

North Northamptonshire Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At 7:00 pm on Thursday 11th March 2021

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

Present: -

Shadow Members

Councillor M Pengelly (Chair)
Councillor C Brown
Councillor J Hakewill
Councillor A Henley
Councillor A Lee
Councillor G Titcombe

Councillor V Perry
Councillor A Davies
Councillor H Harrison
Councillor L Lawman
Councillor M Rowley
Councillor R Beeby

Officers

L Hyde – Director of Transformation
P Goult – NNSA Democratic Services
A Stathem – Executive Director DDC

M Hammond – Executive Director KBC
F McHugo – NNSA Democratic Services
C Hazelgrove - NNSA

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Peter McEwan.

2. Notification of requests to address the meeting

No requests had been received on this occasion.

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. Minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2021 had been circulated.

RESOLVED that: -

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th February 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair (Councillor Pengelly) took the opportunity to thank both Members and officers for their work in connection with the Committee during the Shadow Period. It was appreciated that the last few months had been a busy and difficult time, and the time and effort provided by both Members and officers was appreciated.

6. Director of Transformation Update

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Transformation providing a Programme Status Update dated March 2021.

The presentation included an update on key aspects of the Programme including Adult Social Care, Children's Services (Education), Corporate, Customer Contact and Digital, ICT, Finance and Place.

The Committee also received a financial update in relation to Benefits Realisation. It was noted that this was current showing a £800k negative variance, largely due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This had impacted particularly on Adult Services and on Children's Services, however it was noted that there was confidence that these savings would be realised in the future.

The presentation also provided details regarding Day 1 Assurance, and it was noted that currently this was indicating a positive situation through February and into March 2021.

There was an update regarding the important role of Change Managers and the work of the Communications and Engagement Team.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The presentation be noted.

7. Task and Finish Group – Climate Change Report

The Climate Change Task and Finish Group was established at the October meeting of this committee, at the request of the Shadow Executive. It comprised 8 members and was chaired by Cllr Lora Lawman. It had met ten times, to gather evidence on climate change issues and interventions and to formulate the framework circulated with the agenda. It had been supported by a small team of officers drawn from sovereign councils and the JPDU and had drawn on expertise within and beyond the local government family to provide evidence. The original timetable was amended by this Committee on the 28th January to allow the task and finish group to complete its work. If the attached report was agreed, then it was intended that it would be sent onto the Shadow Executive Committee and subsequently for public consultation to shape a future strategy for North Northamptonshire Council.

The terms of reference for the task and finish group were to-

- Identify best practice in environmental enhancement within local authorities locally and nationally.
- Identify areas in which the new authority could demonstrate environmental enhancement.
- Develop an environmental framework which North Northamptonshire Unitary Authority (NNC) could use to guide its decision making, policy development and service delivery in relation to environmental enhancement and Climate Emergency commitments.

The group went beyond the environmental themes within these headings, to look at how tackling climate change also provided a solid foundation to enhance the environment but link this to service delivery, decision making and policy development.

The report emphasised that the Task and Finish Group were also sighted on work already being undertaken by authorities covering the north of the county and a summary of that work had been included as an appendix to the report. The Task and Finish Group were recommending that these actions were maintained by the new Council as a minimum.

The Task and Finish Group had input on a range of subjects as follows: - corporate leadership and ambition; procurement and social value; housing standards and asset management; planning, transport, infrastructure, natural and built environment; economic development, jobs, and skills; public health and inequalities; public engagement, partnerships & actors. The report before the Committee was arranged accordingly.

The Task and Finish group also had set up an email address, inviting the public to make proposals and suggestions which potentially could be accommodated within the framework. One hundred and ten submissions had been received and these were summarised for the Group to work through and to agree which proposals should feature in the report. For the sake of transparency, Appendix Four to the report listed those ideas which were submitted and highlighted those included in the framework as priority actions. Some actions were not within the Council's powers to do, and others would be picked up anyway either because of national policy changes or ongoing work by the new Council. It was suggested that those left unmarked should still receive attention in the future and had been included therefore as matters to attend to in the longer term.

The framework, whilst aiming to be comprehensive in its coverage, was intended to highlight those actions Members felt were a priority and which should be attended to by the new Council urgently. Members recognised it was not feasible or affordable to take every potential action simultaneously, and that the new Council needed to understand which actions would generate the most impact for the investment before taking decisions.

As the framework stated, the Council could have an impact on mitigating and adapting to climate change and this should be at the heart of the Council's plans and activities. However, it was recognised that this was a global challenge in which the work of the Council was but a part. As a user of resources and a provider of services, the Council would only have a marginal impact, but it could also demonstrate leadership, leading by example and by lobbying and advocacy to ensure that all sectors of the community worked in the same direction,

Further technical work and engagement were required to turn the draft framework into a clear strategy and workstreams. For that reason, the Task and Finish Group had not felt able to set targets to, for example, achieve a net nil carbon growth by any date sooner than the national 2050 requirement. It was suggested that this was something the new Council could do when it had marshalled its resources to that end and could be realistic.

The framework circulated had not yet been consulted on. Should the Shadow Executive Committee agree the framework, they would be asked to determine what consultation should take place and when. Members noted those recommendations which outlined the need for ongoing engagement with the community over the long term, both formally and as part of other initiatives.

The Chair thanked Councillor L Lawman, members of the Group and the officers who had assisted in producing the report. The Committee felt that it was a good basis on which to build a future strategy for the new Council and hoped that the Shadow Executive Committee would support the report's recommendations.

Councillor L Lawman MOVED the recommendation, Councillor Hakewill SECONDED the recommendation.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Committee approved and endorsed the work of the Task and Finish Group, that the draft framework prepared by the Group be forwarded to the Shadow Executive Committee for its approval, as the basis for implementation of recommendations by the new Council after 1st April and for appropriate consultation.

8. Forward Plan of Decisions – March 2021

A copy of the Forward Plan of Decisions 1st – 31st March 2021 had been circulated for information.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Forward Plan of Decisions be noted.

9. Work Programme

The Committee briefly considered whether they had recommendations to forward to the North Northamptonshire Council's Scrutiny Commission, for areas of potential scrutiny or review.

Councillor Pengelly suggested a review of by laws across the North Northamptonshire Council area may be appropriate. Councillor Pengelly had already raised this issue with the Chief Executive as a potential area for review, to look at best practise and achieve some form of harmonisation.

Councillor Henley noted that through a task and finish group, the current Committee had been able to review a few areas of the approved Blueprint document. Most areas of the Blueprint had yet to be reviewed, and Councillor Henley suggested the new Committee may wish to continue with this programme of scrutiny.

Councillor Perry stressed the importance of the new Committee members receiving appropriate training, especially in relation to scrutiny. This was noted and the Committee were informed that some initial training was being built into the induction programme for Members.

10. Exempt Items

There were no exempt items discussed.

11. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items discussed.

12. Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 8:22 pm.