

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 17th August, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Jason Smithers (Leader of the Council) (Chair)

Councillor Lloyd Bunday

Councillor Scott Edwards

Councillor Helen Harrison

Councillor David Howes

Councillor Harriet Pentland

Councillor Mark Rowley

Also in attendance – Councillors Anne Lee, Leanne Buckingham, Lynne Buckingham and Dorothy Maxwell

474 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs Matt Binley, David Brackenbury and Helen Howell. Apologies were also received from the Interim Director of Public Health, Susan Hamilton and the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing, David Watts.

475 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 12th July 2023

RESOLVED that the Executive agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2023 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

476 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

477 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

The Chair, Councillor Jason Smithers reported that there were requests to address the meeting as set out below:

Agenda Item	Speakers
Item 6 - Education Case Management System Procurement and Implementation Business Case	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Lyn Buckingham
Item 7 – Re-procurement of the NHS Health Checks Programme for NNC	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Anne Lee

Item 8 - North Northamptonshire's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023 – 2026 and Co-Production Charter	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Leanne Buckingham
Item 9 – Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023-24	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Leanne Buckingham
Item 10 – Section 106 Funding Uplift to the Schools Minor Works Budget	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 13 – Framework Agreement for Assistive Technology Equipment	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Lyn Buckingham
Item 14 - Local Authority Housing Fund – Round 2 Funding	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell, Lyn Buckingham and William Colquhoun
Item 15 - Designating Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell and Leanne Buckingham
Item 16 - Capital Outturn 2023/24 as at Period 3	Cllrs Anne Lee and Lyn Buckingham
Item 17 - Capital Programme Update - 2023/24	Cllr Lyn Buckingham
Item 18 - Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 3	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell

Cllr William Colquhoun did not attend the meeting and consequently did not speak on Agenda Item 14.

Cllr Dorothy Maxwell arrived at the meeting after consideration of Agenda Item 6. Cllr Maxwell also opted not to speak in relation to Agenda Items 7, 9, 13 and 18.

478 Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 3 - June 2023)

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that sought to provide an update on the performance of the Council across a range of services as measured by performance indicators (PIs), as well as setting out the progress that was being made in the development of the Council's performance monitoring arrangements.

Cllr Bunday reported that the Period 3 report indicated 36 indicators on or exceeding their target, with three inside tolerance levels, 16 performing below target levels and two having insufficient data to allow reporting. Of the PIs reported for the period, 43 had shown improvement, with 24 deteriorating since the previous reporting period.

Cllr Bunday referenced positive performances in relation to:

- The percentage of Council invoices paid within 30 days;
- The increasing number of local contractors and suppliers used by the Council to provide services;

- Business Rates and Council Tax collection rates remaining higher than forecast and for the same period in the previous financial year;
- A reduction in data breaches;
- 53,403 people helped by Customer Services during the period

Following changes agreed at the March Executive meeting, Human Resources and Workforce Data PIs were now presented quarterly to the Executive. Work relating to vacancy data had now been completed and total agency spend was also included.

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to welcome a number of PIs relating to sustainability and the environment being included, which would aid the Council in highlighting areas for improvement on its journey towards carbon neutrality.

RESOLVED

That the Executive noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 3 (June) 2023/24 as set out in the appendices to this report.

Reason for Recommendations – to better understand the Council’s performance as measured by Key Performance Indicators as at Period 3 (June) 2023/24.

Alternative Options Considered: Reporting performance data on a less frequent basis is an option but monthly reporting is considered useful at this stage of the Council’s existence, reporting alongside budget information.

479 Education Case Management System Procurement and Implementation Business Case

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham queried whether the procurement of an Education Case Management System could not have been included as part of the Children Social Care Case Management System approved for procurement in November 2022.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Childrens, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that provided the options available and sought approval to procure and implement a new Education Case Management System. Approval of the use of Transformation Reserves to fund one-off costs associated with the system would need approval by Full Council following recommendation by Executive.

Cllr Edwards noted that procurement alongside the case management system referred to by Cllr Buckingham would not have been possible, as both systems had differing requirements, although an examination of that option had been undertaken.

It was reported that the current system had been in place for a number of years, with the existing contract ending on 31st March 2024. It was therefore appropriate for the Education service to investigate the market to procure and implement a new system using an existing framework as the procurement route. The proposed contract duration was for up to seven years, allowing for the consideration of alternative options to be in place after four years, if required. The cost of the contract was

estimated as being £1.82m over seven years, with a total one-off cost of £1.362m to be met through the Transformation Reserves, if approved by Full Council.

It was heard that the system was essential to allow the Council to deliver effective and efficient education services, providing the opportunity to refine processes and efficiencies as well as reduce corporate complaints and public contacts as well as offering improved financial controls.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the commencement of the procurement process to purchase and implement an ECMS for NNC
- b) Recommended to Full Council:
 - The approval of the use of the Transformation Reserve to fund the one-off implementation costs of £1.362m.
 - The approval of the inclusion of the ongoing annual revenue costs (£131k in 24/25 and £142.5k in 25/26) for the new Education Case Management System to be included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services, to take any further decisions and/or actions required to conclude this procurement, implement the system and deliver this project, including but not limited to awarding and entering into a contract for an ECMS.

Reasons for Recommendations –

- Expiry of the incumbent contracts – the current system contracts expire in April 2024.
- NNC will gain significant benefits from an ECMS. Levels of service to Children, Young People, parents and carers will be improved, and process efficiencies implemented.

Alternative Options Considered –

- Do nothing.
- Apply for a variation with the current supplier, subject to this option being available under the current contract and such modification satisfying the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- Reprocure the current system through a direct award
- Build a bespoke system for the Education Service

All of the alternative options shown above have been discounted as they do not provide an effective solution, for reasons set out in section 5 of this report.

480 Re-procurement of the NHS Health Checks Programme for North Northamptonshire Council

The Chair invited Cllr Anne Lee to address the Executive. Cllr Lee noted that disaggregation of the NHS Health Checks Programme was a positive move and sought clarification regarding the details of existing community providers of health checks. Cllr Lee also requested that figures for health check uptakes be provided to the Health Scrutiny Committee going forward.

The Chair then invited Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to introduce a report that sought to provide options for the future provision of the statutory NHS Health Check programme, as well as seeking delegated authority to reprocure the programme for the residents of North Northamptonshire for a period of one year from April 2024, with options to extend for two further years.

Cllr Harrison noted that details of community health check providers could be provided outside of the meeting and that performance indicators relating to health checks could be presented to both the Executive and Health Scrutiny Committee moving forward.

The meeting heard that the Council had a statutory duty to provide the NHS Health Check assessments to eligible individuals with an aim to improve health and wellbeing for residents, prevent heart disease and the escalation of health needs. It was noted that earlier identification and treatment would help prevent the onset of disease and help people live well for longer. The programme also raised awareness of dementia across the population and within high risk and vulnerable groups.

The current commission was for both North and West Northamptonshire and was due to end on 31st March 2024 with no option to extend. Following a review of the service, a number of options had been considered, with the option proposed seeking procurement of a service for North Northamptonshire only, in line with disaggregation principles. The new service would be for a contract duration of one year (annual value £350,000), with the ability to extend in increments to a maximum of three years enabling the contract to align with the national digital offer once online and maximising health check coverage.

The Chair noted the importance of the report before members in improving the health and wellbeing of North Northamptonshire residents and offered his support in regard to its aims.

Cllr Harriet Pentland stated that health checks were vital in terms of prevention to ensure residents were able to lead long and healthy lives.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Director of Public Health & Wellbeing to:

- i. Reprocurer the NHS Health Checks programme for the residents of North Northamptonshire.
- ii. Award a 3-year contract (comprising of an initial term of 1 year, with options to extend in increments of twelve months).

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The proposed option accords with the Local Authority's responsibility under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 to provide the Health Check Assessment to eligible individuals in a local authority's area.
- The proposed option delivers on a 'Key Area' NNC's Transformation Strategy to 'review, design and deliver splitting of West/North hosted/shared services' by North and West Northamptonshire procuring NHS Health Checks separately for their respective residents.
- The recommendation maintains consistency with previous decisions to re-procure the NHS Health Check programme.
- The recommended action is cost-effective, while maximising benefit to eligible patients in the North Northamptonshire area.

Alternative Options Considered:

- The option to not re-procure the NHS Health Checks programme was considered but rejected on the grounds that it would have a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of the residents of North Northamptonshire and the Council would not be fulfilling its legal obligations.
- The option to re-commission the NHS Health Checks programme jointly with West Northamptonshire Council was considered but rejected on the grounds that the proposal would not align with North Northamptonshire Council's Transformation Strategy.

481 North Northamptonshire's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 and Co Production Charter

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to speak to the Executive. Cllr Maxwell queried whether there were sufficient placements for children with special educational needs for 2023/24, the number of children assessed during 2023 and whether there was a backlog of these assessments. Cllr Maxwell also made reference to speech and language specialists, educational psychologists and training for staff.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before inviting Cllr Leanne Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham stated her support for the report, noting that the need for a comprehensive SEND and inclusion strategy had never been more important and referenced the importance of Family Hubs going forward. Cllr Buckingham also stated that educational awareness of the needs of people with SEND considerations was of paramount importance.

The Chair then invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought to introduce the North Northamptonshire Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 and Co-Production Charter. The strategy provided the framework for how the Council and the local partnership would deliver its statutory duties in relation to education, health and care for children with SEND requirements. The strategy also included the NNC Co-production Charter, a commitment for how the local partners will work together in line with statutory requirements.

Cllr Edwards noted that to assist in the development of the strategy and charter a working group had been introduced in February 2022 to consider best practice and future vision. The proposed principles arising from this activity had been identified as:

- Co-production at the heart of strategic and operational practices
- Making SEND everyone's business
- Making good practice common practice
- Identifying and meeting the right needs at the right time

Cllr Edwards noted that early intervention was key, with the Family Hub programme identified by Cllr Buckingham going some way to providing that support.

It was heard that a series of multi-agency/parent/carer SEND Improvement Workshops had taken place whereby families had been invited to share their experiences of existing services, with key priorities identified as a result. Communication with all partner organisations required improvement, and the culture surrounding SEND needed to better reflect a culture of collectively championing and improving outcomes to provide confidence in the local system.

Cllr Edwards noted positive existing practice in relation to SEND, but it was understood that local variation needed to be reduced in order to best meet local needs, with the workforce having the skills to deliver requirements. Cllr Edwards thanked all those who had played a role in preparatory work that had allowed implementation plans to commence.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the co-produced SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023-26 as well as the Co-production Charter.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To support the Council and its partners to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- To support the Council through the delivery of both the SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the Co-production Charter in delivering its Equality Duties and meeting the requirements of SEND law and guidance.
- To ensure an effective and consistent offer of support to children with SEND and their families across North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Option Considered: The alternative option would be to not have a SEND and Inclusion Strategy in place. However, this would not be a recommended approach as the Strategy clearly outlines what the priorities are for North Northamptonshire in delivering a better, brighter future for children and young people with Special Educational Needs an/or Disabilities.

482 Northamptonshire Youth Justice Plan 2023-24

The Chair invited Cllr Leanne Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham stated that the Youth Justice Plan may not have a far enough reach in regard to adopting a holistic approach to offending, with the provision of positive activities for young people required, noting the difficulty in accessing existing facilities and clubs, including resource needs. There was a need to navigate youngsters away from risky behaviours towards positive activities. It was suggested that pupil premium for those eligible to receive it should be fully utilised, with every facet of life targeted towards positivity and individualised.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce the annual Youth Justice Plan, a statutory document providing specified information regarding the local provision of youth justice services. The iteration before members covered performance for 2022/23 and provided details relating to service budgets, operational and strategic developments within the service and partnership, service structure and the Service Improvement Plan for 2023–2024.

In response to Cllr Buckingham's comments, Cllr Edwards reported that the Youth Offending Service Board were looking at early intervention measures and concurred that every child should be treated differently because of their different needs, ambitions and goals. Cllr Edwards made reference to the pupil premium and stated that work was ongoing to ensure this was being spent in the best possible manner across North Northamptonshire's schools.

The meeting heard that Youth Offending Teams were statutory partnerships with the aim of preventing youth offending. Areas identified as priorities were detailed as follows:

- Early help and prevention
- Recognising and responding to child exploitation and serious youth crime
- Tackling disproportion in the criminal justice system

The meeting noted the complex nature of the youth offending system budget structure, with a number of funding streams. The indicative grant for the service for 2023/24 was £737,177 based on the 2022/23 allocation with a 4.5% uplift subject to confirmation by the Youth Justice Board via the Ministry of Justice.

The report provided performance statistics and performance indicators and case studies in relation to youth offending. The report separated those with special educational needs requirements as well as mental health care and emotional wellbeing requirements.

Cllr Edwards noted that there had been an increase in drugs-related offences, robberies, violent crimes and knife crime, with an increase in 10–14 year-olds entering the criminal justice system also recorded. A consistent reduction in first-time entrants was reported, alongside a reduction in custodial sentences and those on remand. Multi-agency working was helping to tackle these issues, but there remained significant work to be done.

The service development plan would look at a targeted approach to various groups to assist in reducing numbers across all categories, with early intervention key in this regard.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the content of the Youth Justice Plan 2023/24.
- b) Noted Northamptonshire's Youth Offending Service priorities for 2023/24 as set out in the plan.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To accord with the constitution of the Council where the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Policy Framework that is decided by Full Council.
- To provide strategic direction to the Youth Offending Service that is delivered by Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

Alternative Options Considered: As well as being a requirement of statute, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval by the Council is therefore required.

483 Section 106 Funding Uplift to the Schools Minor Works Budget

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the Executive. Cllr Maxwell spoke to query whether the Council had the opportunity to decide where Section 106 development funding was directed or whether it was allocated to specific schools.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before inviting Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to present a report that sought approval to uplift the Schools Minor Works Budget by £807,999 from Section 106 development funding as well as providing details of how this funding would be used.

Cllr Edwards highlighted how the additional funding would be utilised across a total of six schemes that would fund extensions, additional school places and education facilities at sites across North Northamptonshire.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the proposal to uplift of the school's minor works budget in 2023/24 by £807,999 from S106 development funding.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services, and the Executive Director of Finance and Performance, to authorise all necessary financial arrangements to ensure expended use of S106 Development Funding.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- NNC has a responsibility to ensure that the S106 Development Funding is invested in a timely and efficient way to ensure it meets the S106 funding criteria and delivers the most strategic impact in the areas and the schools it is intended to support.
- Provision of appropriate management of the existing school estate and provides an opportunity to meet our statutory responsibilities to provide sufficiency of school places in NNC.

Alternative Options Considered:

The funding is nearing expiry date and needs to be expended appropriately and in a timely way, the alternative is that it would expire without being spent to the benefit of residents.

484 The Avenue Infants School Extension

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval for a capital project to add an extension to The Avenue Infants School.

It was heard that the extension would create additional SEND teaching and ancillary space to meet increasing demand for SEND provision, including physical requirements. The £859,800 of funding required for the extension would primarily come from the SEND Grant, as well S106 Development Funding.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to welcome investment into the Council's SEND provision, noting several recent Executive reports on the subject showed the authority moving at pace in developing this vital provision.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the proposed Capital Project to add an extension to The Avenue Infants School.
- b) Noted the scheme will be funded primarily by the SEND Grant, also S106 development Funding.
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services, and the Executive Director of Place and Economy, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the scheme.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To create additional SEND teaching and ancillary space to meet increasing demand for SEND provision including physical requirements.
- The Council has a statutory obligation to provide school buildings that are safe and fit for purpose and conducive to teaching and learning. If the Council cannot provide safe school buildings in its maintained provision in North Northamptonshire, then it could be subject to health and safety breaches.

Alternative Options Considered:

- Option 1 - Extending into the playground - The School has very limited outside space which is the children's only playground space and is undersized for the size of school.
- Option 2 - Extending / converting loft space - architects assessed this would be far more costly due to the complicated roof heights and level changes.
- Option 3 - Purchasing additional land - there is no available land adjacent to the school site. To the front of the school is the road, to the rear is a private access lane, on either side are residential homes.

485 Great Doddington Primary School Mobile Replacement

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval for the capital project of a mobile unit replacement at Great Doddington Primary School.

It was heard that the £996,300 required to complete the project would come from the Basic Needs Grant Funding, with the construction programme for the proposed works anticipated to be complete by September 2024.

The Chair spoke to welcome additional investment in local schools and strongly supported the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the proposed Capital Project to replace the double mobile classroom with permanent classrooms which will return an area of the playground back to the school.
- b) Noted the scheme will be funded by Basic Needs Grant funding.
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education in consultation with Executive Director of Children's Services, and the Executive Director of Place and Economy, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the scheme.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The current double classroom mobile on site has reached the end of its design life.
- The Council has a statutory obligation to provide school buildings that are safe and fit for purpose and conducive to teaching and learning. If the Council cannot provide safe school buildings in its maintained provision in North Northants, then it could be subject to health and safety breaches.

Alternative Options Considered:

- Option 1: Replace the mobile with a similar sized building in the same location. This was dismissed as the loss of facilities during construction would present too many issues.
- Option 2: Build a new block at the front of the school. There is space and the layout works except for one aspect. To gain access you must walk externally or through another Classroom 27 which is not ideal. Inserting a Corridor through Classroom 27 makes a room deficient in the required floor area.
- Option 3: Construct a replacement at the top of the site on playground area and link back to the main building. The lost playground would be regained in the mobile location. This is the preferred option.

486 Framework Agreement for Assistive Technology Equipment

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to speak on this item. Cllr Buckingham welcomed the report, the disaggregation of the service from West Northamptonshire Council and the investment in Assistive Technology (AT) equipment. Cllr Buckingham queried how the ongoing sensory impairment consultation would inform the framework agreement moving forward.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to present a report that sought to outline the intention to procure a new framework agreement for the supply of AT equipment from 1st April 2024, when the current service would have disaggregated. The report also sought approval to delegate authority to procure a new framework agreement for a term of four years.

Cllr Harrison noted that keeping people safe and well at home could reduce the costs of social care and that procuring a positive AT package would be an “invest to save” opportunity. With regard to the sensory impairment consultation, this was a factor that was being considered.

It was heard that AT was any product designed to enable independence for disabled and elderly people, with a wide range of products considered to be AT. The overall outcome of the service was to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence and wellbeing in their own homes for as long as possible, thereby preventing admissions to hospital and residential care. In turn this would create efficiencies within social care, avoid premature deaths, help people to recover their health and from injury and support informal care.

The meeting noted that framework agreements allowed for the procurement of good and services from pre-approved suppliers, with agreed terms and conditions and legal protections. A tender process with specifications setting out a general statement of needs or requirements was the favoured approach, allowing for a variety of AT suppliers to be appointed to the framework, encouraging innovation and competition. Agreed prices for equipment would be defined at the beginning of the framework agreement, to apply as and when specific purchases were made.

It was proposed to increase the value limit of the framework to £3m over four years, to allow for the development of existing projects and to expand the Council’s offer. Should the recommendations be approved, the next step would be to prepare the specification, issue invitations to tender to potential suppliers and to evaluate those responses prior to setting up suppliers on the new framework agreement.

The Chair spoke to welcome the report and noted that anything the Council could do to embrace technology to keep people in their homes as long as possible was advantageous for all involved.

Cllr Harriet Pentland also spoke to welcome the report, noting the available opportunities in regard to the more complex and technological elements of the subject.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the commencement of a procurement process to establish a framework agreement for the supply of AT equipment.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health & Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing to take any further decisions and/or actions required to procure, award and enter into a framework agreement for the supply of AT equipment.

Reason for Recommendation: The current contract for the supply of AT equipment expires on 31st March 2024. The recommended course of action enables the procurement of AT equipment so that the service can continue to purchase equipment which supports people to live more independently and reduces the need for higher cost care packages.

Alternative Options Considered:

- To request that WNC include NNC as a named contracting authority capable of accessing the proposed framework agreement being set-up by WNC.
- To not have a framework agreement for the supply of AT equipment.

Neither of those options are recommended. The first option may constrain future NNC service development and flexibility. The second option, having no framework agreement, will lead to the service not being able to provide services to the vulnerable people of North Northamptonshire.

487 Local Authority Housing Fund – Round 2 Funding

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to speak. Cllr Maxwell raised concerns regarding the purchase of larger 4-bed properties for refugees given the Council's housing waiting list, noting the need to assist local residents. Cllr Maxwell also queried the match-funding element of the report.

Cllr Lyn Buckingham was then invited to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham welcomed the report and queried whether there was any alternative to match-funding by borrowing against capital spend.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Mark Rowley, Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-up to present a report that sought approval to enter into an agreement with the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities to acquire 11 homes during 2023-2024 for those on Afghan resettlement schemes and to ease wider homelessness pressures.

The report also sought approval to accelerate the capital programme from 2024/25 and 2025/26 into 2023/24 for the homelessness prevention capital programme to enable the Council to provide the required match-funding against the government grant for the programme.

The Assistant Director for Strategic Housing, Development and Property Services noted that grant funding had to be used specifically in relation to the housing of Afghan refugees. The Council would look to examine the possibility of purchasing the properties into the Council's Housing Revenue Account after a maximum of three-years. Purchasing new properties would bring down the considerable pressure of costs associated with temporary accommodation that was currently being used to house refugees. No additional funding was being borrowed to match-fund the purchases, spend being brought forward from 2024/25 and 2025-26.

Cllr Rowley reported that the Council would receive a grant of £1.298m from central government with the Council expected to part match-fund 60% of the required capital, totalling £1.947m. The government funding equated to 40% of total capital costs. At least 11 homes would be purchased, nine for Afghan refugee resettlement and two for temporary accommodation. A number of these properties would be four-bed properties to accommodate larger family units.

It was noted that Round 1 of the funding had been for the purchase of a minimum of 26 houses for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees and it was reported that a total of 30 properties had been purchased on time and to budget.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke in support of the purchasing of properties, stating that pressure had been building on homelessness services as a result of the use of temporary accommodation and noted the knock-on effects of this for local residents. Cllr Harrison noted that use of hotels as accommodation was not suitable for family units and there was a real opportunity for the Council to purchase housing that would ultimately become part of the Council's housing stock and would benefit local residents.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved that the Council enters into an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to acquire 11 homes during 2023-2024 to deliver additional housing for families in temporary accommodation and Afghan resettlement schemes.
- b) Approved the proposal to accelerate the capital programme from 2024/25 and 2025/26 into 2023/24 for the homelessness prevention capital programme, to enable North Northamptonshire Council to provide the required match funding against the central government grant for this programme.
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults,

Health Partnerships and Housing to take any decisions and actions necessary to complete the programme.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- Provide sustainable housing to those on Afghan resettlement schemes at risk of homelessness so that they can build new lives in the UK, find employment and integrate into communities.
- Reduce local housing pressures beyond those on Afghan resettlement schemes by providing better quality temporary accommodation to families owed homelessness duties by the Council.
- Reduce emergency, temporary and bridging accommodation costs.
- Reduce impacts on the existing housing and homelessness systems and those waiting for social housing.
- To increase the overall supply of affordable rented housing available in North Northamptonshire, which meets the corporate objective of enabling safe and thriving places.

Alternative Options Considered

- Do nothing – if the Council does not participate in this programme, it will not receive the funding allocation and the challenge of finding onward settled accommodation for refugees will remain. This challenge is already putting pressure on stretched homelessness services. Those refugees who present as homeless are still owed a statutory homelessness duty by the Council and need to be placed in costly nightly paid temporary accommodation and then progressed through Keyways on to the housing register.
- Commit to delivering a smaller number of homes – whilst this may be easier to achieve, the government grant allocation will reduce proportionately and less homes will be acquired into our temporary accommodation stock. Ultimately fewer additional homes will be available to the Council to use as affordable housing for our residents in the longer term.

488 Designating Care Experience as a Protected Characteristic

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the Executive. Cllr Maxwell spoke to query the involvement of the probation service with those in care.

The Chair then invited Cllr Leanne Buckingham to speak on the report. Cllr Buckingham spoke to offer her support for the report, noting the need to acknowledge the challenges faced by those in care to help achieve an equitable society allowing everyone to thrive. Cllr Buckingham requested the Executive lobby central government to ensure that recognition of the care experience as a designated

characteristic was reflected nationally and that all protected characteristics be considered as part of the provision of Council services and recruitment.

The Chair then invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval for 'care experience' to be treated as if it were a Protected Characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010 so that decisions on future Council services and policies assessed and considered the impact on people with such experience.

In response to the speaker's comments, Cllr Edwards noted that the probation service had no real involvement in this area and that the Council would lobby central government to put care experience on the same legal footing as the other protected characteristics detailed in the Equalities Act.

Cllr Edwards noted that approval of the recommendations would strengthen the Council's corporate parenting duty to protect and support those in care, with current statistics identifying significant levels of discrimination and disadvantage faced by care experienced people.

The Chair spoke to support the recommendations and offered his thanks to the Executive Director of Children's Services for bringing the report to the Executive.

Cllrs Pentland and Harrison also spoke to welcome the recommendations, noting the proactive approach of the Council in relation to the subject.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- i) Agreed that 'care experience' will be treated as if it were a Protected Characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010 so that decisions on future services and policies made and adopted by the council are assessed and consider the impact on people with care experience.
- ii) Approved the amendment of North Northamptonshire Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and its Equality Strategy 2021- 2025 to reflect 'care experience' being treated as if it were a protected characteristic.

Reasons for Recommendations – The rationale behind this recommendation is that it will help to further embed ways of working within the local authority that specifically take the needs of people with care experience into account. In doing so the Council will be strengthening its role as a corporate parent.

Alternative Options Considered - the alternative option would be not to adopt care experience as a protected characteristic. This is not recommended as it will not further the needs of people with care experience or address the underlying stigma and discrimination that they can face in society.

489 Capital Outturn 2023/24 as at Period 3

The Chair invited Cllr Anne Lee to speak to the meeting. Cllr Lee sought clarity regarding the position of two capital programme housing developments at Cannock Road in Corby and the former Grange Methodist Church in Kettering and queried the £16m Housing Revenue Account (HRA) underspend.

The Chair then invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham raised concerns regarding the slippage of projects and queried how the process could be made more efficient to ensure such projects came to fruition.

The Chair thanked both speakers for their contributions before inviting the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the provisional capital outturn position for 2023/24 as at Period 3, including requests to rephase scheme expenditure profiles. The report also detailed the latest capital budgets for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, including new schemes that had been approved since 1st April 2023.

In response to the queries raised by speakers, Cllr Bunday noted that there had been significant slippage to some developments, with reviews of the ongoing suitability and affordability of sites concerned the main cause, as well as requirements to bring all aspects into line with one-to-one capital receipts.

Cllr Bunday reported that of the outturn for the 2023/24 General Fund Capital Programme showed a revised capital budget of £78m including slippage and in-year approved programmes, with spend being £61.2m, representing an underspend of £16.8m against the revised budget. A number of delivered or in-progress projects were highlighted to the meeting, with details of the projects related to the underspend noted as being those associated with the Corby Town Fund, streetlighting upgrades and a number of school-related upgrades.

It was noted that as part of the completion of Period 3 monitoring and the finalisation of the draft position for 2022/23, the carry-forward balances required amendment, largely to accommodate the Refugee Phase 2 Resettlement Programme into the capital programme for 2023/24.

The outturn for the HRA Capital Programme showed a revised budget for 2023/24 of £23.4m, including slippage from 2022/23. The outturn showed a spend of £6.9m, representing an underspend of £16.3m compared to budget.

Cllr Mark Rowley spoke to provide Cllr Lee with an update regarding the positions of developments at Cannock Road and the former Grange Methodist Church.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the draft forecast capital outturn position as at period 3 for the General Fund Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2023/24.

- b. Noted the new schemes that have been approved since 1st April 2023.
- c. Approved the amendments to capital carry forwards from 2022/23 into 2023/24 for the General Fund as detailed in table 2 below.

Reason for Recommendations: This is in line with the Council's constitution and financial regulations in relation to governance.

Alternative Options Considered: This report is on the forecasted out-turn and therefore alternative options are not proposed.

490 Capital Programme Update - 2023/24

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that requested approval for capital schemes that had come forward for inclusion in the Council's Capital Programme. Approval of the funding would allow the schemes to move forward to procurement and delivery.

Ten schemes were highlighted as per the report and recommendation below. In addition, the Executive recommended to Council the approval of a funding virement of £2m for match funding in respect of the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme.

The Chair welcomed the investment in local communities as evidenced by the capital schemes set out below. Cllrs Edwards and Pentland also spoke to welcome the investment in schools, green spaces and library provision.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes into the capital programme:
 - a. The Avenue Infants School SEND Provision – budget approval for £860k, £727k in 2023/24 and £133k in 2024/25 which is to be funded £838k from SEND Capital Grant and £22k from S106 contributions.
 - b. Great Doddington Primary School mobile replacement – budget approval for £997k, £897k in 2023/24 and £100k in 2024/25 which is to be funded from Basic Needs Capital Grant.
 - c. Weavers Academy bulge places - budget approval for £412k, £367k in 2023/24 and £45k in 2024/25 which is to be funded from Basic Needs Capital Grant.
 - d. Schools Minor Works budget uplift - budget approval for £808k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from S106 contributions.

- e. Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) grants passported to Maintained Schools – budget approval for £262k in 2023/24, to be funded by the DFC grant.
 - f. Spinney Road, Weldon Play Area – budget approval of £35k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from S106 Contributions.
 - g. Desborough Green Space – budget approval of £20k in 2023/24 to be funded by S106 contributions.
 - h. Well Lane Recreation Ground, Rothwell – budget approval of £12k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from S106 contributions.
 - i. Higham Ferrers Library Provision – budget approval of £23k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from S106 contributions.
 - j. Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme – approve a budget of £3.298m for phase 2 of the Refugee Resettlement Scheme funded through £1.298m from the Local Authority Housing Grant and a virement of £2m from the Housing and Homelessness prevention capital programme to the Resettlement capital programme to meet the match funding requirement for the grant.
- ii) Recommend to Council to approve a funding virement of £2m for match funding in respect of the Phase 2 Refugee Resettlement Scheme as set out in the report. This is in accordance with the Council's Constitution as the virement request exceeds £0.5m.

Reasons for Recommendations: These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as:

- To support the statutory delivery of school places and SEND school places across North Northamptonshire.
- To meet corporate plan objectives, for instance in leading in improving the local environment

Alternative Options Considered:

- The funding for the schemes in this report are in accordance with the requirements of the grant or S106 agreements, so there are no alternative options proposed in this report.
- Where individual schemes are over £500k, separate reports are included elsewhere on this agenda which set out the wider options that were considered before reaching the proposals put forward.

491 Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 3

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the

Council based on the Period 3 monitoring forecasts for the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The meeting heard that the overall forecast for the General Fund, as at Period 3, was a forecast overspend of £7.847m based on the emerging data for 2023/24. It was reported that the net budget had increased by £482k from £336.590m in Period 2 to £337.072m in Period 3, reflecting the use of the Climate Change reserve as approved by the Executive at its July meeting.

The main budgetary pressure remained that of the Children's Trust where the forecast overspend was £22.186m. The cost to the Council of this overspend was £9.797m, with the meeting noting that this pressure would pose a significant financial risk to the Council should it not be mitigated.

Cllr Bunday made reference to directorate budgets, including those of Place and Economy as well as Enabling and Support Services. The meeting heard that the Council's corporate contingency budget was likely to be used in full during the financial year to offset the staff pay award that would be higher than budgeted.

The Council's overall outturn forecast for the Housing Revenue Account was an overspend of £24,000. It was also reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant was currently forecast to be delivered on budget.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the Council's forecast outturn position for 2023/24 as summarised in Section 4, alongside the further analysis, risks and other considerations as set out in Section 5 to Section 7 of the report.
- b) Noted the assessment of the current deliverability of the 2023/24 savings proposals in **Appendix A**.
- c) Approved an increase in the gross budget of £984k to support the delivery of the government's wider commitment to level up all parts of the UK to be funded from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) grant of £984k as set out in paragraph 5.69.
- d) Approved an increase in the gross budget of £1.919m to provide additional support to adult social care, to be funded from the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund as set out in paragraph 5.70.

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2023/24 as at Period 3 and consider the impact on this year and future years budgets.

Alternative Options Considered: The report focuses on the forecast revenue outturn against budget for 2023/24 and makes recommendations for the Executive to note the current budgetary position as such there are no specific choices within the report.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 11.33 am