case).

12. Elections- Scale of Fees and Charges

[Rob Bridge left the meeting for the duration of the item due to his personal financial interest.]

Director of Legal & Democratic Services A Wylie introduced the report and outlined the returning officer fees and fees for staff managing elections. It was stated that the substantive and independent role sat outside the remit of Chief Executive and attracted an additional fee. A Wylie explained that the combination of consulting with districts and boroughs across the midlands and similar size councils, considering the complexity of 3 member wards and the acknowledgment that the Chief Executive would be answerable to courts and have personal liability was used to determine the proposed fees.

Members were advised that it would be prudent for the Executive to also note the proposed scale of fees outlined in Appendix A for administration of the election.

Members were advised that the level of support required to be provided in successfully and safely administering the election during the pandemic was subject to regular monitoring on the risk register and that additional processes and procedures were in place, including staff engagement.

Councillor D Jenney MOVED and Councillor M Griffiths SECONDED the recommendations

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The Returning Officer fees listed at Appendix A to this report be approved
- (ii) All other fees and charges within the Scale of Fees at Appendix A be noted.

Reasons for Decision - To ensure that there is a consistent and transparent approach to payments for administering elections within North Northamptonshire

[Rob Bridge returned to the meeting.]

13. Approval for Delegated Authority – Intention to Tender for Complex Autism Services.

Executive Director Adults, Communities & Wellbeing, D Watts, introduced the report. He outlined that the report addressed the challenge of many local authorities and assured members that the policy provided a proactive way of supporting children and adults with complex needs relating to autism, where policy can flex and adapt to individual needs. It was stated that the decrease in urgent service referrals should lead to a cost decrease. The approach to involving the service user voice in commissioning was being developed.

Members offered full support for the proposals and Councillor Smithers identified that this was a significant step in being a caring new authority.

Councillor W Brackenbury MOVED and Councillor T Beattie SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Authority be delegated to Katie Brown, Interim Director of Adult Social Services to give permission to proceed with the tender for complex autism services for autistic people over the age of 14 years.

Reasons for Decision - The proposed option aligns most closely with previous decisions relating to Adult Social Service routes to procurement where procurement of care and support services is necessary to meet unmet need. The future Council and customers will receive the maximum benefit from the option proposed and the proposal is aligned to the adult and children's care transformation agenda.

14. Eclipse: Contract and budget changes

Executive Director Adults, Communities & Wellbeing, D Watts, introduced the report. Officers raised the sensitive nature of the information and the impact on the programme as a result of experiences over the last year. It was stated that the recommendations sought to address system weaknesses in supporting vulnerable autistic individuals with complex needs and would result in a redirection of resources. Decisions for the 3 instances outlined would result in additional system implementation and licensing costs. Appendix A and B to the report outlined the additional costs.

Councillor D Jenney and Councillor Smithers queried the shortfall and its location within the forthcoming budget. Officers confirmed that the additional costs were identified in the budget to be considered by the Shadow Executive Committee on 10 February 2021.

Councillor W Brackenbury MOVED and Councillor T Beattie SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Proceeding with a new contract on a 2+1+1 G Cloud framework with OLM be endorsed.
- (ii) Proceeding with change control procedures with Northamptonshire Children's Trust to manage the impact of the changes be endorsed.

The impacts to the Capital Programme and ongoing revenue impacts be noted

Reasons for Decision - Consistency with previous decisions

15. HR Policies- Delegation of Policies

The Chair invited HR Enabler, M Devlin-Hogg to introduce the report. The report briefly outlined work completed to date and set out recommendations for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive to delegate responsibility for the negotiation of Day 1 employee pay arrangements, terms and conditions and employment policies. It was stated that this would provide clear and consistent transparent policies to support and manage the workforce.

Councillor Jelley commended the approach and commented that it was a vital step for North Northamptonshire in the run up to Vesting Day.

Officers reassured Councillor North that a single job evaluation system was captured in the ongoing negotiations with Trade Unions and that a clear policy drawing on best practice would be sought.

Councillor Beattie echoed support for the approach.

Councillor M Griffiths MOVED and Councillor T Beattie SECONDED the recommendations.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) Authority to the Head of Paid of Service to negotiate with the Council's recognised Trade Unions regarding "Day One Terms & Conditions" be delegated.
- (ii) The finalised "Day One Terms and Conditions and associated financial considerations shall be considered by the Shadow Executive in late March 2021(excluding those relating to the Chief Officers) be noted.
- (iii) Authority to the Head of Paid Service in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to approve the employment policies listed in Appendix One be delegated.

Reasons for Decisions - To ensure that the Council has terms and conditions of employment and necessary policies in place for the 1st April 2021 to enable it to recruit and manage staff.

16. Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, 'Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification', in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because exempt information may be disclosed.

17. Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification

Executive Director for Finance, J Gotts introduced the report and directed members to the outlined decisions made by CBC. As part of the Assets, Capital Schemes & Reserves Notification procedure rules, the report which had been circulated, asked members to consider the notification. The report was not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12 A of the Local Government 1972.

Councillor J Smithers MOVED, and Councillor J Addison SECONDED the recommendation.

It was RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The decisions made by Corby Borough Council at its meeting held on 12th January 2021 regarding Community Facilities be noted and endorsed.

Reason for Decision:- Consistency with the Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification process.

18. Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 8:47 pm