

This page is intentionally blank

North Northamptonshire Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At 7:00 pm on Thursday 8th October 2020

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

Present:-

Shadow Members

Councillor Perry (Vice Chair)
Councillor C Brown
Councillor Hakewill
Councillor Henley
Councillor Lee
Councillor Pengelly
Councillor Titcombe

Councillor Beirne
Councillor Davies
Councillor Harrison
Councillor L Lawman
Councillor McEwan
Councillor Rowley

Officers

M Hammond – Interim Monitoring Officer
P Helsby – Programme Director
L Hogston – East Northamptonshire DC
F McHugo – North Northamptonshire
Democratic Services
C Galluzzo – North Northamptonshire
Democratic Services

G Hammons – Interim Chief Finance Officer
L Hyde – Kettering BC
G Kane – Northamptonshire CC
P Goult – North Northamptonshire
Democratic Services

Also in attendance

Councillor A Dutton (KBC), Mr J Padwick, Ms E Fedorowycz, Ms A Holland, Mr D Lewis-Creser, Mr S Lewin, Mr D Dell & Councillor C Stanbra (NCC).

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor M Scrimshaw.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 10th September 2020 had been circulated.

The following amendments were submitted and agreed – Councillor Pengelly added as an attendee; Councillor Rowley deleted as attending; Councillor C Brown had attempted to join the meeting but due to IT issues was unable to fully attend and should be omitted.

Councillor Hakewill MOVED and Councillor Harrison SECONDED that the minutes (as amended) be approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED that:-

The minutes (as amended) of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10th September 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Vice Chair.

Under this item, Councillor Henley wished it noted that he had previously requested that the baseline data, referred to by officers under the Adult Services Update on 10th September 2020, be circulated to Members. He was not aware this had been done. Democratic Services officers agreed to follow this matter up, to ensure the data was obtained and circulated.

3. Members' Declarations of Interest

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

4. Questions and Notifications of requests to address the meeting

The Vice Chair informed the meeting that there were a number of public speakers to address the Climate Change Working Group report - Councillor A Dutton (KBC), Mr J Padwick, Ms E Fedorowycz, Ms A Holland, Mr D Lewis-Creser, Mr S Lewin, Mr D Dell. In addition, Councillor C Stanbra (NCC) would be speaking on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme report.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Vice Chair informed the Committee, that it had been agreed with officers that the Children's Trust agenda item would be taken at the Committee's meeting on 12th November 2020. This would focus on the relationship between the new unitary council and the Trust from Vesting Day, and the future role and responsibilities of unitary Members.

6. Climate Change Working Group

Prior to the Interim Monitoring Officer presenting his report, the Vice Chair invited members of the public to address the committee.

Councillor A Dutton (KBC) addressed the Committee. Councillor supported the proposal to set up the task and finish group, and the intention to use the questions set by the Centre of Public Scrutiny as a template for the group's work. Councillor Dutton's stressed the benefits to be gained from local action in addressing climate change. Councillor Dutton also stressed the benefits of involving a variety of partners and stakeholders in the group's discussions. Councillor Dutton also felt that the group should be all-party.

Mr J Padwick addressed the Committee. Mr Padwick welcomed the report, and the opportunity to prepare the new unitary council to assist in addressing the Climate Emergency. Mr Padwick also suggested that external partners be provided the opportunity to input into the group's discussion and look at best practise elsewhere. Mr Padwick, in conclusion, also suggested that the new unitary may wish to consider a Citizen's Assembly to assist in addressing issues such as climate change.

Ms E Fedorowycz addressed the Committee. Ms Fedorowycz welcomed the report, and suggested the creation of a community committee, to support the task and finish group to act as a conduit for individuals and organisations with an interest in this issue.

Ms A Holland addressed the Committee. Ms Holland stressed the importance of involving partners across North Northamptonshire. Ms Holland felt the new unitary needed to develop

links with the voluntary sector and social enterprise organisations, who may be able to offer insistence. Ms Holland also stressed the importance of involving young people. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals were cited by Ms Holland as a potential blueprint to be followed. Continuing virtual meetings, assisted in saving carbon emissions, saved on travel time and provided greater opportunities for participation by those who may due to personal or domestic reasons struggle to attend on-site meetings.

Mr D Lewis-Creser addressed the Committee. Mr Lewis-Creser welcomed the report and the proposal to set up the task and finish group. Mr Lewis-Creser felt that the current pace of change was relatively slow across the county and hoped that the rate of change would quicken under the new unitary council. Mr Lewis-Creser also supported the creation of a residents' forum to help support the work in addressing the Climate Emergency.

Ms S Lewin addressed the Committee. Mr Lewin felt it was important that the momentum achieved by some sovereign councils in addressing the Climate Emergency was not lost in the move to the new unitary council, and indeed was quickened. Mr Lewin welcomed the report and hoped that sufficient resources were provided to allow the task and finish group to complete its work. Mr Lewin also hoped that the opportunity was provided for external individuals and organisations were able to participate. In conclusion, Mr Lewin noted that the creation of a unitary council provided an opportunity for a new start, and that this would be taken to address the issues around climate change, and noted the important role local government had to play.

Mr D Dell addressed the Committee. Mr Dell also welcomed the report and the proposal to establish a task and finish group. Mr Dell stressed that there were those in the community who would be able to provide informed assistance to the group, and that the expertise that existed could be utilised to the benefit of the process. Mr Dell also welcomed reference in the report to citizen assemblies.

The Vice Chair thanked all of the public speakers for their participation.

(On conclusion of their contribution, all public speakers were removed from the virtual meeting)

The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report. It was noted that the Shadow Executive Committee at its meeting on 24th September 2020, considered a motion on Climate Change forwarded by the Shadow Authority, and had determined to refer the matter to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Shadow Executive Committee was suggesting that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider establishing a task and finish group to draft a Climate Change Strategy for future consideration by the Executive, the Shadow Authority and the future unitary council.

It was being proposed that the Terms of Reference of the Group include:-

- Identify best practice in environmental enhancement within local authorities locally and nationally;
- Identify areas in which the new unitary council can demonstrate environmental enhancement; and

- Develop an environmental framework which North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) can use to guide its decision making, policy development and service delivery in relation to environmental enhancement and Climate Emergency commitments.

It was noted by Members that if it wished, subject matter experts from the wider community could be invited to input into the Group's deliberations. Dedicated officer support would be provided by the Democratic Services team and by relevant officers from NCC, the Joint Planning Unit and sovereign councils.

It was stressed that the Group needed to develop initial proposals for consideration by the Shadow Executive Committee by February 2021, although it was recognised that the work of the Group would be developed further after Vesting Day. It was suggested that the Group provide an interim report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its December 2020 meeting.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) Councillor L Lawman be appointed Chair of the task and finish group, and that its membership consist of eight Shadow Members, comprised of one each from the Liberal Democrat Group and Independent Group, two from the Labour Group and four (including Councillor L Lawman) from the Conservative Group; and
- (ii) That a task and finish group on climate change be established on the lines set out in the report (as amended), with the terms of reference (as set out in the report), and that the task and finish group be asked to report back no later than the end of January 2021, with an interim report in December 2020, in order to allow a proposed strategy to be considered by the Shadow Executive and Shadow Authority in February 2021.

7. Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Prior to the officers presenting their report, the Vice Chair invited Councillor C Stanbra to address the committee.

Councillor C Stanbra (NCC) addressed the Committee. Councillor Stanbra queried the lack of detail in the consultation paper regarding any discussion on alternative options considered by the task and finish group. Councillor Stanbra also challenged the reference in the consultation to "cuts" should a more generous scheme be adopted. Councillor Stanbra also felt the affordability of a more generous scheme was viable, despite references in the consultation document. In conclusion, Councillor Stanbra suggested that consideration of a Discretionary Support Fund could be considered, to assist those in greatest need.

The Vice Chair thanked Councillor Stanbra for his contribution.

(On conclusion of his contribution, Councillor Stanbra was removed from the virtual meeting)

The report before Members detailed the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for North Northamptonshire, following the conclusion of the work undertaken by the Council Tax Harmonisation Task and Finish Group. The report also summarised existing sovereign council Schemes, together with the key issues that needed to be addressed as part of the harmonisation process.

This report had been considered by the Shadow Executive Committee at their meeting on 24th September 2020. The Executive had agreed the option detailed in the report for public consultation; this public consultation was now underway.

Several Members remarked that there was a need to ensure that public consultation was as accessible as possible, particularly those who were currently benefiting from existing schemes. Officers confirmed that all current claimants would be contacted, and that the wider community would be encouraged to participate in the consultation.

Officers stressed that no decision on the implementation of the proposed Scheme had been made; only agreement to consult with the public.

Members expressed a wish to see the tabulated outcome of the consultation process, prior to the Shadow Executive Committee making a final decision.

Concern was also expressed on the potential impact, if the proposed option was approved, on those currently subject to more favourable existing schemes. It was queried whether a phased approach could be adopted, if the proposed scheme was approved. Officers stated that there was a requirement to have a standardised scheme across the authority from Vesting Day, however further advice was being sought from MHCLG on this.

Several Members felt that there needed to be a more robust approach to supporting those claimants who may be disadvantaged by the introduction of the proposed scheme, either through the introduction of a discretionary fund and/or increased financial advice provided to potential claimants by the new authority. An additional recommendation was approved, moved by Councillor Hakewill and seconded by Councillor Lee, requesting that the Shadow Executive Committee consider additional protection for those who may suffer greatest detriment from the introduction of the proposed scheme.

A request for the Committee to see a summary of the consultation responses was made. The Vice Chair agreed that the Committee should be able to see at a future meeting the responses tabulated, in order to gain an idea of the public's responses.

RESOLVED to:-

- (i) Note the decision of the Shadow Executive Committee to:

Approve an 8-week consultation on a new Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21 on the elements included in the report which could be summarised as:

- The LCTSS Scheme headline rate at 25%; and
- The alignment of the Scheme across North Northamptonshire as outlined in paragraph 5.3.2 of the report; and

- (ii) strongly request that the Shadow Executive Committee formulate a budget and a set of criteria under which, should the proposed Scheme be adopted, those residents who are most financially adversely impacted be protected.

8. Detailed Blueprint

The report before Members set out further information on the proposed future design of North Northamptonshire Council in the form of a detailed Blueprint, which gave an insight into how functions and services would work and any changes that may be made.

The detailed Blueprint had been produced in a consistent format with each service area Blueprint providing further detail on the source of the function, the scope of services included in the service Blueprint, the potential scope of services included in the service blueprint, and any investment that had already been identified to support transformation or to support the safe disaggregation of NCC services into the two new unitary councils.

The detailed Blueprint also provided staff, trade unions and stakeholders more details about a number of “safe and legal” aspects of the services and their functions. It also included details of those services to be “hosted” or where a lead authority was to be appointed.

The report also included details about the transformation proposed, whilst conforming to the “safe and legal” approach. Officers stressed that the Blueprint was not a policy document, but laid the foundations for the new unitary.

The Shadow Executive Committee at its meeting on 24th September 2020 had considered the Blueprint. In considering the Blueprint the Shadow Executive Committee had determined the following resolution -

- *That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be asked to consider the Blueprint, and identify further opportunities to transform and improve services during the remaining months up until Vesting Day*

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the options for fulfilling this request from the Shadow Executive Committee. After debate, Members agreed the establishment of a task and finish group to consider and scrutinise the Blueprint in more detail was agreed. The Committee agreed that Councillor H Harrison act as Chair of the group, with four other Members of the Committee comprising the group’s membership. It was agreed that political proportionality need not apply on this occasion.

The group would be requested to provide an interim report at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in December 2020.

RESOLVED to: -

- (i) Note the content of the detailed Blueprint which set out more detail of how services will operate and the design principles that will underpin their future operation and service to stakeholders;
- (ii) Note the key elements of service functions that we plan to transform and improve in the functions and services (the “plus”);
- (iii) Note the key activities that will be undertaken in each area during the first year of the new Council;
- (iv) Note the high level feedback from the initial detailed Blueprint briefings with staff, unions and members;
- (v) Note the detailed Blueprint as the basis of the Day 1 functional design, subject to the identification of any further agreed opportunities to transform and improve service areas during the remaining months leading up to Vesting Day on 1st April 2021;

- (vi) In identifying the development of the Blueprint, identify to the Executive any further opportunities within it to transform and improve services during the remaining months up until Vesting Day; and
- (vii) In order to complete (vi) above, establish a task and finish group, to comprise Councillor H Harrison as Chair, and four other Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who will submit an interim report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2020.

9. Programme Director's Update

The report before the Committee appraised Members of the progress being made in relation to the creation of the new unitary North Northamptonshire Council.

The report included Programme Status Summary, Programme Notes, Change Management update, Communication and Engagement update, and a Finance Report update.

RESOLVED to: -

- (i) Note the high-level Programme Delivery Status;
- (ii) Note the update on Change Readiness and Change Champion Recruitment;
- (iii) Note the Communication and Engagement Update; and
- (iv) Note and approve the Finance Monitoring Report.

10. Forward Plan of Decisions – October 2020 to January 2021

The Forward Plan of Decisions October 2020 – January 2021 had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) The Forward Plan be noted.

11. Exempt Items

There were no exempt items discussed.

12. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items discussed.

13. Close of Meeting

The Vice Chair declared the meeting closed at 9:35 pm.

This page is intentionally blank