

## Scrutiny Commission

At 7:00pm on Tuesday 29 March 2022

Held in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Doddington Road, Wellingborough

### Present:

#### Members

Councillor Wendy Brackenbury (Chair)	Councillor Kevin Watt (Vice Chair)
Councillor Matt Binley	Councillor Philip Irwin
Councillor Robin Carter	Councillor Gill Mercer
Councillor John Currall	Councillor Simon Rielly
Councillor Mark Dearing	Councillor Lee Wilkes
Councillor Jim Hakewill	

#### Officers

Adele Wylie – Director of Governance and HR  
 Guy Holloway – Assistant Chief Executive  
 George Candler – Executive Director of Place & Economy  
 Graeme Kane – Assistant Director of Highways & Waste  
 Nick Henstock – Head of Transport & Highways (WNC)  
 Chris Wragg – Transportation & Development Manager (WNC)  
 Rochelle Mathieson – Head of Transformation Partnerships and Design  
 Katie Jones – Head of Transformation Delivery  
 Stacey Parker – Corporate Support Manager  
 Louise Tyers – Senior Democratic Services Officer

### In attendance:

Councillor Graham Lawman - Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets

### 36 Apologies for non-attendance

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors John McGhee and Geoff Shacklock.

### 37 Members' Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

Councillors	Item	Nature of Interest	DPI	Other Interest
Mark Dearing	Draft Transformation Plan 2022-25	Is a member of the Member Transformation Board		Yes

### **38 Notification of requests to address the meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

### **39 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022**

#### **RESOLVED:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed.

With reference to allowances for the chairs of task and finish groups, the Director of Governance and HR advised that the Independent Remuneration Panel would now be considering the issue as part of their report. Their final report was due to be received shortly and would be considered by full Council.

### **40 Major Highways Capital Works**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Assistant Director for Highways and Waste which provided an introduction into how major highways capital works were prioritised. The report was supported by a presentation. The report was marked as item 5 on the agenda.

As a Highway Authority, the Council had a legal requirement to have and to update a Local Transport Plan (LTP). This Plan was currently the Northamptonshire Transport Plan 2012, but it was expected that the preparation of a North Northamptonshire LTP would be a priority for the Council once the highway service had been disaggregated later this year. A new highway services contractor was currently being procured and was expected to be in place for September.

The Council had received indication of the funding it would receive from the Department for Transport (DfT) for the next three years to aid delivery of the LTP.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. In response to a question about the issues with the Rushden Lakes junction, officers explained that NNC and National Highways worked closely together. The Executive Member had regular meetings with National Highways and any issues could be raised through him in the first instance.
- ii. Members questioned how new rail stations could be delivered. Officers explained that any new stations were best to come through the LTP. Feasibility on any new stations would need to be considered, including could trains stop at that station and was there a business case for train operators to operate a train at that station.
- iii. Members welcomed the disaggregation of the service but felt that they needed to be consulted far more on highways issues. There was a need to talk to local councillors who had the local knowledge of the needs of an area. Members suggested that local area groups should be considered to discuss issues. Officers confirmed that they were always happy to engage with local councillors.

- iv. Issues around surface water flooding in local villages was raised particularly how it was reported. Two systems were currently used to report flooding and it would be helpful to capture real data by merging those two systems.
- v. With regards to the new highway contract, Members sought advice on when scrutiny could have an input to that process. In response, officers clarified that there had been a long process of over two years to get to this stage and the former County Council had liaised with the shadow authorities and former sovereign authorities on the contract and it would have been scrutinised then. The Commission may want to invite the new contractor to a future meeting to talk about their processes etc.
- vi. Members enquired whether splitting the contract meant that there would be more or less monies spent than would have been through a single county-wide contract. In response, officers explained that the budget from the County Council had been disaggregated between the two new authorities based on road length. Department for Transport (DfT) funding had been disaggregated based on assets. The DfT did not explain how this was calculated but it did include a traffic flow element. There would be additional funding for the disaggregated highways team to ensure that it would be fit for purpose.
- vii. There was currently a long wait for potholes to be filled, would it be quicker to use local contractors. It was noted that Keir was organised on areas, but they did sub-contract some of the work. The new contractor may or may not use local sub-contractors. The bidders for the contract had been asked to consider social value in their tenders and this would be assessed.
- viii. The 'golden triangle' of the East Midlands, Nottingham, Kettering and Bedford was renowned for warehousing. We did not gain any benefit through HGVs travelling on our roads and was this recognised by the government.
- ix. Air quality was not mentioned within the criteria for schemes but schemes for walking and cycling were encouraged. Decarbonisation was expected to be central to the new LTP. Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Plans had been developed in Wellingborough and Kettering and were being developed for Corby and Rushden/Higham.
- x. It was noted that many funding rounds were announced at short notice which required the Council to have schemes prepared ready to bid. The DfT was listening to the concerns of authorities as details of the next three years funding had now been received which was better for planning.
- xi. Some Members felt that there was an over reliance on traffic signals. These had costs in relation to upkeep and some junctions often worked better when signals were not in use. This view was not shared by all Members who believed that keeping traffic moving was the priority but there was currently not collective thinking as growth happened in the area.
- xii. Members felt that there needed to be more coordination with other organisations on works to the highway. Often a new junction or road had been put in but was shortly dug up again for other works to take place. With regards to utilities and permitting, the Council tried to balance the demands whilst looking to minimise the impact on the network.

It was moved by Councillor Jim Hakewill and seconded by Councillor Simon Rielly that the Scrutiny Commission write to the three local MPs on the need for a much longer term process for bidding for funding opportunities and that there should be some recognition that council tax payers in the 'Golden Triangle' (Nottingham, Kettering and Bedford) should not pay for lorries and HGVs using the highways network. The new contractor for highways should be invited to the Scrutiny Commission as soon as practically possible.

On being put to the vote, there were three votes for and five against, so the motion fell.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To note the contents of the report.

**Councillors Jim Hakewill and Simon Rielly left the meeting and did not return.**

**41 Draft Transformation Plan 2022 - 2025; Inspiring Improvement**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Heads of Transformation which reported on the development of the draft Transformation Plan 2022-25, which linked back to the Council's Corporate Plan and contributed to the ongoing transformation and financial sustainability of NNC. The report was marked as item 6 on the agenda.

The Draft Transformation Plan identified the projects where the Transformation Team would support and enable service areas to deliver their priority projects. Each service area also had its own Service Plan, which linked back to the Corporate Plan to deliver a range of Business as Usual as well as service improvement. The Transformation Plan would be under constant review to ensure the organisation remained agile and responsive to meeting the service priorities and delivering fundamental improvement where most needed for our customers and the Council.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. Members had found the recent members' workshops useful.
- ii. Members questioned how better outcomes would be measured. In response, officers advised that a Benefits Strategy was being developed which would include a benefits tracker. It was accepted that everybody was responsible for delivering benefits.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To note the draft Transformation Plan 2022-25; inspiring improvement.
- (ii) To note the development of the plan and the benefits it will deliver.

**42 Performance Indicator Report 2021/22 (Period 10)**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the Council's performance across a wide range of services, as

measured by performance indicators. The report was marked as item 7 on the agenda.

The report provided a summary of the performance of Council services and further detail including trend lines and exception reports. Performance measures were being developed to better reflect the desired outcomes set out at a high level through the Council's recently adopted Corporate Plan.

In response to the comments made at the Commission's last meeting, the following update was given:

- Suicide rates – a comprehensive strategy was in place and the Interim Director of Public Health had offered to bring a report to a future meeting on mental health and suicide rates.
- Ofsted inspections – these included both LEA schools and academies. The Director of Children's Services had advised that inspections were expected to be completed by 2025.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. Comments on several specific indicators were made, including:
  - % calls answered (T21a) – The issue appeared to be that calls were still segregated to sovereign areas. The target of 90% appeared to be low and should be at least 95%. In response, officers advised that the separate systems were an issue and a piece of work was being undertaken as part of the Transformation Plan to unify those systems. Work was also taking place to learn and respond to customers ways of accessing council information.
  - Number of permanent exclusions from school (T47) – was the number for LEA schools or did it also include academies.
  - Number of looked after children without a school place/missing education (T48) – did this indicator cover both primary and secondary children and what was being done in this area.
  - Current number of home education children (T46) – there was concern that the Council did not have a lot of control over home schooling.
  - Fly tipping: number of fly tips reported (T64a) – why was information not available in December? In response, officers advised that different systems were in place and we were looking to streamline reporting processes.
  - There was no information provided on maintained nurseries. Officers undertook to put that point to the Director of Children's Services.
- ii. Members enquired as to how much work went into producing this information and whether it was an automated process. In response, officers advised that it was a mix of systems, some more streamlined than others but the Corporate Support Team were looking to streamline data. There were currently 3fte in the North Northants team along with a collaborative agreement with West

Northamptonshire of 5fte who managed the former tier 1 data, e.g. schools and adults.

**RESOLVED** to note the performance of the Council and its services.

#### **43 Proposed Corporate Plan Performance Indicator Set 2022/23**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an opportunity to review and provide feedback to the Executive on the proposed Corporate Plan Performance Indicator Set for 2022/23. The report was marked as item 8 on the agenda.

The performance indicators that North Northamptonshire Council had measured and reported on during 2021/22 represented an amalgamation of the common indicators that were measured by the local councils prior to the creation of the new unitary council. Following the adoption of the Council's Corporate Plan, service areas had been working to identify performance indicators that would help measure how the Council was performing against its key commitments outlined within the adopted Corporate Plan.

During discussion, the following principle points were noted:

- i. Members welcomed the expansion of some of the indicators, e.g. homelessness, which would give the Scrutiny Commission more information to work with.
- ii. Net additional homes provided (STP27) – clarification was needed as to what period this indicator was over. In response, officer advised that they would look to possibly include a description or definition for the indicators.
- iii. It was noted that customers were being directed to the website where possible, so would it be possible to include an indicator around response times to website queries. In response, officers undertook to talk to the Website Manager as to whether this was something that could be reported on.
- iv. Number of electric vehicle charging points publicly available (GSE04) – this indicator was welcomed.
- v. It was noted that a number of HR indicators would be included which covered headcount and FTE, vacancy levels, agency staff and spend on agency staff.
- vi. The Climate Change, Environment and Growth Executive Advisory Panel would be looking at the indicators around the environment and the Council's commitment to Carbon Zero.
- vii. Customer services was a priority so how quickly the Council responded to customers was important. In response, officers confirmed that there were measures around certain forms of interaction, but they would look at written queries.
- viii. % of in-year eligible population offered an NHS Health Check (AFL20) – were health checks offered only to those people who were registered with a GP?

Any further comments on the proposed indicator set should be made to the Assistant Chief Executive directly.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To note the proposed Corporate Plan Indicator Set 2022/23.
- (ii) That the comments of the Scrutiny Commission be fed back to the Executive.

**44 Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22**

The Scrutiny Commission considered a report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer which presented the draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 for comment prior to being submitted to full Council. The report was marked as item 9 on the agenda.

The Scrutiny Annual Report was an opportunity for all those involved in the new scrutiny committees to reflect on the first year, to consider what has worked well and where further improvements to the process could be made. It provides an opportunity to highlight the important scrutiny work that has taken place during this municipal year.

Members were asked to submit any comments to be included in the Annual Report to the Senior Democratic Services Officer by the end of April.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Scrutiny Commission delegates the final wording of the Annual Report to the Chairs of the Scrutiny Commission and Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, prior to its submission to full Council.

**45 Executive Forward Plan - April to July 2022**

The Scrutiny Commission received the Executive Forward Plan which showed the key and significant decisions the Executive would be making over the next few months. The report was marked as item 10 on the agenda.

Members indicated that they would wish to consider the Executive Decision on the Garden Waste: Future Service Provision.

**RESOLVED** to note the Executive Forward Plan.

**46 Suspension of Meeting Procedure Rule 10**

**RESOLVED:**

That Meeting Procedure Rule 10 (Guillotine) be suspended to enable the Committee to continue the business on the agenda.

**47 Scrutiny Work Plan and Future Meetings**

The Scrutiny Commission received the Scrutiny Workplan and future meetings. The report was marked as item 11 on the agenda.

The Chair advised that the Executive had met earlier in the day to consider funding of maintained nurseries. The Executive had agreed to request that the Scrutiny Commission include a review of finance, provision and performance arrangements of maintained nurseries on our work plan.

Members indicated that they would like to consider the following items:

- (i) The Council's approach to social housing.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer will write in the first instance to the relevant Executive Member and Officer to seek information as to whether there was a strategy for social housing, and if yes, what that strategy was.

- (ii) Adoption of Roads on New Estates

The Senior Democratic Services Officer will write in the first instance to the relevant Executive Member and Officer to seek information as to what the Council's approach was to the adoption of roads.

The Asset Rationalisation and Use Scrutiny Panel had now had its first meeting. Councillor John Currall had joined the Panel and it would be helpful to have a member from Wellingborough to also sit on the panel.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) To note the Scrutiny Work plan and future meetings.
- (ii) To add a review of finance, provision and performance arrangements of maintained nurseries to the Scrutiny Work Plan as a task and finish group.
- (iii) To refer the review of maintained nurseries to the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

**48 Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked members and officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.05pm.

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Chair

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Date