

## Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 16th November, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, NN17 1QG

### Present:-

#### Members

Councillor Jason Smithers (Leader of the Council) (Chair)	Councillor Helen Howell (Deputy Leader of the Council)
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Helen Harrison
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor David Howes
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Mark Rowley

Also in attendance – Councillors Valerie Anslow, Lyn Buckingham, Leanne Buckingham, Keli Watts, Dorothy Maxwell, Andrew Weatherill and Matt Keane

### 525 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing, David Watts and the Interim Executive Director for Place and Economy, Graeme Kane.

### 526 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 12th October 2023

**RESOLVED** that the Executive agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

### 527 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

### 528 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

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

Agenda Item	Speakers
Item 5 - Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 6 – September 2023)	Cllr Valerie Anslow
Item 6 - Annual Report of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust 2022/23 and Update on the Annual Review	Cllrs Leanne Buckingham, Lyn Buckingham, Dorothy Maxwell

Item 7 – Public Spaces Protection Order – Dog Control	Cllr Valerie Anslow, Matt Keane, Keli Watts
Item 8 - Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022-2023	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 9 – North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 10 – East Northants Local Plan Part 2 Adoption	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 11 – Procurement of Independent Living Care and Support Provision	Cllrs Lyn Buckingham and Dorothy Maxwell
Item 12 - Delivery of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) from April 2025	Cllr Matt Keane
Item 13 – Kettering Library Roof Replacement Capital Project	Cllrs Keli Watts, Lyn Buckingham and Dorothy Maxwell
Item 15 – Proposal to Relocate Wilby CE VA Primary School to the Glenvale Park Development	Cllr Valerie Anslow, Leanne Buckingham and Dorothy Maxwell
Item 16 - Social Work Degree Apprentices	Cllr Matt Keane and Dorothy Maxwell
Item 18 - Indicative Budget Timeline and Scrutiny Process 2024/25 – Update	Cllr Lyn Buckingham
Item 19 - Capital Outturn Report as at Period 6	Cllrs William Colquhoun and Lyn Buckingham
Item 21 - Capital Programme Update 2023/24	Cllr Lyn Buckingham

Cllr Dorothy Maxwell opted not to speak in relation to agenda items 8, 9 and 10.

Cllr Lyn Buckingham opted not to speak in relation to agenda item 21.

Cllr William Colquhoun was not in attendance and consequently did not speak in relation to agenda item 19.

Cllr Leanne Buckingham did not speak in relation to agenda item 15.

## **529 Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 6 - September 2023)**

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the meeting. Cllr Anslow queried figures provided for rough sleepers and whether long-term rough sleepers were included within the totals. Cllr Anslow acknowledged the difficulty in engaging with certain rough sleepers and queried the number that had been rehoused and sustained their accommodation.

The Chair then 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.

The Period 5 report showed 41 indicators on or exceeding their target, with six inside tolerance levels and 12 performing below target levels. Of the PIs reported for the period, nine had shown improvement with nine deteriorating since the previous reporting period.

Cllr Bunday reported an increase in Data Breaches, although no specific reason had been identified for this increase and none of these had been escalated to the Information Commissioner's office. Customer Services had recorded 300,000 interactions with the public in the first six months of 2023, with such interactions likely to improve in quality for customers as the new phone and customer relations system was embedded.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the indicators as providing a valuable position of the Council's performance across a number of key areas. Cllr Brackenbury referenced the work going on to improve the performance of the planning service.

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to welcome the positive direction of travel for green and sustainable Key Performance Indicators.

Cllr Mark Rowley, responding to Cllr Anslow's queries noted that figures provided within the report included all rough sleepers in North Northamptonshire. Additional figures relating to rough sleepers would be circulated outside the meeting.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 6 (September / Quarter 2) 2023/24, 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 6 (September / Quarter 2) 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.

## **530 Public Spaces Protection Order – Dog Control**

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the Executive. Cllr Anslow noted that enforcement was key to the success of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and that the report recognised the impracticality of monitoring certain areas. Dog owners needed to understand the implications of dog fouling and not keeping animals

on leads, waste bins needed to be regularly emptied and maintained to ensure their use.

Cllr Keli Watts was then invited to speak. Cllr Watts noted that Kettering had previously had a PSPO in place and it had worked positively. Cllr Watts made reference to the need for clear signage and enforcement.

The Chair invited Cllr Matt Keane to address the meeting. Cllr Keane noted a lack of dog waste bins and referenced the need for comprehensive signage emphasising enforcement and called for dog-specific walking areas.

The Chair welcomed support from the opposition group in relation to the PSPO and noted the part that enforcement and signage could play, stating that the police could also issue fixed penalty notices under the PSPO.

Cllr Mark Rowley, Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-up was then invited to introduce a report that sought approval for a new authority-wide Dog Control PSPO based upon the consultation to replace the previous existing PSPO's of the former sovereign areas of Wellingborough, Kettering and East Northamptonshire which were due to expire in November 2023 and to include the former sovereign area of Corby.

Cllr Rowley noted the reference of speakers to enforcement and signage relating to the PSPO. Dog-specific walking areas were also a consideration for inclusion within available space across the Council area.

Cllr Rowley referenced the overwhelming support for the PSPO arising as part of the public consultation process and stated that a common PSPO across North Northamptonshire would provide a single order that all residents could understand. A number of specific changes to existing PSPOs were detailed, including reference to the number of dogs that could be walked by a single walker and the maximum length of dog leads.

Cllr Matt Binley spoke to welcome the report and noted that it was logical to have a single PSPO across the whole Council area. Cllr Binley noted the importance of educating the minority of irresponsible dog owners regarding acceptable behaviours. Communication needed to be undertaken so dog owners understood that any waste bin could be utilised for disposing of dog waste.

Cllr David Brackenbury also welcomed the report as an excellent piece of work and again referenced both education and enforcement. Cllr Brackenbury thanked all those who had responded to the consultation.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive, having regard to the conditions within S.59 of the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, approved the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) (**Appendix A**), to continue to provide ongoing powers to enforcement officers to tackle dog fouling and other forms of irresponsible dog ownership across North Northamptonshire.

Reason for Recommendations – having one aligned PSPO in place for dog control, will bring all existing conditions and controls together in one place, will remove inconsistencies across the areas and make enforcement more straightforward and easier to understand for the public. The updated PSPO will also extend the provisions to the Corby area for the first time.

Alternative Options Considered – the existing PSPO's within the previous sovereign areas of Wellingborough, Kettering and East Northamptonshire could be extended; amended; or revoked or could be left to expire in November 2023. However, having one aligned PSPO in place would remove inconsistencies that having three PSPO's creates and if they were allowed to lapse, this could increase dog fouling and dog control complaints and issues.

### **531 Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2022-2023**

The Chair invited Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to present the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) Annual Report 2022-2023. The report outlined the Board and statutory partner achievements against the strategic plan during the year.

Cllr Harrison noted the statutory requirement on the Council to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board, the purpose of which was to provide assurance that safeguarding arrangements were in place to help and protect adults in its area, preventing abuse and improving outcomes for local people.

The meeting heard that one of the three core duties of the board was to publish an annual report detailing its undertakings during the preceding year in order to achieve its main objectives and implement its strategic plan. The annual report before members covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 and progress made against the plan was detailed via the achievements of the NSAB Sub-Groups, work of the Delivery Board and Strategic Board. Details of board membership were outlined to the meeting and overview of the work carried out by the board during the year was detailed. The meeting noted that statistics and graphics regarding safeguarding concerns raised during the year were included, as was a progress report against the strategic plan.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome the report and stressed the importance of raising community awareness of the "Report It" campaign through every avenue available to the Council, as everyone had a responsibility for safeguarding.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- i) Noted the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) Annual Report 2022-2023 as approved by the NSAB Strategic Board on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at **Appendix A** to the report.
- ii) Acknowledged the contribution that North Northamptonshire Council has

made in supporting NSAB's achievements in keeping adults safe from harm.

Reason for Recommendations – The report provides assurance to the Executive of the activities undertaken to help safeguard adults across North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered – As the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and Children's Services (Interim DCS) has already approved the report, that the report not be presented for consideration by the Executive. This is not recommended for the reasons set out in the Reason for Recommendations.

## **532 North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme**

The Chair invited Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration to introduce a report that sought approval from Executive to agree the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (LDS) for adoption.

The meeting heard that the LDS was a statutory requirement highlighting the various iterations of planning policy the authority was undertaking. It was reported that the document was a useful tool for the government and Department of Levelling Up to ensure that a local authority was meeting its planning policy objectives and requirements.

It was heard that the Council had a strong LDS, a living document that was subject to periodic review, with the last such review taking place in March 2022. Planning Policy items contained within the LDS included the North Northamptonshire Local Plan, the four Part 2 Local Plans (once the East Northants Local Plan Part 2 had been adopted) and the North Northamptonshire Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan. One area not currently included in the LDS was the Minerals and Waste Local Plan as work was ongoing with West Northamptonshire Council with a view to taking a decision as to whether joint or separate plans would be adopted.

### **RESOLVED**

#### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive agreed the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (LDS) for adoption.

Reason for Recommendations – To agree a timetable for the programme of plans identified in the LDS; and to ensure the Council meets its legal obligation to publish and maintain an up-to-date LDS, to meet its requirements as a local planning authority. To ensure the Council meets its obligation under Section 15(1) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, to publish an up-to-date Local Development Scheme to meet its requirement as a local planning authority.

Alternative Options Considered – It is a statutory obligation for the Council to publish and maintain an up-to-date LDS, as such the Council needs to adopt a revised LDS. The Executive could, if it was minded to do so, ask officers to review the timeframes

and present a further revision of the LDS in due course.

### 533 East Northants Local Plan Part 2 Adoption

The Chair invited Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration to introduce a report that sought approval from Executive to progress the Part 2 Local Plan for East Northamptonshire to adoption by Full Council in order to provide an up-to-date development plan for making planning decisions and to guide development proposals for the area.

Cllr Brackenbury reported that all other former sovereign areas of North Northamptonshire had adopted Part 2 Local Plans, with the exception of the East Northamptonshire area. Preparation of the document had taken a significant period of time and involved widespread consultation with a variety of stakeholders, prior to being submitted to public examination and adjudication by the Planning Inspectorate. It was noted that the former East Northamptonshire Council had resolved to submit the Local Plan for examination to the Secretary of State in March 2021, the examination hearing sessions subsequently being held from April to May 2022, and following minor modifications, the plan had been adjudged sound.

Cllr Brackenbury offered his thanks to the officer teams at the former East Northamptonshire Council and North Northamptonshire Council for bringing the plan to state for satisfactory examination, as well as thanking all those who had responded to the consultation, and the Planning Inspectorate for its diligence in undertaking the examination process.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to welcome adoption of the plan, noting that it would offer clarity for residents of East Northamptonshire.

Cllr Brackenbury noted that adoption of the plan would offer considerable protection against unwanted development in the area.

### RESOLVED

#### KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Supported the content of the Part 2 Local Plan Council, (as set out in **Appendix A** to the report) in advance of its progression to adoption by Full Council;
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth and Regeneration, to make any minor alterations to the Plan, or its accompanying Policies Map, that relate to factual updates or typographical errors for the purposes of publishing the Plan to presentation standard; and;
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Growth and Regeneration, to prepare and publish the Local Plan Adoption Statement (**Appendix B** to the report) and the Sustainability Appraisal Statement (**Appendix C** to the

report) and to fulfil any other duties, as required by Regulations 26 to 36 of the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

#### Reasons for Recommendation

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area and a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities.
- The Plan prepared by the Council was subject to thorough examination and has been modified as a result of the recommendations made by the Inspector, as set out in her report (**Appendix D** refers). The Council has previously consulted on a schedule of these Main Modifications (**Appendix E**) and has also made non-substantive modifications to the plan during the examination, which are set out at **Appendix F** to this report. Corresponding changes to the Policies Map are also set out in **Appendix G**.
- Subsequent to the adoption of the East Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2, it will supersede all the saved policies from the 1996 Local Plan for East Northamptonshire, along with the extant policies from the 2011 Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Local Plan.

Alternative Options Considered – The options considered are either to adopt the Local Plan incorporating the recommended modifications, or to resolve not to adopt the Plan.

Adoption of the Plan would provide full coverage for Part 2 Plan policies across the whole of North Northamptonshire. If the Plan was not adopted this would put at risk the delivery of key policies guiding future, sustainable development proposals across East Northamptonshire area.

#### **534 Procurement of Independent Living Care and Support Provision**

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the Executive. Cllr Maxwell spoke to note that the report before members was a step in the right direction and made reference to monitoring of provider care packages and staff training. Cllr Maxwell also noted the importance of care-receivers being able to remain in their own home whilst they received care.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her comments before Lyn Buckingham was invited to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham noted that the report currently covered four schemes and 52 care-receivers and further noted a lack of extra care schemes in the North Northamptonshire area. Cllr Buckingham queried whether schemes would look to be extended where there were gaps in service during the contract duration and also referenced budgetary considerations.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her contribution before inviting Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to present a report that sought agreement from the Executive to procure a Care and Support provision within



Independent Living schemes for adults who were ordinarily resident in North Northamptonshire, inclusive of those with mental health needs, autism, learning disabilities, and physical/sensory disability. Where required, support would also be available to provide palliative and end of life regulated social care.

Responding to Cllr Maxwell's comments, Cllr Harrison stated that any care organisation that contracted with the Council was very closely monitored for quality and performance, with an element of the contracts agreed enabling care providers to access free training by provided by the Council. Cllr Harrison stated that people with learning disabilities were a valued group within communities and the care and support provided to help them remain independent was of vital importance. It was heard that the Council had great aspirations to increase the amount of Independent Living across North Northamptonshire and this would be reflected in the forthcoming Housing Strategy.

The Executive noted that that Independent Living schemes supported Adult Social Care priorities by reducing the number of people who went into long-term residential care and by avoiding preventable hospital re-admissions. Such schemes also facilitated timely hospital discharges and allowed people to die at home with dignity and support. Development of future Independent Living sites was an aspect to be considered separately, with the proposed provision before members laying the foundation for ongoing work.

The framework for specialist care and support provision ensured the Council was ready with a contractual arrangement to call on new schemes as they were built across the Council area. The current framework, which had commenced in April 2019, was due to expire at the end of March 2024. A review of current provision and engagement with the wider specialist care and support market plus stakeholders had been conducted. In addition, benchmarking of both cost and service models had been undertaken. Based on the findings it was proposed that a six-year contract be awarded, with the possibility of a one-year extension to allow certainty and stability to the system. The total contract value across the seven years would be £4.2m. Utilising a Framework would enable awarded providers to contract with the Council throughout the term of the agreement, encouraging new and specialist Providers into North Northamptonshire. In addition, the Framework would support a range of providers to work with the Council, increasing diversity and volume within the market and maximising choice and sustainability. Following a robust procurement process, providers would be awarded contracts having been assessed against a range of quality assurance tools, minimising risk to the Council.

Cllr Matt Binley spoke to welcome the report and noted that the importance of Independent Living, having seen first-hand the provision in action.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the procurement of Care & Support provision within Independent Living Schemes to ensure North Northamptonshire remains compliant in its statutory responsibilities.

- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS), to take any further decisions and/or actions required to conclude the procurement and award of the contract.
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS), to take any decisions in relation to future call-off and mini-competitions from the agreement.

#### Reasons for Recommendations:

- A Framework will ensure that the Council can efficiently source specialist care and support in Independent Living settings in a timely fashion when responding to new scheme developments.
- The provision of high-quality care and support within Independent Living settings offers a beneficial and impactful alternative to residential care when Home First is no longer a sustainable long term accommodation option for individuals
- Commissioning of Care & Support provision within Independent Living settings, ensures the Council fulfils its statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 to provide care and support whilst preventing and influencing the delay of increasing need of ageing individuals.

The recommended approach maximises outcomes and value for money by supporting individuals with care and support needs to remain living independently for as long as they are able, delaying the need for residential care solutions. The Council is also better able to engage with contracted providers to support quality improvement and the shaping of services to meet the needs of people in North Northamptonshire. Furthermore, the Council is able to make informed decisions about its medium-term financial plan due to the reduction in need to source delivery with rates negotiated on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

#### Alternative Options Considered:

- Making use of the Homecare Framework to source care and support provision – acknowledged not recommended due to absence of non-specialised support conducive to Independent Living settings. This would mean we could not influence the development of services tailored to the provision of extra care and would limit opportunities to target care and support in a way that maximises independence in these settings.
- Negotiating individual contracts for each scheme on a non-framework agreement basis - acknowledged equally not recommended due to likelihood of higher cost impact in doing so. This also reduced our oversight of quality and safety and abilities to stimulate an efficient and effective market and service model.

## **535 Delivery of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) from April 2025**

The Chair invited Cllr Matt Keane to speak on this item. Cllr Keane suggested that an all-member briefing was required to outline options going forward with regard to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), making specific reference to access issues at the Corby site.

The Chair thanked Cllr Keane for his comments and made reference to section 6.7 of the report regarding member involvement, with a view to utilising the significant experience of members in regard to waste procurement and processes. It was noted that a contract of the size concerned would be considered by the Council's scrutiny function, which would be likely to include an all-member briefing.

The Chair then invited Cllr Matt Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought agreement of the proposed operating model for HWRCs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, and further sought approval for the Waste Management service to undertake procurement activities to secure the necessary contracts to support that operating model.

In response to Cllr Keane's comment, Cllr Binley noted that the options appraisal had been considered by both the Sustainable and Prosperous Communities EAPs and the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee and that member involvement and engagement going forward was vital.

Cllr Binley reported that as a result of the current HWRC operations outsourcing arrangements ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the current operations at the Council's four sites had been reviewed to identify the requirements for the future of the service. The meeting heard that an options appraisal had been completed and was included as an appendix to the report before members. The appraisal identified acceptable capacity with regard to current demand, with HWRC's located within a good distance for the residents to travel. Some issues had been identified with the facilities requiring actions to allow them to maximise their waste collection, address customer satisfaction and meet future demand.

It was noted that the Wellingborough and Corby sites had been identified as being limited with regards to their size, layout and access, with potential improvements listed within the appraisal for all four sites, as well as long and medium-term actions to maintain service levels based on housing developments and population growth. Accordingly, a future HWRC strategy would be developed.

The appraisal had reviewed the option of having an in-house service or retaining the outsourced model, with a recommendation of retaining an outsourced service. In reaching this conclusion it had been estimated that an in-house service would cost approximately £140,000 more annually.

It was recommended to procure a contract offering at least the same service level, maintaining opening days, operational hours and materials accepted, with the procurement process aiming to deliver an outsourced model for a 15-year duration, and to extend the lease of the Corby site for a further three-years to enable a review of that provision and consider the options available.

## RESOLVED

### KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved commencement of procurement of the Council's future Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) contract.
- ii) Approved that the operation of HWRC facilities in North Northamptonshire will be delivered under an outsourced operating model for a duration up to 15 years.
- iii) Approved the extension of the current lease for the land for Corby HWRC by 3 years to enable a review to be undertaken on alternative provision for the area.
- iv) Approved officers undertaking a review of alternative provision at Corby to consider the sourcing of a new lease for, or purchase of new or existing land, or utilisation of existing council owned land, dependent on which provides the greatest value to both the Council and delivery of the service, on which to provide a HWRC facility in the vicinity of Corby.
- v) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with Executive Director for Place & Economy, Executive Director for Finance and Performance and the Executive Member for Finance, the authority to take any further decisions and/or actions required in connection with the North Northamptonshire procurement process and award of the HWRC contracts, and property related transactions without the need to return to the Executive.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The proposed option most closely aligns with local government reform and transformation outcomes for Waste Services in North Northamptonshire.
- The recommended course of action will allow the Council to secure the most cost-effective, solution for North Northamptonshire residents.
- This approach enables the Council to make informed decisions regarding its medium- and long-term financial planning for its Waste Management services.
- This approach ensures the Council has legally procured and has a compliant contract in place for the provision of services that provide a direct benefit to residents in disposing of their waste.

Alternative Options Considered:

- The alternative to procuring an HWRC contract would be for the Council to enter the HWRC sector by running its own facilities however it is

considered that the lengthy lead in times and additional cost make this prohibitive.

- The Council could seek to jointly procure a new shared contract with West Northamptonshire Council to reflect existing arrangements however this could constrain the Council's ability to make decisions which best fits the future needs of North Northamptonshire

## **536 Kettering Library Roof Replacement Capital Project**

The Chair invited Cllr Keli Watts to address the meeting Cllr Watts spoke to query the amount of financing required to replace the roof of Kettering Library, noting that it might have been less burdensome had works been undertaken following the condition survey carried out in 2019 under the former Northamptonshire County Council. Cllr Watts also queried whether there was any risk that grant funding paid by SEMLEP may need to be repaid. Cllr Watts concluded by volunteering to be the ward member for the project team that would be required to convene as part of the project.

Cllr Lyn Buckingham was then invited to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham spoke to reference the condition survey undertaken by GSS Architecture and the lack of reference in the report regarding Kettering Museum as part of the project. Cllr Buckingham noted the complexity of using Collyweston slate on the roof and made reference to the projected budgetary cost and the aim of using 50% reclaimed slate from the existing roof. Cllr Buckingham noted the lack of mention of potential grant funding for restoration of the roof within the report and asked for more details regarding the outcomes for the Council.

The Chair noted the need to undertake the processes laid out in the report due to the necessity of undertaking the roof replacement of a Grade II Listed Building.

Cllr Dororthy Maxwell then spoke and stated that the Council had no choice but to maintain the building for future generations and the longer it was left, the worse the situation would become. Although the use of Collyweston slate would be expensive, there was no option but to go forward with the project and undertake the roof replacement as proposed.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their contributions before inviting Cllr Helen Howell, Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism to introduce a report that detailed the work required and the rationale, proposed methodology and estimated, high-level, worst-case scenario costs to replace the 120-year-old Collyweston stone roof on Kettering Library.

Accordingly, the report also sought approval to add £6.807m to the Council's capital programme so that the work could be undertaken over the remainder of the current year and the next two financial years. Further approval was sought to enter into the required procurement activity to secure the installation of the scaffolding and canopy tent, the appointment of the professional team (Architects, Quantity Surveyors and Contract Administrators), ordering of the Collyweston slate and appointment of the main contractors to complete the roof replacement.

Cllr Howell reported that the library roof had been in need of repair for some time, with a condition survey undertaken by the former county council in 2019 stating that the roof would require replacement within ten years.

It was heard that the project for the new extension to the library had been inherited from the former Kettering Borough Council, with the building itself inherited from the former county council. Replacement of the library roof had not been included within the scheme of works for the new extension and the funding application consequently did not include costs for that work, only for some minor repairs.

The meeting noted that the new extension had been completed successfully, however, during the winter of 2022-2023, the library roof had deteriorated rapidly resulting in water ingress into the main library building and parts of the new extension where the old roof met the new.

A new condition survey had been carried out and provided evidence that the roof needed to be replaced in its entirety as repairs would no longer fix the issue. Should the building not be made watertight as soon as practicable, there was a risk that further water ingress would compromise the structure of the building and damage the internal fabric, library stock and equipment. The Council had a duty to keep the Grade II Listed Building in good repair and maintain a library function in Kettering Town Centre.

In light of the above situation, it was heard that a decision had been taken in January 2023 to delay opening of the new extension and to progress work on a design for scaffolding and tenting of the whole building to allow work on the roof to continue during inclement weather. These designs were complete, along with an indicative cost for them to be in place for two years while the roof was replaced.

The Executive heard that the project was extremely complex as the roof comprised a variety of pitches and there was only one source of Collyweston slate which had an 11-month lead-in time for mining and delivery of the required material, as well as requiring 20% of the slate to be preordered to secure excavation of the remainder.

It was anticipated that approximately 50% of the existing slate could be salvaged for reuse, although new slate would have a greater life expectancy than reclaimed slate. A minimum of one hundred years lifespan could be expected for the replaced roof, possibly closer to two hundred if well maintained.

Cllr Howell reported that the project did not allow for the full replacement of the timber frame of the roof, the condition survey intimating that localised repairs may be required. However, the extent of these were unknown until the existing roof was removed. Should a full frame replacement be required, there would be a significant cost implication. In order to mitigate this risk 20% contingency had been added into the cost estimates that also included a level of repairs to the Art Gallery roof.

The meeting heard that the project would be undertaken in two phases, with an estimated project duration of two years once funding had been secured. Interim arrangements for the library service during the tenting erection would be in place before the building reopened subject to Health and Safety guidance.

Cllr Howell thanked officers for their work, time and expertise in getting the project to the current stage, demonstrating a clear direction and understanding of the task. The

Council was committed to retaining and maintaining Kettering Library and once fully opened it would prove to be a fantastic asset for many years to come.

The Chair spoke to thank the team involved in the complex project, noting that the Council was reliant on experts to guide it to allow for the building to be kept in the best possible condition for future generations. The Chair noted the importance of informing the community of the project so there could be no misinformation in the public domain.

Cllr David Brackenbury stated that the Council was the custodian of the Grade II Listed Building and that doing nothing or attempting repairs were not available options and emphasised that the cost estimate was the worst-case scenario and contained significant levels of contingency.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to provide background information on Collyweston slate and noted that the 50% reclamation figure was conservative. Cllr Harrison fully supported the project as a method of preserving a heritage asset for future generations.

Cllr Mark Rowley offered thanks to Cllr Howell and the team involved in bringing the project to this stage, noting that the building had to be protected by the Council.

Cllr Scott Edwards also spoke to support the project and offered thanks for the arrangements in place to allow users of the library to continue using vital services elsewhere.

Cllr Helen Howell concluded debate by thanking members and officers for their support and noted that the project would be a long process, one that was not to be rushed and still required budgetary approval at Full Council in December.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive:

- a) Recommended to Council the approval of the budget of £6,807,000 to be added to the Capital Programme to fulfil the Executive's longstanding commitment to replace the Kettering Library roof and to commit to repair the roof of the Art Gallery.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and the Director of Place and Economy, to procure the necessary works to replace the Kettering Library roof and undertake any actions required to deliver the project within the approved financial envelope

## Reasons for Recommendations:

- The library building is Grade II listed and it is the responsibility of the Council as the owner to maintain it. Further, the Council has various statutory enforcement powers to require the owners of listed buildings to keep listed buildings in a good state of repair. It is therefore important that the Council demonstrates its preparedness to tackle the condition of listed buildings.
- If the building is not made watertight as soon as practicable there is a risk that further water ingress will compromise the structure of the building and cause damage to the internal fabric, library stock and equipment.
- To enable the Council to continue to deliver its full statutory library functions within Kettering town centre.
- Over the weekend 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 further heavy rain caused the ceiling to collapse in a section to the right of the side doors of the library. This resulted in the library having to close whilst urgent remedial works and a clear up are undertaken and assessment is made as to the safety risks in re-opening the library to staff and the public. The frequency and likelihood of this re-occurring increases whilst the building remains exposed to the elements with the roof in the condition it is in. Options are now having to be considered to relocate the library until the building is watertight.
- Cornerstone cannot open in its entirety until the building is watertight, due to water ingress into the new space on the ground floor, where the old roof meets the new. Inability to fully open Cornerstone compromises the Council's ability to comply with the funding agreement in place with SEMLEP and exposes the Council to a risk that some of this funding will be clawed-back. The Council submits twice yearly monitoring reports to SEMLEP and so they are aware of the current challenges and have been supportive to date but want to see Cornerstone fully open as soon as practicable.
- The Gallery has a revenue cost to the Council and the intention, should Cornerstone be open, is for the new spaces to generate an income that will offset some of these costs.
- Whilst Cornerstone remains closed the Gallery Collection is not accessible to the public.

## Alternative Options Considered:

- **Not undertaking the work to replace the library roof**  
This would result in the permanent closure of the library building and the need to permanently relocate it to another town centre location. Even if such a location, with the right footprint, could be found the cost of the relocation would be increased due to the need to connect any new space with the former County Council IT network, on which the library management systems operate.

Even if the library could be relocated the Council would still be left with a Grade II Listed Building in need of repair and it could prevent the opening of Cornerstone as originally intended. This would risk SEMLEP clawing back some or all of the funding committed to the Cornerstone development.

- **Not using Collyweston Slate**  
This has been discussed at length with the Conservation Officer on more than one occasion and advice has also been sought from Historic England, as listed building consent would be required, and using an alternative slate on this roof is



not an option.

- **Not tenting the building while the roof is replaced.**

Despite the cost being higher for the option to tent the building, it is the preferred option for the following reasons:

- It is the much less risky option in terms of NNC's control over the programme of activity and ability to mitigate unknown risks. The timeline for replacement without tenting is much more weather dependent.
- It protects the internal fabric of the building including those renovations already complete and the new extension.
- It protects the internal contents of the buildings.
- Without the tent, once the slates and felting are removed, even in sections, the timbers will be exposed, there will be a risk of further damage through increased water
- If the Council were to open Cornerstone without a tent, there is a risk of further leaks, if water ingress from the library roof worsens.
- Tenting will allow for Cornerstone to fully open sooner, if deemed safe to do so, and to start to attract an income to offset the annual revenue cost to the Council.
- Once tented, if there are unforeseen delays to the roof replacement phase of the project, these will not compromise the operation of the Library and Cornerstone as they will be protected.

## 537 Corporate Property Leasehold Policy

The Chair invited Cllr Matt Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to present a report that sought approval of a Corporate Property Leasehold Policy, a policy and process that provided delegations for internal review and approval of leasehold terms.

Cllr Binley noted that the policy would form an integral part of a collection of various other policies for asset management, which formed part of the Council's asset strategy.

The meeting heard that the Council held a portfolio of land and buildings that were leased to other parties. This portfolio of assets was very diverse, and it was important that it be effectively managed to maximise the best outcomes in supporting the Council's strategic objectives.

Following an internal asset management audit, a need to have suitable policy processes in place to ensure a unified approach to manage any risk associated with leasing property had been identified. The draft policy before members covered items including the lettings process and heads of terms and provided suitable supporting governance.

### **RESOLVED**

#### KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the Corporate Property Leasehold Policy at **Appendix A** of the report for adoption.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- i) The Council has fiduciary responsibilities to ensure all leasehold agreements it enters represent value for money. The Corporate Property Leasehold Policy supports this outcome.
- ii) Progressing leasehold transactions in a co-ordinated way will contribute to the Corporate Plan and the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- iii) The Corporate Property Leasehold Policy supports a timely and professional process, which will help manage costs and assist the Council to achieve income targets from its commercial estate.
- iv) The Policy supports centralised current record keeping; a requirement of the constitution.

Alternative Options Considered: The Council could choose not to adopt a co-ordinated leasehold policy, but this would lead to uncertainty and increased risks of agreements being entered into without full consideration.

**538 Proposal to Relocate Wilby CE VA Primary School to the Glenvale Park Development**

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the Executive. Cllr Anslow made reference to concerns raised by some parents as part of the consultation process regarding the relocation and size of the new school compared to the current site in Wilby. Cllr Anslow also referenced possible special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision at Glenvale Park, Wellingborough and potential uses for the old site being vacated by Wilby CE VA Primary School.

The Chair then invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval for the relocation of Wilby CE VA Primary School to the development at Glenvale Park, Wellingborough following a robust selection process and extensive public consultation.

Cllr Edwards reminded the Executive of the background to the report and that due to demographic changes on the Glenvale Park development, there would be insufficient demand to support the school opening until at least September 2025. Consequently, work had been undertaken to assess the options for the new school to ensure that the local community had access to sufficient school places. Local primary schools had been invited to express their interest in relocating to the brand-new school building at the Glenvale Park site with two expressions of interest subsequently received. Following a selection process and 30-day public consultation, a recommendation had been made that Wilby CE VA Primary should be the school that relocated to the Glenvale Site.

Cllr Edwards referenced Cllr Anslow's comments regarding SEND provision, noting the recent increase capacity in such provision across North Northamptonshire, with work continuing to see what other opportunities might be available at the Glenvale Park and Wilby Primary School sites. It was noted that the Peterborough Diocese

owned the Wilby Primary School site and work would be ongoing with the organisation to secure future use of the school.

The Chair spoke to note that both the Council and local residents welcomed school capacity in the area, stating that infrastructure and expansion at the site had been aligned in positive fashion.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome good quality school provision at the Glenvale Park development and noted that relocation would be positive for attending pupils.

Cllr Edwards concluded the debate by stating that the Peterborough Diocese would work with parents towards providing solutions to concerns that they had regarding the relocation of the school.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the relocation of Wilby CEVA Primary School to the Glenvale Park site
- ii) Approved the continuation of the statutory process relating to the transfer of a school to another site in line with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'Making a Significant Change to a Maintained School.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To support children and young people and their families to access high quality sustainable education facilities that enable the achievement of the best outcomes.
- To progress the relocation of the school in accordance with legislative requirements and Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance.
- To ensure the delivery of sufficient suitable school places that meet the needs of the community now and in the future.
- To make effective and efficient use of the education estate to meet the needs of all pupils.

Alternative Options Considered: Alternative options were considered in section 5 of the 'Primary Education Provision at the Glenvale Park Development Wellingborough North' paper presented to Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The options were shared along with accompanying risks and advantages. A summary of the options that were outlined in the previous paper to Executive were:

- Option 1: Mothball the school build until demand for places increases
- Option 2: Repurpose the school building to meet an existing educational need
- Option 3: Relocate a local school into the newly built school at the Glenvale Park Development

The preference was to progress Option 3. This preference was approved by the Executive on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Colleagues leading on the project then progressed to the initial stages of the relocation process.

### **539 Social Work Degree Apprentices**

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the Executive. Cllr Maxwell queried which University would underwrite the social work degrees and questioned the starting level for qualifications and whether a newly qualified social worker would be expected to remain employed at the Council following their qualification. Cllr Maxwell also sought figures for the number of successful trainees since 2019, the number on courses in the current year and the cost of delivering the course.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her comments before introducing a report that sought approval to make live a tender opportunity valued at £1.23 million for delivery of Social Worker Degree Apprenticeships on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

The Chair stated that every individual undertaking the course since 2019 had passed and stressed the need for Councils to develop their own talent, noting that it was not possible to tie employee to the Council once they had qualified.

It was heard that across the period of 2024-2026 there was an aim to enrol 55 members of staff onto the degree apprenticeship, with funding coming from each of the three organisations' Apprenticeship Levy at a total of £400,000 each, with North Northamptonshire Council being responsible for securing the contract.

It was noted that attracting and retaining skilled social workers was a significant challenge across local government and that securing a training regime was an important step towards delivering this. The Chair stated that the Council wished to be an employer of choice, offering a clear career pathway and enabling staff to reach their full potential. The apprenticeship degree could also benefit and support care-leavers.

The Chair concluded by noting that the development of new social workers was a positive news story for the Council which was making every effort to maximise use of the Apprenticeship Levy funding.

Cllrs Edwards, Howell, Harrison, Brackenbury and Binley all spoke strongly in support of the report, reiterating the need for the Council to develop its own workforce and retain qualified professionals.

### **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive approved the Council's Social Worker Apprenticeship Degree which will be procured through the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Apprenticeship Training Dynamic Marketplace DPS which is compliant with the Public Procurement Regulations 2015 (as amended).

Reasons for Recommendation:

- The proposal fully incorporates the Council's "Grow our Own" strategy and starts to use Apprenticeships in a more strategic means for workforce development, acting to retain and support staff to develop their careers.
- Securing social worker apprenticeship training will enable us to support opportunities for our care leavers and the recent key policies that have been agreed in this area.
- In meeting future workforce needs via Apprenticeships programmes we are increasing utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy Account, helping to safeguarding against potential expiry of funds and ensuring maximisation of spend on programmes that will have return on investment and positive impact for the Council.
- Social workers are part of a regulated service, and we must therefore plan to ensure we have resilience and availability of staff to provide a compliant service.
- It is also recommended that the Crown Commercial Services Apprenticeship Dynamic Purchasing System Apprenticeship route is utilised to run a competitive tendering process to ensure providers bidding have completed base-line pre-checks for quality and achievement rates. Further questions and requirements specified within the documentation ensure providers bidding can meet specific requirements as set by the organisations enabling tailoring of the apprenticeship programme.

Alternative Options Considered: Consideration was given to releasing the opportunity via Lots. This would have allowed each organisation to set their own questions and criteria however this would not give us the buying power required to be able to stipulate the need for Practice Educators to be supplied, trained or funding towards salaries provided and created a greater risk that each organisation would be working with a different training provider. This could create issues related to work experience weeks not co-aligning as required to allow the rotation between organisations as currently planned and utilised in previous models which proved beneficial. Based upon this the Lead Social Workers decided they would like to proceed as outlined above.

#### **540 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25**

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that updated the Executive on the Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2023/24 and proposed the continuation of the scheme for 2024/25.

Cllr Bunday noted the statutory requirement for the Council to operate a Local Council Tax Support Scheme and advised the meeting that following unitarisation in April 2021 a single scheme had been consulted on and implemented for North Northamptonshire resulting in a scheme where all working age claimants were required to pay a minimum of 25% towards their Council Tax liability. In the years following that decision

it had been agreed to maintain the same level of support. It was now proposed to continue with the scheme for 2024/25 with a recommendation to Full Council on that basis.

Details of the current number of CTS claimants were provided, with the meeting noting that the current CTS expenditure for 2023/24 amounted to £16.7m, a figure that had the possibility of increasing or decreasing dependent on claimant caseload before the end of the financial year.

Members' attention was drawn to the support available for those facing financial hardship as well as the cost to the Council of offering these discretionary discounts to eligible claimants.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive

- a) Considered the information as set out in the report and endorsed a proposed 2024/25 Local Council Tax Support Scheme which maintains the current 2023/24 scheme, allowing for the changes required to reflect the annual uprating of allowances and premiums and any statutory base legislation changes which are required to be made to the scheme.
- b) Recommended the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25 to Council for approval at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Reason for Recommendations – to deliver a Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 that meets statutory requirements.

Alternative Options Considered – The Council could choose to increase or decrease the minimum contribution payable to the customer. Decreasing the contribution would lead to a budget pressure and increasing the contribution would result in the scheme exceeding the breakeven requirement as detailed in sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 of the report.

## **541 Indicative Budget Timeline and Scrutiny Process 2024/25 - Update**

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham endorsed the scrutiny process, stating that it had been well thought out and was proving enjoyable in terms of learning about each service area and the financial pressures they faced. Cllr Buckingham stated that she was looking forward to Phase 2 of the scrutiny process commencing.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments and her role within the scrutiny process.

The Chair then invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that provided an overview of the budget timeline

for the 2024/25 budget process for the General Fund and associated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the Housing Revenue Account, MTFP and housing rent levels and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2024-2028. An update was also provided in regard to the proposed arrangements for scrutiny.

Cllr Bunday stated that the local government settlement would be communicated to the Council in the week leading up to the Christmas period and the budget process would be concluded at Full Council in February 2024 where the draft budgets detailed above would be approved.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome an excellent report that offered clear guidance as to the scrutiny processes involved in setting the Council's budget.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to endorse the timetable and scrutiny process and noted the hard work of scrutiny members in ensuring that the Council's budget setting process would be properly scrutinised.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the proposed process and noted the timeline for the setting of the budget and that this may be subject to change in line with Government announcements or other factors. In particular:
  - The proposed budget setting and scrutiny arrangements for the Children's Trust as set out in this report, see particularly paragraphs 5.7 to 5.11 of the report.
  - The overall indicative timeline for the budget setting as set out under paragraph 5.13.
- b) Noted that the process has been to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee for comment, and that the approach outlined in this report was approved.

Reason for Recommendations – To inform Executive of the indicative budget setting timeline for 2024/25 and the arrangements for the scrutiny of the budget by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

Alternative Options – There are no alternative options under consideration, due to the need to meet approval deadlines and consultation requirements. The Corporate Scrutiny Committee considered the proposals as set out in section 6 of this report regarding the scrutiny arrangements and were agreed to proceed on the basis as outlined. Some dates of the scrutiny committee work group meetings remain subject to finalisation, as outlined in the report, and others may be affected by further Government announcements.

## 542 Capital Outturn Report as at Period 6

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham raised concerns regarding the level of slippage on capital spend in regard to energy efficiency and the Council Housing Revenue Account.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments 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 6, 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

Cllr Bunday acknowledged the level of slippage to certain schemes, stating that the outturn forecast in respect of the General Fund Capital Programme showed a revised capital budget position of £85.8m, including slippage and in-year approved programmes. The outturn position was currently estimated at a spend of £64.1m, representing an underspend of £21.6m against the budget, with specific reference made to the Corby Towns Fund projects, streetlighting upgrades and school upgrades.

The outturn for the HRA Capital Programme showed a revised a budget for 2023/24 of £23.4m, including slippage from 2022/23 of £8.7m. The outturn showed a forecast spend of £7.4m, representing an underspend of £15.9m compared to budget. This would be reviewed and re-profiled considering the latest position. Certain schemes were forecast to underspend due to delays in finalising new contractual arrangements and identifying development sites for new build properties. It was reported that virements for the HRA capital programme relating to the housing tenancy capital schemes were to enhance and maintain current housing stock.

Cllr Mark Rowley spoke to reference the need for the Council's existing housing stock to be upgraded, whilst Cllr Brackenbury referenced the slippage against the projects associated with the Corby Town Centre Fund, although noting the recent opening of Corby Sixth Form College.

### **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the draft capital outturn position as at period 6 for the General Fund (GF) Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2023/24.
- b. Noted the new schemes that have been approved since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

Reasons 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.



**543 Annual Report of the Service Delivery Contract between Northamptonshire Children's Trust and West and North Northamptonshire Councils 2022/23 and Update on the Annual Review**

Prior to the Annual Report of Northamptonshire Children's Trust being introduced, the Chair spoke to highlight some significant issues that he wished to highlight within regards to this item.

In regard to the financial position of the Trust, it was heard that whilst the report presented the overspend from the view of the Trust, it was important to acknowledge the additional cost to both North and West Northamptonshire Councils against the budgeted contract sum was an overspend of £21.4m (15.6%) against a budget of £137.5m for the Trust in 2022/23; of this overspend around £9.5m would fall to NNC to fund.

It was noted that this overspend presented a significant adverse movement against budget, and whilst the Council was clear in its continuing support for positive outcomes for its children, it was also acutely aware of the potential wider impact on other vital services to its residents when areas were spending above budget.

The Chair referenced Agenda Item 22 - Budget Forecast Report – Period 6, where there was a forecast overspend of £23.4m (15.5%) against an increased contract sum of £150.9m for 2023/24, with a risk that this may worsen before the year ended. As a Council, demand pressures were recognised, but the Council was clear that effective service delivery for the best outcomes must be accompanied by robust financial management in all service areas and work continued with the Trust on this issue.

It was heard that the Council also had significant concerns regarding the assurance that could be provided in respect of the Trust operations through the Trust's own internal audit work for the year. As a corporate parent the Council took this risk very seriously. As could be seen in the report before members, the Council's Audit and Governance Committee at its meeting in September expressed dismay at the comparatively low level of audit coverage on which a satisfactory annual audit opinion was given, including the number of risk-based audits specific to the Trust and also the number of audits where only a limited assurance was reported.

The Council's Audit Committee had sought urgent additional assurance directly from the Trust, particularly in relation to the internal audit work that would be delivered in 2023/24, with the Committee recommending a member working group meet with the Chair of the Trust's Finance, Resources and Audit Committee to discuss the position and seek assurance on future audit plans. The Council was pleased to note that an initial discussion had taken place and that a closer working relationship was proposed for the future, particularly as it was aware that the Trust's own Finance, Resources and Audit Committee were critical of the quality of the initial information provided.

Therefore, whilst the report in front of the Executive was recommended to be noted only, it was very important that this came with the caveats that the concerns and risks set out above must be addressed urgently. The Council would not wish to see a similar position being presented next year.

The Chair then invited Cllr Andrew Weatherill, Chair of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee to provide details of the risks highlighted in the opening statement above.

Cllr Weatherill spoke to provide a reflection on the last couple of years of committee activity in relation to the Children's Trust. It was heard that the committee felt a responsibility for the Trust in terms of service delivery and therefore required a level of assurance around its activities, although both contractual and organisational barriers had prevented such assurance being provided to date.

It was reported that the committee was comfortable with the level of internal audit provision within the Council itself, with initial examination of the audit environment identifying the Children's Trust as a key risk. Assurance had therefore been sought in that regard from the earliest opportunity. It was noted that the 2021/22 Children's Trust audit process had commenced late, with work split between West Northamptonshire Council and an external firm and had offered very limited assurance with no Head of Internal Audit identifiable. No risk-based approach had been taken as part of this audit process and the overall opinion of Internal Audit for 2021/22 was that reasonable assurance could be given, although this assertion had been challenged by the Council's Audit and Governance Committee.

The meeting heard that the 2022/23 audit programme had been delayed in starting, with significant concerns again raised by the committee in reference to:

- A low number of Trust-specific audits being completed
- Audits from 2021/22 being rebadged for 2022/23
- No risk-based approach taken to the audit process
- Audits deferred including those relating to financial sustainability, and that related to the Medium-Term Financial Plan

Cllr Weatherill stated that officers from the Trust had been invited to attend the committee and questioned regarding the level of assurance being received in relation to the auditing being carried out. The level of assurance received by the committee in this instance was very far from being reasonable.

It was heard that further engagement had been made with the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee at the Trust. That committee was also critical of the audit coverage completed. A meeting had been arranged between Cllr Weatherill and the Chair of the Trust's audit committee and both shared the similar concerns, work was ongoing to understand how to improve the situation going forward. Mutual invitations for the Chairs to attend each committee had been extended.

The Executive heard that again, little progress had been made in terms of the audit plan for 2023/24, with quick delivery and a risk-based approach being vital in ensuring an appropriate level of assurance was received for this key service delivery.

The Chair thanked Cllr Weatherill for his attendance and his involvement and advice throughout the process, that was critical to both the Council and the Executive in regard to holding the Children's Trust to account.

The Chair then invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham noted that if the Trust was lax on assurances regarding audits, other areas of

operations might not be being assessed properly. Cllr Buckingham thanked Cllr Weatherill for his comments.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments. Cllr Dorothy Maxwell was then invited to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell referred to children and adoption and the numbers involved. Cllr Maxwell stated that children should be looked after and provided with the best possible outcomes for their future.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before inviting Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that provided the Executive with an update on the progress of the 2022/23 Annual Review of the Service Delivery Contract between Northamptonshire Children's Trust and West and North Northamptonshire Councils which also included the 2022/23 Annual Report.

Cllr Edwards noted that the report before members was an annual requirement, detailing the positive outcomes, and challenges faced by the Trust over the past year.

Cllr Edwards thanked Cllr Weatherill for his comments and involvement with the Trust as Chair of the Council's Finance and Audit Committee and noted the positive working relationship with the Chair of the Trust's Finance, Risk and Audit Committee as an improved way forward was sought.

The meeting was provided with the headline financial figures mentioned in the Chair's introduction, with it being heard that the four main areas comprising the overspend related to staffing, placements, legal and transport costs, with certain areas being more complex including an increase in those assisted and the number of referrals.

Cllr Edwards concluded by referencing the caveats detailed by the Chair during his introduction.

Cllr Howell stated that she was reassured that Cllr Weatherill and the Council's audit team were trying to resolve the issues that had been highlighted above. It was heard that children had to be kept safe, but the money available to the Trust had to be spent in appropriate manner.

Cllr Helen Harrison thanked the Chair, Cllr Weatherill and Cllr Edwards for providing context regarding the situation with the Children's Trust to allow sufficient understanding for the Executive to be able to note the report with the caveats detailed in the Chair's introduction.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a) Noted that the Annual Report contained at **Appendices A-L** of the report was completed in line with the service delivery contract.
- b) Noted that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Service Delivery Contract (SDC) have remained the same since the start of the contract with Northamptonshire Children's Trust and that the Annual Review, completed by Strategic Group in October 2023, will consider and agree

any amendments to the SDC, including changes to KPIs.

- c) Noted that any changes to the SDC would need to be agreed by all parties, presented to Children's Trust Joint Committee meeting for approval and once approved, be implemented by a Change Control to the SDC.

#### Reason for Recommendations

- The arrangements to complete the Annual Review and Annual Report are set out in the SDC and provide a procedure through which the Councils can review the Service Delivery Contract and Northamptonshire Children's Trust's performance in delivering its functions.

#### Alternative Options Considered

- Do nothing - Failing to complete the Annual Review or produce an Annual Report would not be compliant with the SDC and would not allow the Councils to formally review the contractual arrangements with Northamptonshire Children's Trust and agree changes. It should be noted that the SDC contains a process for the Councils to propose changes outside of the Annual Review if required.

## **544 Half Yearly Treasury Management Update**

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that provided a review of the Council's treasury management and prudential indicators following progress on the disaggregation of the assets and liabilities that were previously held by Northamptonshire County Council. In addition, the report provided an update regarding North Northamptonshire Council's treasury management activities and performance in the six months to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, in accordance with the CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

The report before Members provided an update on the borrowing, investments and cash flows, money market and capital market activities to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

Cllr Bunday reported that as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, the authority had net borrowing of £277.4m, arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. As of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, this figure had reduced by £26.3m. It was noted that during this first six months of the year, a call-in option had been exercised by one of the Council's Lender's Option Borrower's Option (LOBO) loan lenders resulting in the Council repaying £5m to avoid an increase in interest rates. It was heard that there were further potential call-in options that could be exercised by lenders over the next 12 months totalling £27m.

Cllr Bunday reported that current treasury management was set against a backdrop of Bank of England interest rates being maintained at 5.25%, inflation continuing to fall to

6.7%, with Council investments of £191.5m at an average interest rate of 5.09% and borrowing of £443.4m at an average interest rate of 3.21%.

Cllr Brackenbury spoke to note that the Council's treasury management strategy was both prudent and effective and thanked the officer team responsible.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the activity undertaken during the first half of the financial year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and the performance achieved set out in Appendix A to this report: and
- b. Noted that all treasury activities were undertaken in line with the approved Treasury Management Strategy/Annual Investment Strategy.

Reason for Recommendations: The Council's TMSS is underpinned by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management ("the Code") which requires that members are informed of treasury management activities at least twice a year. Full Council has delegated the formulation and monitoring of the Council's treasury management strategy, policy and activity to the Executive Committee.

Alternative Options Considered - This report is for information and there are no alternative options for consideration.

### **545 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. Two schemes were highlighted as per the report and recommendation below.

The Executive also recommended to Council to approve borrowing for the costs associated with the restoration and preservation work required for the Kettering Library Roof and associated work relating to the roof of the Art Gallery.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes into the capital programme:
  - a. Smart Equipment for Long Covid (SELC) - budget approval for £158k, in 2023/24 which is to be funded from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) grant.

- b. Kettering Library Roof replacement and associated work to the roof of the Art Gallery – budget approval for £6.807m in 2023/24 which is to be funded from borrowing.
- ii) Recommended to Council to approve borrowing for the costs associated with the restoration and preservation work required for the Kettering Library Roof and associated work relating to the roof of the Art Gallery. This is in accordance with the Council's Constitution to approve all borrowing requests.

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

- To meet corporate plan objectives, specifically “active, fulfilled lives”.
- To enable the Council to continue to deliver its library functions within Kettering town centre.

Alternative Options Considered:

- Schemes in this report which are grant funded are in accordance with the requirements of the grant conditions so there is no alternative option proposed in this report.
- Where individual schemes are over £0.5m, separate reports are included elsewhere on this agenda which set out the wider options that were considered before reaching the proposals put forward.

## **546 Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 6**

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 6 monitoring forecasts for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The meeting heard that the overall outturn forecast for the General Fund for 2022/23, as at Period 6 was a forecast overspend of £7.575m against the approved budget, a favourable movement of £246,000 since the last reporting period. The largest budgetary pressure came from the Children’s Trust at £10.348m. Although the Trust continued to look at mitigations there was a risk that the position could worsen before the end of the financial year with over £4m of identified savings failing to materialise.

It was heard that to safeguard the financial position of the Council, officers would continue to seek efficiencies in year to offset the forecast overspend. Whilst there was a contingency budget and reserves available to call on to help fund in year pressures, the Council would look to alternative mitigations before these were applied.

Cllr Bunday noted that there remained uncertainty regarding the staff pay award that was yet to be agreed for 2023/24 and reported on a number of budgetary movements across the Council’s service areas, noting that pressures affecting demand-led services.

The Council's overall outturn forecast for the Housing Revenue Account was reported as being an overspend of £52,000.

It was also reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant had a forecast pressure of £6.404m, with pressures relating to the high needs funding block that supported SEND provision. Reserves of £480,000 had been utilised to mitigate this.

## **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** to the report.

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2023/24 as at Period 6 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.

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Chair

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Date

The meeting closed at 1.17 pm