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**North
Northamptonshire
Council**

Democratic Services
The Corby Cube,
George Street,
Corby,
Northants,
NN17 1QG

Meeting: Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Date: Monday 30th January, 2023
Time: 7.00 pm
Venue: The Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, Northants, NN17 1QG

Committee Membership:

Councillor Mark Pengelly (Chair), Councillor King Lawal, Councillor William Colquhoun, Councillor Jim Hakewill, Councillor Ken Harrington, Councillor Larry Henson, Councillor Ian Jelley, Councillor Richard Levell, Councillor Paul Marks, Councillor Dr Anup Pandey, Councillor Steven North, Councillor Mark Rowley and Councillor Malcolm Ward

Substitutes:

Councillors Scott Brown, Emily Fedorowycz, Clive Hallam, Matt Keane, Anne Lee, Jan O'Hara and David Sims.

Agenda Supplement

The following additional report has now been published.

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Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer
North Northamptonshire Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adele Wylie'.

Proper Officer
Friday 20 January 2023

This supplementary agenda has been published by Democratic Services.
Contact: democraticservices@northnorthants.gov.uk

Committee Administrator: Carol Mundy / Rajvir Sohal
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Where a matter arises at a meeting which **relates to** other Registerable Interests, you must declare the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but must not take part in any vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation.

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Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

30th January 2023

Report Title	Budget 2023/202 – Report from Budget Scrutiny Meetings
Report Author	Paul Goult - Interim Democratic Services Manager/ Statutory Scrutiny Officer Paul.goult@northnorthants.gov.uk

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Session 1 Children’s Services 6th January 2023

Appendix B – Session 2 Place and Economy 17th January 2023

Appendix C – Session 3 Enabling Services 18th January 2023

Appendix D – Session 4 Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing 23rd January 2023

Appendix E – Draft Scrutiny Submission 2023/2024 (TO FOLLOW)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. For the Committee to receive feedback from the eight budget sessions conducted on the Executive’s budget proposals for 2022/23. These sessions were conducted between 6th – 24th January 2022. The Committee are being requested to determine its representation to the Executive for consideration at the Executive meeting on 10th February 2022. The final budget proposals from the Executive will be forwarded to Full Council on 24th February 2022 for determination.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The report details the process undertaken by the Committee in reviewing the proposed draft budget for 2022-23. The report is requesting that the Committee having considered the budget proposals indicates whether the proposals are robust, whether there are any areas of concern noted, and whether there are other priorities that the Committee wish the Executive to consider.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. It is recommended that the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee –
- (i) Receive the notes from the four scrutiny budget sessions (detailed in Appendices A-D);
 - (ii) Agree what comments, questions, or recommendations the Committee wish to forward to the Executive;
 - (iii) Note that in the Municipal Timetable 2023/24 provision has been made for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 Budget Scrutiny meetings;
- 3.2. (*Reason for Recommendations* – To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire.)

4. Report Background

- 4.1. The Executive at its meeting on 22nd December 2022 set out its draft proposals for the Council's budget 2023/24. These proposals included the Capital Programme 2022-25 and proposals for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2022-23.
- 4.2. These draft proposals were submitted for public consultation, with the consultation period closing on 27th January 2023.
- 4.3. The main headline assumptions within the draft budget proposals are:
- A balanced budget for 2023-24.
 - Further investment of circa £57m to both protect vital services and invest in service change and improvement. This includes investment within the 2022-23 medium term financial plan that remains in place for 2023-24. This allows for demand and cost increases for Home to School Transport (c£7m), Adult Social Care (c£20m) and the Children's Trust (c£6m) alongside further investment in the Children's Trust to protect and increase the baseline funding from 2022-23 into 2023-24. The Children's Trust is also seeking additional one-off revenue investment of £2.2m countywide (c£1m from the North) to help deliver further service improvements and generate further efficiencies.
 - These pressures are, in part, offset by savings, efficiencies and income generation including new direct service grants of c£17m, this includes the continuation of savings already included as part of the 2022-23 medium term financial plan and which remain deliverable, with the remainder being met through improved business rates income, council tax and Government grants.
 - Planned savings and pressures from previous Medium Term Financial Plans will remain to be delivered, unless there is a requirement to change the assumptions following review.

- The use and retention of reserves to support non-recurring investment in service improvement, fund time limited projects, pump-prime invest to save schemes and help manage risk.
- The investment in Social Care recognises the increase in the National Living Wage from 1 April 2023 to £10.42 per hour and the reversal of a 1.25% increase in national insurance contributions for care providers, following the changes proposed in the Government’s budget earlier this year.
- An increase in Council Tax consisting of 2.99% for the “core” council tax and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, which results in a new Band D equivalent Council Tax of £1,657.51, an average weekly increase of £1.52 (based on Band D equivalent)
- No change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme which will continue at 25%.
- Inclusion of a contingency to mitigate against uncertainty, which totals £3.8m and is equivalent to around 1% of the Council’s Net Budget. This recognises that there remains uncertainty in funding and spending predictions.
- Officers will continue to seek efficiencies in order to help address the budget requirement from 2024/25 and into future years.

4.4. In addition to the public consultation, the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee were invited to consider the draft budget proposals and were invited to scrutinise these. Any comments, concerns or representations from the Scrutiny Committee would be reported to the Executive at its meeting on 9th February 2023 for the Executive’s consideration.

4.5. To assist the Scrutiny Committee in formulating its representation, four budget scrutiny sessions were timetabled. These sessions were formulated around the four main service areas of the Council:

Service Area	Budget Sessions
Children’s Services	6 th January 2023
Place and Economy	17 th January 2023
Enabling Services	18 th January 2023
Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing	23 rd January 2023

4.6. All members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend each session, and each session was attended by the appropriate senior officers from the respective service area and officers from Financial Services.

4.7. Each session comprised a presentation from officers relating to the respective service area, with a focus on the budget implications as contained in the draft budget proposals 2023/24. Each session included an opportunity for questions and answers.

4.8. Summary notes from each session are included within Appendices A-D accompanying this report and are intended to assist the Scrutiny Committee in formulating its representation to the Executive.

- 4.9. It should be noted that in late 2022, officers conducted briefing sessions for members of the Committee which included budget monitoring information for 2022/23 together with then current outturn projections for 2022/23, together with an early indication of key issues to be taken into account in the formulation of the draft 2023/24 budget proposals.
- 4.10. The Executive at its meeting on 9th February 2023 will consider any representations received from the Scrutiny Committee and any representations received through the public consultation period. These representations will inform the Executive's final budget recommendations which will inform the final proposals submitted to Full Council for determination.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. It is suggested that the Scrutiny Committee consider the outcome of the budget sessions held, by each service area, and consider the points raised for inclusion in any representations to the Executive.
- 5.2. It has been recognised that the scheduling of both Stage 1 and Stage 2 Budget Scrutiny sessions was complicated by the absence of pre-set diary appointments. To mitigate against this for the 2024/25 Budget Consultation, Full Council agreed as part of the Municipal Timetable for 2023/24 that both Stage 1 and Stage 2 sessions were prioritised. This will assist both officers and Members in both preparation and attendance.
- 5.3. It is further noted the absence of dedicated scrutiny officer support to the Committee has again caused concern in the preparation of any response, however the Committee will be aware that the restructure process of the Democratic Services is underway and this matter will be addressed in early 2023/24.
- 5.4. It is further suggested that the Committee may wish to consider obtaining further training and guidance in relation to assisting with its undertaking of scrutiny responsibilities, including scrutiny of budget proposals.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Once the Scrutiny Committee have formulated its representation to the draft budget proposals this will be communicated to the Executive ahead of the Executive meeting on 9th February 2023. The Chair of Scrutiny Committee (or their designated deputy) will have the opportunity to present the Committee's representation to the Executive.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. The Scrutiny Committee are required to ensure that the draft budget is robust and to challenge any proposals or assumptions made which they feel are unreasonable. It is not the role of the Scrutiny Committee to develop an “alternative budget” but where the Committee feel that there are areas of potential income or expenditure that have not been fully explored or addressed it is reasonable for the Committee to raise these with the Executive. The need to ensure the Council set a balanced budget is paramount.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. Under the Council’s approved Constitution (Part 7.1 Scrutiny Procedure Rules) the Committee are required to challenge the draft budget proposals and any assumptions made in those proposals.
- 7.2.2. The Committee should report its findings and deliberations to the Executive, prior to the Executive making its final recommendations to Full Council.
- 7.2.3. Senior officers of the Council have been available throughout the Committee’s scrutiny process to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

7.3. Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1. The Executive in compiling its draft budget proposals is required to ensure that these support the implementation of the approved Corporate Plan and satisfy all legislative requirements placed on the Council.

7.4. Risk

- 7.4.1. It is important that any draft budget proposals are subject to rigorous challenge and appropriate scrutiny. This will assist in ensuring that the draft proposals are robust, meet the Council’s corporate priorities, fulfil statutory requirements, and provide for a balanced budget.

7.5. Consultation

- 7.5.1. The Committee are being consulted on the budget proposals as required under the approved Council Constitution.

7.6. Consideration by the Executive

- 7.6.1. The Executive approved the draft budget proposals on 22nd December 2023. The Executive will receive all consultation responses at its meeting on 9th February 2023.

7.7. Equality Implications

7.7.1. None directly from this report.

7.8. Climate Impact

7.8.1. The Council, having declared a climate change emergency in June 2021, is committed to reducing its climate impact both within its own Council buildings and in working with businesses and the wider community to achieve net zero energy emissions.

7.9. Community Impact

7.9.1. The Executive's report stated that no distinct community impacts had been identified as a result of the proposals included in their report.

8. Background Papers

- 8.1. Executive Report 22nd December 2022 – Draft Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan
- 8.2. Executive Report 22nd December 2022 – Capital Programme 2023-26
- 8.3. Executive Report 22nd December 2022 – Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Draft Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Proposals
- 8.4. Scrutiny Budget Sessions Presentations

Appendix A

Children's Services 06/01/23

An overview of the service area was provided. The service area employed 291 FTE and had a General Fund budget of £69.530m.

The directorate is split into three areas –

- Education Services
- Commissioning & Partnerships
- Intelligent Client Function/Children's Trust

Pressures identified over the previous 12 months (2022/23) included: -

- Children in Care population increase by 52.
- In year school applications increase of 600+ in year
- EHCP caseloads increase average 360-380/worker (recommendation 150-180)
- Elective home education; Children Missing Education increase.
- Removal of non-statutory Psychology function
- Increase in School Population 3%
- Increase in SEND Population 7.2%
- Increase in SEND Support 3%
- Increase in EHCP 28.9%

Pressures Identified for 2023/24

- Continued increase children in care (virtual school)
- Increase school age population (admissions)
- Increase SEND at all stages and ages (Education Inclusion/Ed Psychology/Educational Health and Care)
- Reduction in SENDIASS
- Reduction in Admissions Service
- No strategic Leader Early Years; SEND.
- No brokerage or contract management functions for SEN; Ed Psych and alternative provision
- No participation/engagement function for SEN

Members queried why demand for post-16 SEND places had increased.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students with special educational needs had not been identified, as they were not attending school. As a result, since students had returned to schools, an increased need for post-16 SEND provision had arisen. In addition to this, there also existed long waiting lists for children to receive assessments and diagnoses for neurodivergent conditions.

General Fund Budget Summary

Draft Budget Summary for Children and Education –

2023/24 - £69.530m

2024/25 - £70.157m

205/26 - £71.897m

Education

The service area includes –

- Standards and Achievement
 - School Effectiveness
 - Safeguarding in Education
 - Governance
- SEND and Vulnerable Groups
 - Education, Health and Care Plans
 - Education Psychology
 - Attendance and Early Help
- Access and Sufficiency
 - School Admissions
 - Pupil Place Planning
 - Capital Investment
- Virtual School

One member acknowledged that the local authority had inherited some costs of new academies, such as students' travel to remote areas. They queried whether anything could be done to ensure that new academies were established in more convenient locations, to better serve the local population.

The DfE and ESFA would assess appropriate sites for schools. Pressures against schools' transport budgets existed when academies were established in isolated areas however, it was not simple for the local authority to make location demands of academies.

Members queried whether pension rates were likely to change.

Pensions rates did not fluctuate much, except for adjustments for cost of living and cohort of pensioners. If schools were to make redundancies for efficiency, they would pick up the cost.

Commissioning and Partnerships

The service area includes -

- Partnerships
 - Integrated Care Northamptonshire
 - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
 - SEND Independent Advisory Service
 - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Commissioning
 - Education Commissioning
 - SEND and Alternative Provision Commissioning
 - Joint Commissioning
- Service Development
 - SEND Improvement
 - Family Hubs
 - Early Years
- Intelligent Client Function
 - Contract Performance
 - Contractual Governance
 - Financial Management

Capital

Details regarding the proposed Capital Programme for 2023/24 were provided.

Rowan Gate Special School – Mobile Unit Replacement £1,661,000

Schools Minor Works Programme £1,947,000

Children’s Trust £600,000

Total - £4,208,000

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Information was provided regarding the DSG.

2023/24 Dedicated Schools Grant Settlement

Schools Block

The DFE have rolled in the School Supplementary Funding in 2022-23 into the National Funding Formula which is why Schools Block needs to be rebased to make an accurate comparison.

Following the 2022 Autumn Statement the DFE will also be paying a new one-off grant in 2023-24 called Mainstream Schools Additional Grant to mainstream schools only. This grant will be rolled into Schools Block from 2024-25.

Central School Services Block

The DFE continues to reduce Historic Commitments by 20% year on year.

High Needs Block

The DFE have rolled in the additional high needs funding into High Needs Block. They have also included the mandatory requirements of ensuring 3% MFG above 2021-22 funding is paid to Special Schools, PRUS and APs as well as 3.4% additional high needs funding in 2023-24 in the terms and conditions of DSG Grant Funding.

Early Years Block

The DFE have rolled in the Teacher Pay and Pension Grant (which previously was only paid to schools and academies) into the 3 and 4 year old funding rate as well as the Maintained Nursery School Supplement rate.

One member queried whether other local authorities had misallocated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), leading to deficit positions.

Some local authorities held deficits on the DSG, which sat against Council reserves. This strategy was not ideal due to the fact that Council reserves then could not fall below this position, as they would need to be aligned with the deficit position.

Members queried whether North Northamptonshire Council had inherited a DSG deficit from the legacy County Council authority.

Much of the DSG deficit inherited from Northamptonshire County Council had been 'clawed back' from alternative service provision. This spend continued to be closely monitored.

Conclusion

Members thanked officers for their presentation. Members recognised the continued challenges faced by the service regarding financial constraints and increasing demand for services. Members congratulated officers for being able

to address many of these challenges and for the dedication of the directorate's staff.

Appendix B

Place and Economy 17/01/23

Overview

Four key functional areas:

- Assets and Environment
- Growth and Regeneration
- Highways and Waste
- Regulatory Services

Five Executive Members covering the areas across the Directorate. A draft Net Budget of £68.5m in 2023/24 – around 20% of the overall budget. A draft Capital Programme 2023/26 over £27m. A draft Development Pool 2023/26 around £137m.

Growth & Regeneration

Service area covering – Planning management, Planning policy, Minerals & waste planning, Planning enforcement, Developer contributions, Street naming & numbering, Economic Growth, Digital infrastructure, Regeneration, External funding & investment, Climate change, Flood & water management.

Key Objectives

- Ensure successful operation of 'lead authority' service provision for Minerals & Waste Planning and Digital Infrastructure.
- Complete review/restructure of planning, economic development and regeneration services.
- Develop an aggregated and upscaled Planning Enforcement team.
- Create Climate Change and Flood & Water teams.
- Complete Action Plan from the PAS Review which will include harmonisation of procedures for backoffice processes across the planning service.
- Continue development of new Strategic Plan, Gypsy & Traveller site provision, Economic Strategy for North Northants.
- Progress delivery of key regeneration projects (i.e. Corby Town Plan and Kettering Heritage Action Zone).
- Lead on the implementation of the corporate Carbon Management Plan and work towards carbon neutrality.
- Increase gigabit and full fibre broadband availability across North Northants.
- Attract external funding to the area to support corporate priorities.

MTFP

Members queried whether there would be sufficient staffing capacity to deal with the outcomes of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan once adopted, together with other development control work associated with major applications e.g. Kettering Energy Park.

Officers confirmed that the planning service was currently undergoing review. Although the retention and recruitment of staff was difficult, it was hoped that capacity would be included following any staffing restructure to deal with the projected workload in a timely and comprehensive manner.

Regulatory Services

Service area covering – Bereavement Services, Building Control, Business Continuity Planning, Emergency Planning, Environmental Health, Licensing, Local Land Charges, Private Sector Housing, Trading Standards, Traveller Unit.

Key Objectives

- Complete restructure of Regulatory Services functions linking to Future Ways of Working and Asset rationalisation programmes
- Produce and consult on NNC Street Trading, Sex Establishments and Animal Welfare Policies
- Produce and consult on new Fees and Charges model for Hire Vehicle Licensing and Future Options for Zoning/Dezoning for Hackney Carriage Licensing.
- Develop a new Air Quality Strategy and Action Plan to deliver Improvements in Local Air Quality linked to Public Health Air Quality Project Officer funding.
- Review Regulatory Services Business Support Offer (Better Business for All)
- Conclude procurement and implementation of new Trading Standards Civica CX Database and Metrology Lab relocation.
- Review and Update the Northants Traveller Unit Policy, Operation and Governance arrangements with reference to the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022.
- Implement LLC Data Migration Strategy and supporting action plan to meet HMLR requirements.
- Review and Implement new competency validation and training requirements for BCS's to comply with Building Act 2022.
- Embed and validate Business Continuity arrangements across NNC and agree revised Business Continuity Strategy which identifies NNC's critical functions and priorities following BIA process.
- Review Community Risk Register and response plans with LRF partners to support an effective local incident response.

Members queried in the absence of a new NNC Empty Homes Strategy what policy were officers working against.

Officers confirmed that the previously approved local plans were being utilised until such time as an NNC plan was adopted.

Members queried that in former councils, Members were able to obtain data regarding air quality e.g. Kettering, Rothwell. Were readings still being taken and could Members receive this information.

Officers confirmed that readings were still being taken in various areas and this data could be shared with Members upon request.

Members requested clarification in relation what support was available to local business.

Officers confirmed that officers provided statutory services and provision of guidance where required to do so at no additional charge. Anything outside legal requirements e.g. training was chargeable.

Members queried in relation to the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 whether this would make it easier to move on travellers on unauthorised sites.

Officers confirmed that further discussions with Police as a consequence of the new powers in the Act were required, however in certain cases the Act was likely to provide additional powers for the Police and/or Council to take action more efficiently and effectively.

With regard to Fees & Charges concern was expressed that these had not been made available for scrutiny as part of the budget scrutiny process. Fees & Charges were a vital income stream and Members felt that these should be available for perusal, whilst recognising that any increase/reduction to these was a delegated Executive responsibility.

Officers agreed to provide a directory of fees & charges to Members.

In addition, there was concern that figures presented across the budget presentations gave no indication of the 2022/23 base figures, or an indication of the % increase over 2022/23, thus making it difficult for Members to assess the robustness of the proposals or the indication of trends.

Members noted the proposed reduction in income from Bereavement Services of £300k in 2023/24. Members wondered whether there were likely to be any other legacy income targets that had been set which would require adjustment.

Officers confirmed that there had been some legacy targets which needed to be reviewed and reset, however these were manageable. The Bereavement Services target from the former BCW was not manageable so needed to be brought forward as part of the budget setting process.

Members noted that it was desirable that the two crematoria within NNC were not placed in a competitive situation with each other, and there was a harmonisation of fees. Members also raised concern that there seemed to be a lack of scrutiny of the Board of Directors of the Wellingborough crematorium.

Officers confirmed that it was desirable that neither site was in competition with each other and fees should be harmonised. In relation to the Board, officers confirmed that governance arrangements were currently under review.

Highways and Waste

Service area covering – Highways maintenance, Home to school transport, Strategic transport planning, Highways street-lighting (Balfour Beatty PFI), Active Travel, Highways Development Management, Recycling and waste collection and disposal, Street cleaning, Bulky waste collections, Enviro-crime, Housing waste and recycling centres (joint contract until 2025), Closed landfills.

Key Objectives

- Embed the new Highways contract with Kier.
- Complete recruitment to the new highways and transport team.
- Implement and establish the restructured waste and recycling team.
- Implement new harmonised garden waste arrangements across North Northants.
- Commence procurement of the waste disposal contract.
- Review options for the future delivery of Household Waste and Recycling Centres.
- Implement Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership.
- Progress Active Travel schemes and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.
- Support the development and delivery of the Climate Change Management Plan.
- Progress the Business Case and planning application for the Isham Bypass.

It was noted that the new Highways contract with Kier had commenced in September 2022. Executive had made the decision to harmonise the collection of green waste across NNC and arrangements for this were now being rolled-out. For the implementation of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership, Government funding was being sought.

MTFP

Members queried whether there was any budget allocation for the replacing/resurfacing of roads. Members recognised that potholes and cracks were addressed but wondered whether there was budget for replacement.

Officers confirmed that an investment programme would be required, as there were currently no funds to undertake significant work of that nature.

Members requested information regarding the Isham by pass project. How much had been requested and how much had been received to date.

NB. Later in the presentation it was confirmed that £50m had been requested and awaiting confirmation, with £1.8m received towards the cost of development of a business plan.

Members noted the additional £7m required in 2023/24 for the Home to School Transport scheme.

Officers confirmed that this was a result of contract inflation and increasing demand for the service. This was likely to be a significant growth area for future years. The current budget was £11m. Officers were working to minimise the cost of the scheme within the parameters set.

Members noted that due to changes in regulations affecting the collection and disposal of soft furnishing bulky items there was a £100k pressure. The new regulations came into force on 1st January 2023.

In relation to the harmonisation of green waste charges it was noted that it would result in a reduction in expenditure of £1.358m in 2023/24. NNC would not be able to cover the total cost of the scheme from the charges but it would reduce the cost to NNC of rolling the scheme out. NNC would not make a profit from the scheme but it would reduce the cost of the service to the Council.

In relation to the £5k saving on the review of the litter bin network, officers stressed that this would not result in an impact to the service provided to the public or the removal of existing bins.

Members noted a £50k saving following the promotion of the food waste service in Corby and East Northamptonshire and enquired how this figure had been reached.

Officers confirmed that a reduction in food waste going into general waste would reduce landfill charges. It was an estimated figure.

Assets & Environment

Service area covering – Facilities Management, Asset Management, Energy Management, Capital Projects (Property), Fleet Vehicles, Grounds Maintenance, Parks & Open Spaces, Country Parks, Public Car Parks, Parking Enforcement.

Key Objectives

- Complete Restructure of the Asset & Environment Service across all teams.
- Deliver a new Parking Enforcement Service team as part of service disaggregation by April 2023.
- Implement the adopted Tree Care Policy and Pollinator Strategy across North Northamptonshire to provide a consistent land management service across Grounds and Woodlands teams.
- Deliver Environmental Schemes for which external grant funding has been secured for, such as Woodland Accelerator Programme, Treescape funding, and Active Parks project.
- Develop a Car Parking Strategy to review public car parking arrangements, including Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Implement the Asset Disposal Policy to support our office and wider asset rationalisation programme (linked to Future Way of Working).
- Implement the Building & Fleet elements of the Corporate Carbon Management Plan to support the Council's carbon neutral commitments for its assets.
- Deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for North Northants.

MTFP

Members queried what plans were there for the Council's estate, as the Council owned a lot of buildings, some of which may be underused. Was repurposing of buildings being considered.

Officers confirmed that work was being undertaken to identify the best use of the Council's estate or where appropriate, consideration of disposal opportunities.

It was noted that some rationalisation of assets was an important part of the transformation process, as well as ensuring services were provided to residents in an efficient and effective manner.

Members queried whether the Council achieved economies of scale in relation to the purchase of vehicles.

Officers confirmed that they worked closely with procurement colleagues to ensure the most appropriate and economical purchase or lease options available.

Members noted that the income from Corby car parks were estimated to be reduced by £108k in 2023/24.

Officers confirmed that currently income was lower within the Corby car parks as usage had yet to recover to pre-lockdown figures. The reassessment of income was considered prudent.

Capital

In relation to Capital schemes a sum of £15,902,266 was being proposed for 2023/24.

In relation to the East Kettering scheme, it was confirmed that this included income from developer contributions.

The £19.9m from the Corby Town Fund had been allocated.

Details of schemes within the draft Development Pool were also circulated. These currently totalled over £38.7m for 2023/24. It was noted that the schemes listed LTP Maintenance, LTP Integrated Transport and Incentive Fund had now been included in the Capital Programme following confirmation of funding from the DfT.

END

Appendix C

Enabling Services 18/01/23

Officers provided an overview of the service which included Finance & Performance, Chief Executives, Human Resources & Governance, Transformation Customer Services & IT.

A General Budget Summary was provided –

Draft Budget Summary 2023/24			
Summary by Directorate	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Adults, Wellbeing and Communities	132,530	141,696	158,607
Children and Education	69,530	70,157	71,897
Place & Economy	68,500	72,833	77,316
Enabling Services	36,102	35,536	36,226
Corporate	29,833	37,268	42,196
Base Budget Gross Budget (Excluding DSG Funding)	336,495	357,490	386,242
Total Base Gross Budget	336,495	357,490	386,242
Total Funding	(336,495)	(339,200)	(332,274)
Budget Gap	0	18,290	53,968

Finance & Corporate

Finance Service Objectives

Delivery of Exchequer Services

Provision of accurate and timely payment and Income collection services; payroll services and insurance arrangements

Procurement

Ensure effective procurement processes in place to meet statutory requirements, while achieving Value for Money (VFM) for the Authority. The development of a procurement strategy to ensure compliance with the carbon neutral agenda and empowering Local Suppliers and implementing Social Values for the residents of North Northamptonshire e.g. local jobs, apprenticeships, training etc.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit delivers a plan of work for the year, which seeks to inform the annual assurance opinion over the Council's governance, risk and control framework. We focus on the Council's key risks and seek to provide assurance over the controls in place to manage these. In the year to date, we have issued 13 audit reports and certified spend on 8 grants – which is demonstrating good progress against the agreed plan.

In times where services are facing increasing risks and are reviewing processes to deliver efficiencies, the role of internal audit becomes even more vital in ensuring the Council is not exposed to intolerable or unmanaged levels of risk and that value for money is sought in every process. Internal Audit provides assurance over management of risk but also seeks to support services in maximising value for money.

Revenue and Benefits

- Robust and efficient income collection for the Council through Council Tax and NNDR
- Timely and accurate payment of grants to businesses/individuals as required.
- Timely and accurate payment of benefits e.g. Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments
- Provide money, debt and budgeting advice to our customers via our Social Inclusion Team.

MFTP – Finance

Members raised concern about the Audit Fee increase of £500k as they were under the impression that fees would reduce not increase. There was also concern that Auditors were stepping back from some unitary councils citing this was due to the complexity of the audits.

It was clarified that fees were set at a national level and this was being looked at by the sector. It was noted that in the early years of NNC that the work involved with audit was very resource intensive. It was also clarified that there had been changes in provision under the PSSA agreement and confirmed that the cost had been queried.

One member did comment that historically fees had been low and that this was probably a more realistic figure for Audit fees.

MFTP - Corporate

The Treasury performance had been better than expected due to the increase in interest rates.

Reference was made to bad debt provision and a member asked if a breakdown of this could be provided and asked for clarification that this did not relate to any Covid payments.

It was confirmed that separate pre-payment fraud checks had been undertaken to ensure that payments were made correctly, and this did not relate to Covid payments. It was confirmed that an analysis could be provided.

Chief Executive's Office

The presentation detailed the services that fell under the Chief Executive's budget which included:

- Chief Executives Office
- Chief Executive
- Executive Support
- Assistant Chief Executive
- Communications
- Consultation, Engagement and Corporate Equalities
- Web Team (content)
- Performance & Business Intelligence

Reference was made to the medium-term financial plan and closing budgets and reference to the increase in subscriptions and the cost of the website migrations.

Members questioned if access to the former websites would be available as many found this particularly useful, particularly in relation to planning issues.

It was clarified that the functionality would remain. If councillors wished to contact the Assistant Chief Executive about what they particularly would like to be able to access that would be helpful.

Human Resources & Governance

The Executive Director reported on the service area of Human Resources & Governance, including:

- HR Advisory, Workforce Planning & Development, Learning and Development and Health and Safety and
- Legal & Governance, including Legal Services, Democratic & Election Services, FOI & Data Governance and Registration and Coroners Services.

The Executive Director referred to the pay and grading review that was a very complex and time intensive project, which was ongoing. In relation to the Coroner's Office, there was a need to provide a cold storage and that had been costed in.

Within the service area there were ongoing restructures which would result in changes to pay structures. Legal Services, which was now in-house, were predicting an increase in legal fees for the coming year.

There had been some reductions to costings in the Civic office and this had resulted in savings.

Members asked what the total income had been for legal previously and what it was proposed to be.

It was confirmed that previous income had been £50k and it was expected that there would be an increase to £200k.

Members also asked about the Coroners Storage and asked why this could not be covered within the Crematoria.

The Executive Director clarified that this was a statutory service and had to be delivered and provided as part of death management.

Transformation, Customer Service & IT

The meeting considered the Customer Services area which also fell under this remit.

- **Business Transformation**
- Service Transformation
- **Customer Services**
- Customer Services
- Blue Badges
- Complaints
- **IT**
- Applications
- Security
- Technical Services
- Service Delivery
- IT Projects
- Services delivered by WNC – Programme Team, Business Systems, Digital Services, IT Leadership, IT Managed Service, IT Service Delivery, IT Operations

There was a new telephony system being introduced and it was referenced the savings this would achieve. The system would be in place by 1 April 2023.

Members asked if the time it took to get through to the required service could be improved rather than the three minutes it currently took pressing options which, particularly for the elderly, was very frustrating and time consuming.

It was confirmed that this was being looked at with a view to improving the customer journey and experience. There would be an improved case management system, with a reduction in costs and increased productivity.

The costings for ICT and the increases in licensing costs were also highlighted. There was an ongoing programme to rationalise the cost of the mobile phone contracts and Office 365 migration costs. There was work ongoing in relation to the infrastructure and remote working and there would be additional costs for the ongoing replacement of IT hardware, such as laptops. The IT Strategy was being reviewed along with the infrastructure, including the design of new networks and service areas with a focus on security. Generally, the service would become more agile and suited to the current and future methods of working.

Conclusion

Councillor Smithers, as Leader, addressed the meeting and commended the work of the finance team and senior officers in setting a balanced budget, which was not an easy task in the current climate particularly with world events having an impact.

A member asked what the three main concerns were in relation to the budget and the future finances of the council.

The Leader considered that his biggest concern was uncertainty around global conflicts, the cost of Petrol and Diesel and general utility costs which would affect everyone including the Council.

Members considered that it would be useful to have notification of a four-year settlement.

Members thanked officers and members for the improvements made to the reporting and scrutiny process implemented this year.

General Point

With regard to Fees & Charges concern was expressed that these had not been made available for scrutiny as part of the budget scrutiny process. Fees & Charges were a vital income stream and Members felt that these should be available for perusal, whilst recognising that any increase/reduction to these was a delegated Executive responsibility.

In addition, there was concern that figures presented across the budget presentations gave no indication of the 2022/23 base figures, or an indication of the % increase over 2022/23, thus making it difficult for Members to assess the robustness of the proposals or the indication of trends.

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Appendix D

Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing 23/01/23

Officers provided an overview of the service. It was noted that from 2023/24 Public Health & Communities would form a separate directorate for budgetary purposes.

Housing & Communities

- Council Housing stock in Corby and Kettering, Temporary Accommodation, Homelessness prevention services
- Community Safety, Voluntary Sector, Community Development, Asylum Seeker Dispersal, Afghan Resettlement Scheme, Homes for Ukraine programme*
- Leisure services including running of council leisure services and contract management of external leisure services outsourced from previous sovereign councils contracts*
- Town and Parish Council liaison*

Adult Social Care

- Adult social care assessments and provision of care and reablement services
- Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Provider Services including delivery of in-house provider services (regulated and non-regulated), coordination of safeguarding activity, and auditing of delivery of safeguarding activity
- Commissioning and Performance, contact commissioning, market oversight and market management. This department has also taken on the coordination of the transformation functions that transferred into the Directorate following structural changes implemented in Autumn 2022

Public Health*

- Health protection, Lifestyle services, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Adult Learning

*subject to changes and development of Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate in 2023/2024 – current reporting lines maintained pending recruitment of DPH

Housing & Communities

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for both Housing & Communities. These included: -

Housing

- Stabilise frontline services by recruitment to staffing vacancies & reduce agency spend.
- Engage with new ICS Place Delivery model with a greater focus on community asset and strengths-based practice and prevention and early intervention and requisite learning & development and cultural change for staff.
- Complete the comprehensive review of our use of Temporary Accommodation to drive down costs and improve consistency of best practice, including new DPS procurement framework.

- Demonstrate how we can meet the need for affordable housing and which provide homes for the future for our tenants.
- Develop an overarching Housing Strategy; a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure we meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and provide more preventative solutions; and an approach to providing Housing for Care which will enable older people and vulnerable residents to retain independence for longer in their own homes.

Members were keen to know what future plans for building more NNC council houses would be. There had been a good record of accomplishment by former councils of building new houses, and members were keen for this to continue. Ensuring that RTB receipts were spent before deadline was imperative, otherwise receipts would be lost.

Future plans for new build were currently being explored. This was subject to reprofiling as both increases in cost of construction and increase in interest rates were having a negative impact. Any future capital programme needed to be sustainable.

It was noted that temporary accommodation was still being used, and members recognised that this facility would be required in the future given increasing demands on the service. Members were keen to have assurances that NNC was maximising its stock and any individual's residency in temporary accommodation was minimised.

It was confirmed that a review of the Council's use of temporary accommodation was currently subject to review to drive down costs and improve consistency of good practise. NCC was seeking to achieve a £200k reduction in costs for 2023/24.

Members asked when the review of temporary accommodation would be completed.

Likely to be the early part of the new financial year.

Members recognised the work that had been commenced on integrating the two former housing services into one service. Whilst recognising this was a process that needed to be appropriately planned and managed the creation of a single service was key to the Council's transformation agenda and ensuring that costs were minimised and savings reinvested. Given that trades at the DSOs were a particularly high-level of agency spend this needed to be prioritised.

There was one HRA however there were still two separate trading accounts. The intention was to amalgamate these two accounts, though no deadline for this was in place. It was a complicated issue that needed to be addressed in a step-by-step approach ensuring that all appropriate checks and balances were in place.

Work on amalgamating frontline services to customers was well underway and ensuring both former housing services were working in unison and at a consistent level.

The corporate work being undertaken on Pay & Grading would hopefully assist in the retention and recruitment of staff. Where necessary following this exercise, the use of market supplements may be considered.

Members queried regarding the placement of residents outside of the NNC area. Was this still the case and could it be minimised.

Placement outside of the NNC area was a last resort. Currently there were two households in this situation. Numbers had been successfully driven down, as had the length of placement outside of the NNC area. There was increasing demand but the service was attempting to mitigate any negative impact on residents.

Communities

- Development of a Communities Strategy, framed within the context of the emerging Place model, to include Devolution Framework, VCSE infrastructure proposals and approaches to strategic investment in the VCSE
- Plan and implement alignment and refresh of Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities strategies; review and progress current capital programmes for leisure. Scope and deliver a new Healthy Active Lifestyles Strategy as a wider Leisure Strategy
- Develop a refreshed Community Safety Plan, a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Commissioning framework and a strategic response to the requirements of the new Serious Violence and Victims Bill agendas.
- Successfully mobilise Cornerstone as a cultural hub for NN and bring all culture, heritage and tourism services and venues under one business plan and Profit and Loss account to maximise resources and income opportunities.
- Develop the refugee Resettlement programme to find innovative solutions which will help to successfully resettle those coming to the UK under the Afghan, Homes for Ukraine or Full Asylum Dispersal programme.

Members queried the “one business plan and Profit and Loss account.”

Currently all of the Council’s community and leisure facilities operated under different plans and strategies. It was intended to amalgamate these so there was one clear business plan. There were likely to be some facilities that would require subsidy, or may break even, whilst others were able to maximise income and make a profit. An assessment could then be made as to what facilities or services required subsidy and where new income streams could be generated. This exercise would result in a robust, sustainable delivery of service to residents covering both sporting, community and cultural facilities and programmes.

Members queried how easy it would be to scrutinise this account.

Members were assured that the amalgamation would still allow Members to scrutinise individual facilities or service areas, but it would ensure that data was more easily accessible and business planning simplified.

Members queried whether trading data for Chester House could be made available as soon as possible. There were now several months figures available and access to these figures would be helpful in assessing the 2023/24 budget proposals.

Housing & Communities

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for both Housing & Communities. These included: -

- Income targets remain challenging across Communities, Leisure and Cultural services
- Potential risks of increase in housing need due to Homes for Ukraine sponsor placements reaching their initial expiry periods.
- Budget not identified for pathways, highways, street lighting maintenance on NN housing stock land but not related to our stock.
- Kettering Library – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost .
- Wellingborough library – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost.
- Kettering swimming pool – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost
- Increasing energy costs remains a risk within leisure.
- Refresh of leisure /sports facilities and PPS strategies could require future capital investment.
- Exec ambition to extend the Greenway across the whole of NN area will require further capital investment.

Members recognised that the increase in energy costs would have a significant impact on many facilities and an impact on council house residents. There was also an objective on reducing the Council's own carbon footprint. Members sought assurances that every opportunity was being taken to both reduce costs and reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Rising utility costs was a corporate issue and colleagues from all service areas were seeking measures to minimise the impact on Council finances. Measures had been implemented and further measures would be considered to reduce the Council's carbon footprint during repairs or maintenance of facilities, including switching to LED lighting etc.

MTFP

It was noted that the increase in utility costs were a major pressure.

Councils were lobbying Government, together with the wider leisure sector, for further assistance in relation to rising utility prices.

The increase of £679k in Domestic Abuse Duty Funding was noted. It was felt important that victims were supported appropriately.

This increase would be covered by Government funding.

It was noted that the income targets for Lodge Park Sports Centre required reprofiling and resulted in a reduction in the income target by £95k.

Whilst this was obviously impacted by Covid, with attendance numbers not recovering after lockdown, it was also due to unachievable income targets being set. The new income target was more robust.

With regard to Fees & Charges concern was expressed that these had not been made available for scrutiny as part of the budget scrutiny process. Fees & Charges were a vital income stream and Members felt that these should be available for perusal, whilst recognising that any increase/reduction to these was a delegated Executive responsibility.

In addition, there was concern that figures presented across the budget presentations gave no indication of the 2022/23 base figures, or an indication of the % increase over 2022/23, thus making it difficult for Members to assess the robustness of the proposals or the indication of trends.

Concern was expressed by several Members regarding a proposal to reduce funding to devolved community centres. This concern regarded both the proposal generally but also the lack of notice provided to these centres. Members noted that these centres were generally managed by volunteers and that the continued operation of these centres, which were important community hubs, was dependant upon the goodwill of local residents.

Devolved centres had only been contacted the previous week regarding this proposal, which greatly restricted their ability to constructively respond as part of the consultation process.

Members were reminded that other devolved centres did not have the same level of financial support and were able to function appropriately for the benefit of local residents. Consultation responses from devolved centres would be presented as part of the report to the Executive.

There was debate regarding the continuing NNC subsidy to Chester House and the lack of parking charges.

It was noted that the subsidy to Chester House was reducing in 2023/24. Income generation from the facility was ahead of target. There were significant income streams from events and facilities at the site. It was noted that NNC were bound by funding agreements, and that the cost of closure of the site in full or part would result in significant claw back from funders. The aim was to maximise public usage of the site for organised events and for casual usage.

Neighbourhood Accounts Budget Changes 2022/23 to 2023/24

Members noted the 7% rental increase proposed for 2023/24, whilst recognising that this would still leave the HRA with significant financial pressures. It was noted that the current estimate for future years was 4%.

Members queried debt repayment for the HRA and whether payments were on schedule.

It was confirmed that both former CBC & KBC debt repayments were on schedule. The two repayment strategies were slightly different but neither were currently causing any concern.

With regard to the proposed move of reserves to cover increased investment in Repairs and Maintenance clarity was requested.

Primarily as a result of lockdown there was a backlog in repairs to Council properties. Whilst new repair requests could be met there was a need to invest further funds in reducing this backlog. It was being proposed that there was a one-off increase in funding in 2023/24 to achieve this. The availability of trades to complete this work was also a factor.

It was noted that the stock valuation was going to result in an increase of Revenue Contribution to Capital of £999k Corby & £540k Kettering. This was positive and resulted as a consequence of the increase in house prices. Members recognised that should house prices fall in the future this may need to be reviewed.

It was confirmed that this was a technical adjustment to comply with Government accountancy rules.

Members were keen to ensure that the two DSOs shared best practise and that economies of scale could be achieved.

It was noted that the DSOs were working towards a single supplier contract which should result in both savings and efficiencies.

Members again expressed a desire to see the unification of the two accounts into one.

This was being worked on and officers had started to map out the process for achieving this. It would not be a simple task but it was stressed that NNC does have a single HRA with two neighbourhood accounts. There was no deadline for this work to be completed however progress was being made and could be monitored by Members.

Members queried reference made during the presentation to the Tenant Advisory Panel and queried the composition of this.

It was stated that there were 8 representatives from each neighbourhood (Corby & Kettering) and the composition of this and membership would be provided.

It was noted that in 2023/24 there were increases in Repairs & Maintenance proposed of £500k Corby & £400k Kettering, then a reduction in growth bid to £100k for each.

It was confirmed that this was to address the backlog in both areas during 2023/24 then reduce in subsequent years to a more sustainable increase in budget.

Capital Programme

There was a brief discussion regarding the Capital Programme. It was recognised that there was a planned programme of maintenance and replacement. This was based on an assessment of housing stock. The service was seeking to standardise equipment and stock, although the variety of house types etc would need to be assessed. Items that required immediate replacement would be actioned under the repairs budget outside of the pre-planned maintenance budget.

Members queried the number of boiler replacements in a year and the cost of these. In addition Members sought assurance that other energy efficient and “greener” boilers were being considered.

The data on boiler replacements would be provided. Confirmation was given that where suitable “greener” options were explored and any replacement equipment future-proofed, although this was dependent upon the type and construction of the property in question.

Adult Services

Commissioning & Performance

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Commissioning & Performance. These included: -

- Increase collaboration within the 4 localities for population outcomes and less transactional commissioning, working with the VCS for embedding enabling and diversion services
- Complete homecare re-tender moving to dynamic purchasing system and tiered funding to support rural communities.
- Develop the micro provider and PA market to meet needs in hard-to-reach rural locations
- Recommission the advocacy contract to ensure there is a North Northamptonshire dedicated service.
- Mobilise contracts that use 'Individual Service Funds' for individuals with complex needs –supporting greater flexibility and allowing for fluctuation in need, achieving better outcomes
- Improve the utilisation of the Shaw PPP beds.
- Disaggregate Personal Budget Support Service (cost £125k)
- Support our CQC registered services to achieve a minimum of 'Good' in their CQC ratings
- Embed place-based model of commissioning and contract oversight within 4 key localities in North Northants supporting better community links and enhancing the quality of our commissioned services

Members requested clarification regarding the term dynamic purchasing system, particularly in relation to rural areas.

It was confirmed that the rates applying to customers in rural areas were higher, to cover higher travel/mileage costs. This was to ensure that customers in rural areas were able to receive a comparable level of service to customers in urban areas.

Members queried the saving of £125k with regard to the Personal Budget Support Service.

It was confirmed that this would be hosted by NNC and there would be a consequential staffing budget saving to the Council.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Commissioning & Performance. These included: -

- Increasing difficulties sourcing home care availability – competition with other industries for recruitment and retention of staff is high. This impacts on

individuals awaiting care in their own home and needing support on discharge from hospital.

- Risk of provider failure as costs of running continue to increase due to cost of living rises – particularly if the fair cost of care is not possible to implement due to new burdens not being adequately funded.
- Social Care reform – care cap delayed but still an expectation to move towards Fair Cost of Care and to develop sustainable social care markets.
- Social Care reform – fair cost of care: grant funding for implementation but unclear whether new burdens funding to support implementation.

Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider. These included: -

- Provider Services Transformation – Review consultation feedback, decision and implementation.
- Linked to Provider services Transformation - Recruitment to staffing vacancies – reduce agency spend.
- Shared Lives Disaggregation, development and growth of service
- Preparation for Liberty Protection Safeguards.
- Finalise negotiations for running of Thackley Green Specialist Care Centre.
- Strengthen Safeguarding practice - further improve response for vulnerable adults and promote safety of local residents.
- Regulated service improvement plans (KLOEs) and fully embed self-audit programme.
- Further develop the assistive technology offer to provide greater independence.
- Develop ongoing Emergency Duty Team proposals alongside Children's Trust.

In relation to the consultation outcomes regarding Provider Services Transformation this was delegated to the Executive Member to implement.

Members would be kept updated.

It was recognised that there was a high dependency on agency staff.

The service would be seeking to reduce spend on agency staff, and retain and recruit permanent staff. This was a corporate issue and the outcome of the current Pay & Grading exercise was awaited.

It was noted that there was a backlog of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard cases.

The number had reduced from 1800 to 900 and this was commended, however further work was required ahead of the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider. These included: -

- High number of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard assessments and authorisations remain with no clear date for implementation of Liberty Protection Standards (LPS)
- Provider services – facilities upgrading/service offers – may require investment in the short term to maintain service/reduce health and safety risks.
- Provider services, staffing and quality challenges – improvements set out in transformation consultation concluded on 15 January 2023
- Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) recruitment challenges.
- Thackley Green Specialist Care Centre – ongoing negotiations, contractual agreements and services development requirements may delay implementation further in to 23/24

Members requested an update with regard to Thackley Green.

Discussions were underway regarding NNC taking over the facility from WNC. Currently negotiations were being conducted with the NHS regarding their potential usage of the site. It was hoped that mobilisation on site would commence from 1st April 2023, however it was important that NNC conducted full due diligence and so if this target date slipped into early 2023/24 that decision would be taken. Members would be kept updated.

There was a general discussion regarding the assumption often cited by hospitals that “bed blocking” was caused due to deficiencies in local Adult Services.

The numbers awaiting transfer from local hospitals into Adult Services care were relatively low. There were a number of factors that could cause over stay in hospitals. Adult Services monitored the situation on a daily basis and action taken to minimise delays.

Members requested a breakdown of data in relation to the transfer of residents from NHS to Adult Services care.

MTFP

It was noted that the £1,788m cost under Specialist Care Centre, was largely offset by a saving under Adult Services MTFP.

Adult Services

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Adult Services. These included: -

- Undertake statutory assessments of need in line with the Care Act 2014.

- To fully embed the practice and quality improvements focussing on strengths-based practice associated with the “Three Conversations model.
- To review the first year implementation of the Target Operating Model and develop the next phase implementation and embedding of the approach, including whether the team and staffing structures are appropriate to the delivery of the model.
- To continue to consider and deliver the benefits associated with integrated working with health, in particular in relation to the Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire (iCAN) programme and place based working arrangements (Community Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships).
- Promote and enable people to regain independence or become more independent
- Assess and support the needs of informal carers in their caring roles.
- Continue to develop the performance management approach to provide assurance to the council of the efficacy of the services’ approach to supporting people that have or may have social care support needs.

Members queried whether performance on adaptations to properties had improved. That often resulted in delays of patients being discharged from hospital.

It was noted that significant adaptations were conducted under DFG, the responsibility of Place & Economy. There were not significant delays for minor adaptations or equipment.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Adult Services. These included: -

- Availability of external social care provision continues to impact on the ability of adult services teams to support people in a timely way.
- Key roles such as social workers remain difficult to recruit to.
- Social care reform – additional demand for assessments of need may require further staffing to implement - delayed but still need to plan.
- Ordinary Residence whilst believed to be resolved has resurfaced related to disaggregation – intensive activity required to minimise risks of transfers of cases from WNC.
- Hospital pressures remain and require intensive support to ensure costs are appropriate for NNC. Flu season has exacerbated this in 2022/2023 winter.

It was noted that there was currently a 50% vacancy figure for social workers.

Work on seeking to recruit to vacancies was ongoing, and benchmarking of pay rates undertaken. Increases in the National Living Wage may also impact on future years’ budgets.

Public Health

An overview of existing Public Health services was provided.

Core services	Current status
Substance Misuse	Commissioned
Sexual Health	Commissioned
Management & Admin	NNC Staff
Health Protection	West Lead (CWA)
Health Improvement	NNC Staff
Health Promotion	NNC Staff
Falls Service	NNC Staff
Commissioned Health	Commissioned
Mental Health	NNC Staff
0-19 Services	Commissioned
Adult Learning Fund	NNC Staff

It was noted by Members that the service was seeking to disaggregate from contracts over time.

An overview of key areas of activity was provided. It was noted that the service had disaggregated in October 2022.

- Core public health services delivered in line with grant funding, strategy and statutory requirements.
- Supporting the re-shaping of NNC PH Team post disaggregation e.g. interim capacity; service equity.
- Service gaps to be identified and addressed.
- Services with exit plans (includes CWAs, identified realignment opportunities etc)
- Project related activity (funded through Reserves, linking to other grant activity and delivering public health outcomes in line with ambitions).

- Working with Finance colleagues to establish PH budget position post disaggregation.

Overview

An overview of Public Health funding and income was provided.

- All ALS funding allocations are ringfenced, funding from the ESFA and actual funding received is dependent on delivery up to the maximum allocation. ALS is a hosted service for West. The current make up of funding allocations are as follows:
 - Community Learning grant allocation of circa £2.05m
 - Currently spending and drawing down full allocation within funding rules
 - Accredited 'Skills' funding grant allocation of circa £450,000.
 - Currently spending approximately £120,000 of allocation resulting in circa £330,000 claw back per year
 - This has been the profile for the past 3 years.
 - Study Programme grant allocation.
 - Reduced funding allocation of circa £19,000 for 2022/23. Previous profile of circa £100,000. Reduction is due to lagged funding following lower delivery during and post covid-19. Ongoing inherited operational deficit of £50-£100,000 per annum
 - Multiply grant of circa £1.9m across three years
 - Year one allocation (circa £580,000); grant awards being made to deliver projects meeting the vision of the council.
 - Year two and three allocation (circa £670,000 p.a.)

Actions and next steps

- Launch new 'skills' courses – March 2023.
- Appoint Multiply and "Skills" posts to enable delivery: Nov 2023 – Jan 2024.
- Roll out revised Curriculum Planning process – Dec 22, planning for 2023/24 to commence March 2023.
- Improved marketing of courses to increase learner numbers and start to develop growth of income and capacity – March 2023.
- Formal proposal and review of Study Programme approach and staffing –roll out August 2023.
- Review accommodation strategy for Study Programme – Jan 2023.
- Develop and launch commissioning model for L2B courses – launched by March 2023.
- Review staffing and consider restructure for ALS to deal with potential funding change – Feb 2023 (subject to formal completion of public consultation).

Members asked for confirmation that the Public Health (PH) grant would be used in line with the requirements.

It was confirmed that part of the NNC PH Strategy included a paper setting out the financial framework for the service including how the PH funds can be used.

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