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Meeting: Joint Children's Trust Committee
Date: Wednesday 21st June, 2023
Time: 2.00 pm
Venue: Council Chamber, County Hall, George Row, Northampton, NN1 1DF

To members of the Joint Children's Trust Committee

Councillor Lloyd Bunday (NNC), Councillor Scott Edwards (NNC), Councillor Jason Smithers (NNC), Councillor Fiona Baker (WNC), Councillor Matt Golby (WNC) and Councillor Jonathan Nunn (WNC)

Members of the Joint Committee are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business listed on the agenda.

Agenda			
Item	Subject	Presenting Officer	Page no.
01	Apologies for Non-Attendance		
02	Notification of requests to address the meeting		
03	Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023		5 – 8
04	Members' Declaration of Interests		
05	Contract Sum 2023/24 Update	Ann Marie Dodds - Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC)	9 – 20
06	Joint Children's Trust Committee Forward Plan	Ann Marie Dodds - Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC)	21 - 26

07	Urgent Business		
08	Close of Meeting		
<p>Adele Wylie, Monitoring Officer North Northamptonshire Council</p>  <p>Proper Officer 13th June 2023</p>			

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Agenda Item 3

Children's Trust Joint Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee held at The Council Chamber, County Hall, Northampton NN1 1DF on Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 1.00 pm.

Present:

Councillor Fiona Baker (Co-Chair, in the Chair)
Councillor Scott Edwards (Co-Chair)
Councillor Lloyd Bunday
Councillor Matt Golby
Councillor Jonathan Nunn
Councillor Jason Smithers

Officers:

Rob Bridge, Chief Executive (NNC)
AnnMarie Dodds, Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC)
Janice Gotts, Executive Director of Finance (NNC)
Martin Henry, Executive Director Finance (WNC)
Richard Woodward, Intelligent Client Function Programme Lead (NNC)
James Edmunds, Democratic Services Assistant Manager (WNC)

1. **Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Matt Golby. Apologies for non-attendance were received from the Chief Executive (WNC) and the Executive Director of Customer and Governance (NNC).

2. **Minutes**

RESOLVED that: the minutes of the meeting of the Children's Trust Joint Committee held on 7 September 2022 be agreed.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

None declared.

4. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

5. **Urgent Business**

The Chair advised that there was no urgent business.

6. **Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan and 2023/24 Contract Sum**

At the Chair's invitation the Executive Director Finance (WNC) introduced the report, advising that the provisional 2023/24 Contract Sum and Business Plan for 2023/24 – 2026/27 had resulted from development work and negotiation between the relevant parties in autumn 2022. Delivery against the Contract Sum and Business Plan would be monitored across the year ahead.

The Executive Director Finance (NNC) and Chief Executive (NNC) highlighted the importance of recognising both the challenges facing Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT) and the need for it to deliver effective services that represented value for money. The owning authorities had provided further investment to support NCT's improvement journey and were working closely with it to mitigate financial risks. The Valuing Care model should also help to deliver value for money.

The Committee considered the report and members made the following points during the course of discussion:

- A lack of confidence was expressed that NCT would be able to deliver the 2023/24 Contract Sum as planned. The owning authorities had a duty to support young people but also needed to secure value for money from services.
- It would be beneficial if the Committee could have more oversight of how resources were used. This would give assurance on matters such as use of the additional funding provided to support high risk cases.
- There would need to be a significant focus through the year ahead on delivering the budget even taking into account demand pressures. The owning authorities and the Committee would continue to provide support and challenge to NCT on this.
- The Business Plan presented to the Committee included some sections that were not yet complete. The Committee should seek further information on the Strategic Risk Register in particular to ensure that it provided the necessary assurance.
- There should be more of a role for councillors in overseeing NCT than was provided for in the arrangements set by the Department for Education (DfE). Councillors were corporate parents and were accountable to residents for the effectiveness of services. Councillors needed to be able to see that key challenges were being addressed. They could also provide different perspectives that would assist in doing this.
- NCT did not seem to have made much progress so far with service transformation compared to the aims that were projected when it was being developed.
- Proposed savings to be delivered in 2023/24 were predicated on additional investment from the owning authorities. This was not a sustainable approach. Service transformation and effective core services were needed to manage budget pressures.
- The Leader of NNC had written to NCT to seek its response to various matters of concern.

The Executive Director of Children's Services (NNC) made the following points during the course of discussion:

- The Operational and Strategic groups had discussed the use of funding provided to support high risk cases at meetings earlier that week to seek assurance on this.

- The Intelligent Client Function (ICF) would be analysing how NCT had used additional funding for early help and fostering provided by the owning authorities. If necessary this could result in recommendations to the owning authorities regarding a second year of funding.

The Chief Executive (NNC) made the following points during the course of discussion:

- It was open to the owning authorities to contact the DfE to seek a meeting to discuss the kind of issues raised at the current meeting and the potential for more democratic oversight of NCT.
- Effective forecasting and modelling of placements was key to financial delivery. ICF and NNC representatives had met with a high-performing local authority and would share the learning gained with NCT.
- The NNC Audit and Governance Committee had identified matters relating to NCT that it planned to consider, potentially including the risk register.

The Executive Director Finance (NNC) advised that the NNC Audit and Governance Committee was due to consider NCT audit reports at a meeting in the following week. Work was also being done by audit officers from both owning authorities and the finance lead for NCT.

The Chair advised that in response to a recommendation from the WNC Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee she had written to the DfE requesting that it fund any overspend on the NCT budget. The DfE had not agreed to do this.

The ICF Programme Lead made the following points during the course of discussion:

- NCT had now set up a Transformation board designed to ensure that resources were used as effectively as possible.
- NCT had identified £2.99m savings in 2022/23 and a further £7.6m proposed savings in 2023/24, including £3.8m from Valuing Care.
- The financial reporting process used with the Operational Group was being improved to provide clearer information about the delivery of in-year savings by NCT. The ICF had sought to work with NCT to streamline processes and enhance transparency. If this approach was not successful the owning authorities could consider further actions available to them under the contract.
- The Contract Sum was provisional until NCT's and the owning authorities' budget setting processes had been completed.

The Chair noted that it was essential to avoid a similar situation with children's services as had occurred under Northamptonshire County Council. There should be constructive discussion between NCT and the owning authorities about their future engagement and how the authorities could support NCT to address the challenges it faced. It was also helpful for the owning authorities to discuss these matters as at the current meeting.

The Chair subsequently invited views from the Committee about its future meeting arrangements, to reflect that meetings were typically very short and scheduled meeting dates were often not used.

Committee members made the following points:

- Discussion at the current meeting suggested that Committee meetings would be longer in future.
- Arrangements for democratic involvement in the work of NCT needed to be maintained at the appropriate level.
- Frequent meeting cancellations appearing on the owning local authority websites could lead to inaccurate perceptions of the Committee's work.

The Chief Executive (NNC) advised that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Committee were currently focussed more on formal approval for ownership functions and maintaining relations between the two local authorities than holding to account NCT. This focus could be reviewed and subject to further discussion in the appropriate forum, with input from NCT. It would be important for the two owning authorities to show that they had a shared position on this matter.

Committee members expressed support for revisiting the ToR and that the owning authorities should agree common outcomes for this.

The ICF Programme Lead advised that the ToR for the Committee stated that it would meet as and when required. NNC Democratic Services was due to support the Committee in 2023/24 and there had been discussion with them about scheduling quarterly meetings.

The Chair noted that it could be impractical to try to arrange Committee meetings only when required due to the number of senior leaders involved. The Chair also encouraged that future Committee meetings in North Northamptonshire be held in Wellingborough, given its relatively central location in the county.

RESOLVED that: the Children's Trust Joint Committee:

- a) Noted the provisional contract sum for Northamptonshire Children's Trust for the 2023/24 financial year.
- b) Approved the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan for the 2023/24 – 2026/27 period.
- c) Requested that the completed Strategic Risk Register for the Northamptonshire Children's Trust Business Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27 be circulated to Joint Committee members.
- d) Supported that the Department for Education should be contacted to seek a discussion with the owning authorities about future democratic oversight of Northamptonshire Children's Trust.
- e) Supported that Joint Committee meetings should take place on a quarterly basis in 2023/24.

The meeting closed at 1.40 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____

Children’s Trust Joint Committee 21st June 2023

Report Title	Contract Sum 2023/24 Update
Report Author	Ann Marie Dodds, Executive Director of Childrens Services (NNC) annmarie.dodds@northnorthants.gov.uk Richard Woodward, Head of Business & Performance (Interim) ICF Programme Lead (NNC) richard.woodward@northnorthants.gov.uk
Executive Member	Councillor Scott Edwards, Executive Member Children, Families, Education & Skills (NNC) Cllr Fiona Baker – Children, Families & Education (WNC)

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide an update to the financial position of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. At the meeting of the Strategic Group in November 2022 NCT reported significant increases in demand led services and other inflation and statutory related areas. Additional funding to rebase the Contract Sum for 2022/23 of £11.891m was agreed moving the rebased Contract Sum for 2022/23 to £148.614m
- 2.2. As reported to the Childrens Trust Joint Committee in February 2023 the Contract Sum recommended by the Strategic Group in November 2022 and agreed by the Councils and Trust for 2023/24 is £150.938m

- 2.3. Like most Councils across England, NCT is facing a significant rise in demand for services and the most significant cost driver is children in care. The total in care population has increased by 8% from 1,139 in January 2019 to 1,229 in December 2022. An increase of 6% up to 1,313 is forecast to December 2024.
- 2.4. Included in the Contract Sum for 2023/24 were savings of £7.672m proposed by the Trust. NCT reported in June 2023 that £6.653m of proposed savings were at risk of non-delivery but this would reduce to £5.539m at risk with mitigation activity proposed by the Trust.
- 2.5. NCT presented a re-forecasted outturn position for 2023/24 of £177.055m with a variance of £26.117m above the agreed Contract Sum of £150.938. In accordance with the contract split percentage the £26.117m re-forecasted pressure equates to £14.584m for West Northamptonshire and £11.533m for North Northamptonshire.
- 2.6. In November 2022 the Councils agreed investment of £1.3m in 2023/24, on an invest to save basis, to support the development of a Circle to Success programme aimed at changing practice and improving outcomes for young people. Fundamentally the programme is designed to reduce spend on NCT's placement budget with the project forecasting savings of between £2.161m to £4.547m in 2023/24, against a savings target of £3.8m.
- 2.7. Strategic Group have agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting focusing on NCT's budget on the 12th June 23 and a Recruitment & Retention Summit taking place on 16th June 2023.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Children's Trust Joint Committee:

- a) Note NCT's reported provisional outturn for 2022/23 and the additional pressure of £21.435m above the agreed contract sum of £137.451m;
- b) Note NCT's reforecast for 2023/24 and the additional pressure of up to £26.117m above the agreed contract sum of £150.938m; and
- c) Note the forthcoming Extraordinary Strategic Group meeting focusing on NCT's budget taking place on the 12th June 23 and the Recruitment & Retention Summit taking place on 16th June 2023.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations:

- 3.2.1. To ensure that the Children's Trust Joint Committee maintains democratic oversight of arrangements for the delivery of early help and children's social care services by Northamptonshire Childrens Trust (NCT) as set out in the committee's terms of reference.

3.2.2. To ensure the Children’s trust Joint Committee can consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of the services and their financial position.

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

3.3.1. To do nothing – however this is not recommended. If appropriate action is not taken to address the rising financial pressures through reducing demand and transformative activity it will have significant impact on the Council budgets and wider service delivery in 2023/24 and beyond. See paragraph of the report for further details regarding Issues and Choices.

4. Report Background

4.1. NCT’s provisional Outturn position for 2022/23

4.1.1. As reported to the Children’s Trust Joint Committee in December 2021 the Contract Sum for 2022/23 agreed between the Councils and the Trust was £137.451m, which was an increase of £0.3m compared to the 2021/22 financial year.

4.1.2. Included in the 2022/23 Contract Sum were savings of £2.99m proposed by the Trust to be delivered in the financial year of which £0.769m was delivered as set out in the table below:

Area	Savings Proposed	Savings Delivered
Staffing	£0.330m	£0.317m
Placements - Sufficiency	£1.250m	£0.139m
Placements – Increased joint funding	£1.200m	£0.0m
Transport Review	£0.100	£0.081m
Legal Services Review	£0.110m	£0.232m
Total	£2.99m	£0.769

4.1.3. £2.221m of the original proposed savings were not delivered but NCT did report mitigation activity which generated £2.312m savings in other areas.

4.1.4. One-off funding of £1.350m outside of the Contract Sum was also agreed as detailed in the table below:

Early Help (year 1)	£0.400m
Foster Care (year 1)	£0.250m
Additional social work capacity (22/23 only)	£0.700m
Total	£1.350m

4.1.5. At the meeting of the Strategic Group in November 2022 NCT reported significant increases in demand led services and other inflation and statutory related areas. Additional funding to rebase the Contract Sum for 2022/23 of £11.891m was agreed moving the rebased Contract Sum for 2022/23 to £148.614m as broken down in the table below:

2022/23 Original Contract Sum	£137.451m
Agreement to additional costs for 2022/23:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee Pay Award - £1.901m Adoption (LGO) - £0.844m Fostering - £0.103m 	£2.848m
Drawdown payment based on actuals:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport £0.675m Placements £7.640m 	£8.315m
Rebased Contract Sum	£148.614m
Continuation of the managed social work teams through to 31 st March 2023 (one-off)	£0.728m

4.1.6. At the Operational Group on the 6th June NCT reported their 2022/23 provisional outturn as £150.066m which is variance of £21.435m above the original Contract Sum for 2022/23.

4.1.7. After the additional investment of £11.891m agreed by Strategic Group in November 2022 the variance reduces to £9.544m as shown in the table below, however it is important to note that the overall pressure to the two Councils is unchanged at £21.435m

Summary	Gross Budget excl one-off investment	Less Income	Net budget	Exp Forecast (incl. actuals)	Income Forecast (incl. of actuals)	Net Forecast Outturn	Variance before agreed additional Investment	Additional Investment agreed in 22/23 contract Sum	Net Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Staffing	46,782	-4,334	42,448	49,306	-4,334	44,972	2,524	2,524	0
Other non-Staff costs	343	0	343	343	0	343	0	0	0
Placements	60,648	-7,380	53,268	77,695	-7,602	70,093	16,825	7,743	9,082
Contracts	4,767	0	4,767	4,767	0	4,767	0	0	0
Children's Homes	3,484	0	3,484	3,762	0	3,762	278	104	174
Legal	4,700	0	4,700	5,065	0	5,065	365	0	365
Adoption	7,046	-100	6,946	7,890	-100	7,790	844	844	0
Transport	1,930	-566	1,364	2,779	-566	2,213	849	676	173
Other care	6,554	-353	6,201	6,484	-372	6,112	-89	0	-89
NCT Central - Other budget	133	0	133	133	-161	-28	-161	0	-161
Support Services / SLA	4,977	0	4,977	5,482	-505	4,977	0	0	0
Grand Total	141,364	-12,733	128,631	163,706	-13,640	150,066	21,435	11,891	9,544

4.1.8. This significant change relates to several factors including increasing demand for placements for children in care and a reduction in the previously assumed joint funded contributions following confirmation by partners.

4.1.9. The support services increase of £0.505m relates to the increased charge at market rate for the occupation of One Angel Square based on an occupancy of 366 desks. The desk calculation is consistent with the original calculation in the initial contract sum. There is no direct impact on the outturn position of the NCT as this increase is assumed to be matched by the equivalent increase in income consistent within the support services agreement. It should be noted that this does create a pressure of £0.223m for NNC with a corresponding gain to WNC as recipients of additional income.

4.2. **2023/24 Contract Sum and One-Off funding**

4.2.1. As reported to the Childrens Trust Joint Committee in February 2023 the Contract Sum recommended by the Strategic Group in November 2022 and agreed by the Councils and Trust for 2023/24 is £150.938m.

4.2.2. It was agreed for the Contract Sum of £150.938m to be split into two parts, this consists of a Base Contract Sum (£141.429m) and a “drawdown payment” relating to actuals on agreed elements of demand led services (£9.509m) which will be based on the 2022/23 outturn position.

4.2.3. One off funding of £2.243m outside the Contract Sum for 2023/24 was also agreed as set out in the table below:

Revenue Items	Amount
Early Help	£0.400m
Foster Care	£0.250m
Valuing Care Proposal – additional resources to deliver savings of £3.8m to the Placements Budget	£1.300m
Children’s Homes – Initial set up costs	£0.294m
Total	£2.243m

4.2.4. It should be noted that although the investment in the above table has been agreed in principle, each investment will require a full business case to be submitted to and approved by the Councils.

4.2.5. The overall position of the agreed Contract Sum and One-offs split by each Council is shown in the table below:

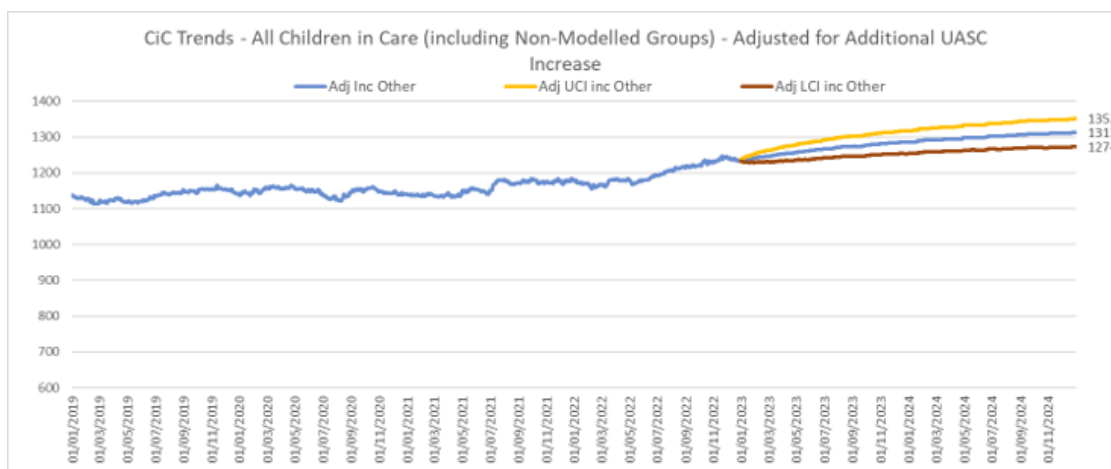
	North	West	Total
Contract Sum	£66.654m	£84.284m	£150.938m
Less Drawdown Payment 2023/24 - £8.315m 2024/25 - £1.194m	(£4.199m)	(£5.310m)	(£9.509m)
Base Contract Sum	£62.455m	£78.974m	£141.429m
One-Off Funding	£0.991m	£1.252m	£2.243m
Total	£63.446m	£80.226m	£143.672m

- 4.2.6. Included in the Contract Sum were savings of £7.672m proposed by the Trust to be delivered in the financial year as set out in the table below:

Description	Proposed Saving
Review of Social Care Transport	£0.100m
Review of placements supply	£0.600m
Supporting families to stay together	£0.600m
Increase provision in supported accommodation	£0.240m
Review of Business Operations	£0.070m
Review of Children's Legal Costs	£0.100m
Review of Contracts	£0.100m
Asset Management Strategy	£0.200m
Increase in In-house Fostering.	£0.620m
Review of External placements to develop effective Joint Funding Commissioning	£0.627m
Review of Care Costs	£0.200m
Review of Non-Essential Budgets including mileage, supplies and provisions.	£0.050m
Review of Learning Development/ Social work academy	£0.065m
Implementation of Treasury Management Policy	£0.900m
Targeted work with Children in Complex Settings	£3.200m
Total	£7.672m

4.3. Rising Demand

- 4.3.1. Like most Councils across England, NCT is facing a significant rise in demand for services and the most significant cost driver is children in care.



- 4.3.2. The chart above, provided by NCT, shows the growth of children in care since 2019 and forecast modelling to the end of 2024. The total in care population has increased by 8% from 1,139 in January 2019 to 1,229 in December 2022. An increase of 6% up to 1,313 is forecast to December 2024.

4.4. 2023/24 Reforecast

- 4.4.1. On the 5th April 2023 a Finance Summit was held with senior officers and Members from both Councils and senior staff from NCT. The purpose of the session was to share a transparent financial position and discuss the factors driving the significant additional cost of NCT's delivery in 2022/23 and the likely impact on 2023/24. The summit agreed that:
- NCT would reforecast the 2022/23 outturn position with a worst-case scenario including all known pressures and present this to the May 2023 Operational Group.
 - NCT would adopt the new monthly reporting template agreed by the Councils.
 - Council Finance AD's would be allowed full access to NCT budgets and forecasting.
 - NCT would move to full reporting in ERP allowing Councils open access to financial information.
 - NCT will hold a forecasting workshop on 16th May with Council Finance and Commissioning AD's and ICF staff. The purpose of this was to jointly agree the methodology used by NCT for forecasting 2023/24 outturn.
 - NCT would present a revised 2023/24 forecast outturn position based on the agreed forecasting methodology at the Operational group in June 2023.
 - NCT would provide an MTFs view for 2024/25 and 2025/26 by the end of June 2023.

- 4.4.2. At Strategic Group in May 2023 a number of actions were agreed:
- Hold an extraordinary meeting of the group on 12th June 2023 specifically to look at the 2023/24 reforecast and increasing pressures on NCT's budgets.
 - Hold a Recruitment & Retention Summit on 16th June 2023 to jointly agree targeted action to address the significant recruitment and retention challenges faced by the Trust leading to the continued use of Managed Teams at significant costs to the Councils.
- 4.4.3. At Operational Group in June 2023 NCT presented an updated 2023/24 re-forecasted outturn position and details of 2023/24 savings potentially at risk as per the table below:

Contract Sum Budget Heading	Agreed Contract Sum	Reforecast Outturn	Variance
Staffing	£49.732m	£50.739m	£1.007m
Other Non-staffing Costs	£0.358m	£0.358m	£0m
Placements	£65.376m	£84.263m	£18.887m
Contracts	£5.001m	£35.001m	£0m
Children's Homes	£3.767m	£3.767m	£0m
Legal	£4.788m	£5.299m	£0.511m
Adoption	£7.776m	£7.776m	£0m
Transport	£2.870m	£3.043m	£0.173m
Other Care	£6.799m	£6.799m	£0m
NCT Central	(£0.762m)	(£0.762m)	£0m
Support Services	£5.233m	£5.233m	£0m
Total	£150.938m	£171.516m	£20.578m
Savings at Risk Red & Amber (£6.653m) less Mitigations (£1.114m)			£5.539m
Total	£150.938m	£177.055m	£26.117m

- 4.4.4. NCT are reporting a variance of £26.117m above the agreed Contract Sum of £150.938m for 2023/24. In accordance with the contract split percentage the £26.117m re-forecasted pressure equates to £14.584m for West Northamptonshire and £11.533m for North Northamptonshire.

4.5. **Circle to Success**

- 4.5.1. As set out at 4.2.3 in November 2022 the Councils agreed the investment of £1.3m in 2023/24, on an invest to save basis, to support the development of a Circle to Success programme aimed at changing practice, improving outcomes for young people and delivering indicative savings of £3.8m in 2023/24. Fundamentally the programme is designed to reduce spend on NCT's placement budget.

- 4.5.2. Since its establishment in January 2023 the Circle to Success Programme Board has undertaken detailed work to forecast the likely impact of the programme and its interventions as detailed in the table below.

Year	Scenarios	Cost savings	Cost avoidance	Total
23/24	Low	£1,843,000	£318,000	£2,161,000
	Medium	£2,769,000	£537,000	£3,306,000
	High	£3,742,000	£805,000	£4,547,000

- 4.5.3. The analysis projects savings between £2.161m and £4.547m in 2023/24, from a combination of cash and cost avoidance savings against a savings target of £3.8m.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1. The Councils have established the Children’s Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the Councils that relate to ownership of NCT, the provision of support services to the Trust and consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of children’s early help and social care services and their financial position.
- 5.2. Given the significant level of pressure above the agreed contract sum in 2022/23 and 2023/24 the Councils need to apply robust scrutiny of NCT’s activities working in partnership with them to address the significant levels of rising demand and financial impact and agree mitigations for 2023/24
- 5.3. If appropriate action is not taken to address the rising financial pressures through reducing demand and transformative activity it will have a significant financial impact on the Council budgets and wider service delivery in 2023/24 and beyond.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. Strategic Group have agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting focusing on NCT’s budget on the 12th June 2023 and a Recruitment & Retention Summit taking place on 16th June 2023.
- 6.2. The Councils and the ICF will continue to monitor the financial position of NCT via the monthly Operational Group.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

- 7.1. **Resources and Financial**

7.1.1. As indicated by NCT at the Operational Group in June 2023 the cost of services delivered by NCT in the 2023/24 financial year could exceed the agreed contract sum by around £26m. The Trust have especially alerted the Councils to the continued overspend on the budget for placements of children in care. This is a demand-led budget which causes challenges in forecasting demand and expenditure and a small number of high-cost emergency placements can have a significant impact on the budget. NCT will in the first instance look for in-year mitigations to manage the overspend. If these mitigations are not sufficient, then the Trust is able to seek additional funding through the 'in-year change request' mechanism set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

7.2. **Legal and Governance**

7.2.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.

7.2.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Service Delivery Contract, the Articles of Association and Support Services Agreement.

7.3. **Risk**

7.3.1. As indicated by NCT at the Operational Group in June 2023 the cost of services delivered by NCT in the 2023/24 financial year is forecast to exceed the agreed contract sum. The Trust have informed the Councils of the continued overspend on the budget for placements of children in care. This is a demand-led budget which causes challenges in forecasting demand and expenditure and a small number of high-cost emergency placements can have a significant impact on the budget. There are significant risks that this overspend could increase if there were considerably more children in care than that forecast, if NCT failed to deliver less of the proposed savings or if there are other unknown factors that could affect the finances of the Trust. NCT will in the first instance look for in-year mitigations to manage the overspend. If these mitigations were not sufficient, then the Trust is able to seek additional funding through the 'in-year change request' mechanism set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

7.3.2. 4.2.6 sets out NCT's proposed savings for 2023/24 which have been built into the Contract Sum. As part of their re-forecasted outturn NCT have flagged £6.653m of proposed savings as being at risk of non-delivery (red and amber). Some of this is offset by suggested mitigation activity in other areas amounting to £1.114m reducing the risk to £5.539m. This risk has been included in NCT's re-forecasted pressure of £26.117m set out in 4.4.3. There is also a potential knock-on effect to future years as identified transformation activity might not flow into savings projections for future financial years.

7.3.3. As indicated in section 4.5 the Circle to Success invest to save programme has £3.8m of savings in 2023/24 attached to it against an investment of £1.3m by the Councils. NCT have suggested a forecast of savings between

£2.161m and £4.547m could be delivered as a result of the programme in 2023/24. However, they have flagged the £3.8m as amber in their analysis of potential savings that could be at risk. This has been included in NCT's re-forecasted pressure of £26.117m set out in 4.4.3. Non-delivery of these savings would pose a significant risk with the Councils picking up the cost as savings have already been built into the contract sum 2023/24 and would mean that the invest to save funding of £1.3m does not deliver value to the public purse originally set out by NCT. There is also a potential knock-on effect to future years as identified transformation activity might not flow into savings projections for future financial years.

7.4. Consultation

7.4.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.5. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.5.1. This report has not been considered by NNC's Executive Advisory Panel

7.6. Consideration by Scrutiny

7.6.1. This report has not been considered by the overview and scrutiny committees of either Council.

7.7. Equality Implications

7.7.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.8. Climate Impact

7.8.1. There is no specific climate impact arising from this report.

7.9. Community Impact

7.9.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.10.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None

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Children’s Trust Joint Committee 21st June 2023

Report Title	Children’s Trust Joint Committee Forward Plan
Report Author	Ann Marie Dodds, Executive Director of Children’s Services (NNC) annmarie.dodds@northnorthants.gov.uk Richard Woodward, Head of Business & Performance (Interim) ICF Programme Lead NNC) richard.woodward@northnorthants.gov.uk
Executive Member	Councillor Scott Edwards, Executive Member Children, Families, Education & Skills (NNC) Cllr Fiona Baker – Children, Families & Education (WNC)

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

None

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. This report seeks the Children’s Trust Joint Committee’s agreement to the proposed forward plan of agenda items for future meetings for the municipal year to May 2024.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. At the meeting of the Children’s Trust Joint Committee held on 15th February 2023 it was agreed that the committee would meet on a quarterly basis.

2.2. At the meeting of the Joint Officer Board on 18th May 2023, it was agreed to recommend a forward plan to the Children’s Trust Joint Committee.

2.3. Four meetings have been scheduled for the municipal year to May 2024 with an additional meeting in November 2023 during the contract sum process.

2.4. The additional meeting scheduled towards the end of the contract sum negotiation process in November 2024 will provide the Joint Committee with democratic oversight of the process and allow any decisions to be taken in line with the committee's terms of reference.

2.5. This report seeks the Children's Trust Joint Committee's agreement to the proposed forward plan of agenda items for future meetings for the municipal year to May 2024.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that the Children's Trust Joint Committee:

- a) Notes the dates of the committee's meetings for the municipal year to May 2024.
- b) Approves the forward plan proposed by the Joint Officer Board for the municipal year to May 2024 as set out in this report.
- c) Notes that that Joint Officer Board will from time to time also recommend additional agenda items for consideration at the Children's Trust Joint Committee as required by the terms of reference for the Committee and the Joint Officer Board.

3.2. Reason for Recommendations

- To ensure that the Children's Trust Joint Committee maintains democratic oversight of arrangements for the delivery of early help and children's social care services by Northamptonshire Childrens Trust (NCT) as set out in the committee's terms of reference.
- To oversee the interface between the unitaries in relation to the effective discharge of the commissioning responsibilities pursuant to the Service Delivery Contract.
- Consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of the services and their financial position.
- To provide governance in respect of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust limited company to reflect the role of the two Unitaries as joint members/owners of the jointly owned Teckal company in accordance with the Articles of Association. In particular, joint decision making for the exercise of Council rights under the Articles, NCT's Business Plan and the Reserved Matters;
- To provide political and statutory oversight of the relationship between the two unitaries in relation to the provision of Support Services to NCT pursuant to the Support Services Agreement.
- Consider matters reported to the Joint Committee by the Joint Officer Boards and the Councils

3.3. Alternative Options Considered

- To not have a Forward Plan of the Committee – This Is not recommended. Not having a clear forward plan would mean the two Councils might not be able to fully meet their responsibilities in relation to the ownership of the Trust and appropriate oversight of its service delivery and financial position. Further details regarding Issues and Choices considered can be found in section 5 of the report below.

4. Report Background

- 4.1. From 1 April 2021, after the abolition of Northamptonshire County Council, North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council became joint owners of Northamptonshire Children’s Trust (NCT) with each council owning a 50% share. Whilst the Trust is operationally independent of the Councils, the Councils still retain significant control over NCT and are responsible for making decisions on a number of ‘reserved matters’ that are set out in the Trust’s Articles of Association.
- 4.2. The Councils have established the Children’s Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the Councils that relate to ownership of NCT, the provision of support services to the trust and consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of the children’s early help and social care services and their financial position.
- 4.3. At the meeting of the Children’s Trust Joint Committee held on 15th February 2023 it was agreed that the committee would meet on a quarterly basis.
- 4.4. At the meeting of the Joint Officer Board on 18th May 2023, it was agreed to recommend a forward plan to the Children’s Trust Joint Committee.
- 4.5. Four meetings have been scheduled for the municipal year to May 2024 with an additional meeting in November 2023 during the contract sum process.
- 4.6. The additional meeting scheduled towards the end of the contract sum negotiation process in November 2023 will provide the Joint Committee with democratic oversight of the process and allow any decisions to be taken in line with the committee’s terms of reference.
- 4.7. The meeting dates and forward plan of the Childrens Trust Joint Committee for the municipal year to May 2024 proposed by Joint Officer Board are contained in the table below:

Meeting Date	Forward Plan
Wednesday 21 st June 2023 2pm WNC – Council Chamber, County Hall, Northampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract Sum 2023/24 Update - Budget, actuals and forecasted outturn
Wednesday 6 th September 2023 10am NNC - Council Chamber, Corby Cube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change control to include Transport in the Support Services Agreement • Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Annual Review and Annual Report • Review of progress to realise 2023/24 savings proposals and MTFS • Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Accommodation Strategy • Early Help
Wednesday 8 th November 2023 2pm WNC – Council Chamber, County Hall, Northampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCT Business Plan • Contract Sum 2023/24 Update - Budget, actuals and forecasted outturn • Contract Sum 2024/25 and MTFS • Support Services SLA Strategic Review and Change Controls
Wednesday 6 th March 2024 2pm WNC – Council Chamber, County Hall, Northampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of realisation of 2023/24 savings proposals and MTFS
Wednesday 1 st May 2024 10am NNC - Council Chamber, Corby Cube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract Sum 2024/25 Update - Budget, actuals and forecasted outturn

5. Issues and Choices

5.1. The Councils have established the Children’s Trust Joint Committee to discharge the functions of the Councils that relate to ownership of NCT, the provision of support services to the Trust and consider relevant matters arising in relation to the delivery of children’s early help and social care services and their financial position.

5.2. The development of a forward plan for the Childrens Trust Joint Committee will ensure an appropriate level of democratic oversight and the ability to discharge the Councils functions as set out in the terms of reference of the Childrens Trust Joint Committee, the Service Delivery Contract, the Articles of Association and Support Services Agreement.

5.3. Not having a clear forward plan would mean the Councils might not be able to fully meet their responsibilities in relation to the ownership of the Trust and appropriate oversight of its service delivery and financial position.

6. Next Steps

6.1. Should the Committee agree to the forward plan proposed by the Joint Officer Board it will form the basis of the work of the committee for the municipal year to May 2024.

7. Implications (including financial implications)

7.1. Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to maintain oversight of NCT's financial position.

7.2. Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1. The relationship between NCT and the Councils is governed by a series of contractual and legal agreements.
- 7.2.2. The recommendations set out in this report will allow the Councils to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in the Service Delivery Contract, the Articles of Association and Support Services Agreement.

7.3. Risk

- 7.3.1. As indicated by NCT at the Operational Group in June 2023 the cost of services delivered by NCT in the 2023/24 financial year will exceed the agreed contract sum. The Trust have especially alerted to the Councils the continued overspend on the budget for placements of children in care. This is a demand-led budget which causes challenges in forecasting demand and expenditure and a small number of high-cost emergency placements can have a significant impact on the budget. NCT will in the first instance look for in-year mitigations to manage the overspend. If these mitigations were not sufficient, then the Trust is able to seek additional funding through the 'in-year change request' mechanism set out in the Service Delivery Contract.

7.4. Consultation

- 7.4.1. This report has not been subject to any consultation.

7.5. Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

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7.7. Equality Implications

- 7.7.1. There are no specific equality implications arising from this report.

7.8. Climate Impact

- 7.8.1. There is no specific climate impact arising from this report.

7.9. Community Impact

7.9.1. There is no specific community impact arising from this report.

7.10. Crime and Disorder Impact

7.10.1. There is no specific crime and disorder impact arising from this report.

8. Background Papers

8.1. None