

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 15th September, 2022 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

279 Apologies for Absence - 15th September 2022

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Scott Edwards and Graham Lawman.

280 Move to Adjourn the Meeting - 15th September 2022

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers spoke to offer his condolences in respect of the passing of Her Majesty the Queen and offered thoughts and prayers to King Charles and the Royal Family at this difficult time.

Members and officers were then invited to stand to observe a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

In line with official mourning protocols, the Chair sought approval to adjourn the meeting and the remaining business on the agenda to reconvene at the same venue at 10.00am on Tuesday 27th September 2022.

It was proposed by Cllr Helen Howell and seconded by Councillor David Brackenbury, before it was

RESOLVED: That the meeting of Executive be adjourned to 10.00am on Tuesday 27th September 2022

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive reconvened from 15th September 2022

At 10.00 am on Tuesday 27th September, 2022 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 Harriet Pentland
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor David Howes	

Also in attendance – Councillors, John McGhee, Jean Addison, Mike Tebbutt, Jonathan Ekins, Wendy Brackenbury, David Jenney, Martin Griffiths and William Colquhoun

281 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Cllrs Lloyd Bunday, Scott Edwards and Helen Harrison.

282 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 25th August 2022

RESOLVED that: The Executive agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25th August 2022 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

283 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

284 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

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

Agenda Item	Speaker
Item 6 – Garden Waste - Future Service Provision	Cllr Martin Griffiths, Cllr John McGhee, Cllr Jean Addison, Martyn Reuby (Corby TC), Lee Forster
Item 7 – Hackney Carriage Fare Tariffs	Martyn Reuby, Neil Rielly, Ian Robb, Tam McGuirn, Rob McArther, Cllr John McGhee
Item 8 – Cannock Road Housing Development	Cllr Jean Addison

Item 10 – Family Hubs	Cllr Jean Addison, Cllr John McGhee, Phil Bromhall, Anthony Lee, Stuart Foster
Item 11 – Fuel Procurement for Council Fleet	Lee Forster
Item 14 – Waste Management 3 Year Plan	Lee Forster
Item 19 – Knuston Hall - EXEMPT	Cllr Jon-Paul Carr

285 Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 4 - July 2022)

The Chair introduced a report that sought to provide an update on the performance of the Council across a range of services as measured by performance indicators, as well as setting out the progress that was being made in the development of the Council's performance monitoring arrangements.

The Chair reported that 60% of performance indicators were currently on target or overperforming, with 15% within 5% of their respective targets. A total of 25% of indicators were underperforming and outside the 5% tolerance.

The Chair highlighted a total of 14 underperforming indicators and noted that the recently introduced Corporate Plan indicators had been improved to better indicate improvement or deterioration to ongoing trends. Comments sections within the report had also been improved to provide additional clarity regarding actions taken to address performance issues.

The meeting received a number of highlights from Period 4, noting service levels in Customer Services for July, the number of road defects repaired and the volume of safeguarding concerns received. Members noted that staffing data provided as part of the report was continuing to be refined and improved.

Cllr Brackenbury spoke to highlight the performance of the Planning Department, noting improved trends within performance. In addition, the work of the Housing Department in significantly reducing the number of outstanding applications on the Keyways Housing Register was commended, with thanks offered to Cllr Matt Binley for driving this work.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 4, 2022/23 as set out in the appendices to this report.
- b) Noted the progress being made in the development of the Council's approach to performance management.

Reason for Recommendations – to better understand the Council's performance as measured by performance indicators as at Period 4, 2022/23.

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.

286 Garden Waste: Future Service Provision

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers welcomed Cllr Martin Griffiths to the meeting to address the Executive. Cllr Griffiths spoke to reference the current performance of bin collections in the Wellingborough area and that the introduction of any charge for green waste collections given the current cost-of-living crisis was an error, especially as the vast majority of public consultation responses were against it. Cllr Griffiths concluded by noting that the introduction of a charge would set a dangerous precedent when tackling other levelling-up issues and requested that the issue be put to Full Council for decision.

Cllr John McGhee was then invited to address the meeting. Cllr McGhee stated that the service should be funded from general taxation and considered the imposition of a charge for the green waste service to be a stealth tax. He noted that harmonisation had to occur, but this did not require a charge to be levied across the board as residents had clearly stated that they did not wish to see the introduction of a charge in this regard.

The Chair then invited Cllr Jean Addison to speak on the item. Cllr Addison noted that the public consultation had been well supported, with the vast majority of respondents stating there should be no charge for the green waste service. Cllr Addison stated that a charge for all was not harmonisation, rather levelling-up in reverse and that the will of the people should be listened to.

Cllr Martyn Reuby, Chair of Corby Town Council was invited to address the meeting. Cllr Reuby felt that the proposal to level a charge for the service was regressive, unworkable, and impacted those who could not afford the additional cost, with Corby Town Council opposing the scheme in the strongest possible terms. Residents would not sign up to the scheme and there would be an issue of contaminated black bins. The Executive was requested to take onboard the outcome of the public consultation and not approve the scheme.

Mr Lee Forster then addressed the Executive and queried how the proposed scheme met with the Council’s ambition to have climate and environmental considerations as the golden thread running through its activities, stating that implementation of the charge would be an environmental disaster as residents chose other ways to dispose of their green waste by burning it or hiding it in general waste bins. Mr Forster noted that the Council needed to educate residents on the benefits of composting and provide them with the tools to do so, concluding that introducing a service charge was not the right thing to do in the current financial climate.

The Chair thanked the speakers for attending the meeting before inviting Cllr Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways Travel and Assets to introduce a report that asked Executive to consider the future of the garden waste service for North Northamptonshire and to make a decision as to how this would be funded based on a number of service models outlined in the report, together with the associated financial implications.

Cllr Lawman also thanked the speakers for their contributions as well as all those who had taken part in the public consultation process between March and April 2022 and officers involved in the formulation of the proposals before members.

Cllr Lawman noted the need for harmonisation of the garden waste service, especially in regard to bringing the former East Northamptonshire area into line with the remaining Council areas, residents in this area currently paying a £55 annual subscription charge. There was the possibility of legal challenge should this situation not be addressed.

It was heard that aside from the public consultation process, both the Service Delivery, Performance and Customers Executive Advisory Panel and the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee (with Scrutiny Commission members invited) had considered the proposals, with the response of Scrutiny circulated to Executive in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Lawman noted that as a result of the adjournment of the meeting of Executive on 15th September, two minor amendments were required to start dates (from 1st November 2022 to 1st December 2022) relating to an amendment in subscription costs for East Northamptonshire residents and a rebate of £20 per bin per year for all existing garden waste customers in East Northamptonshire who renewed their subscription.

The meeting heard that green waste collections were not a statutory service and currently incurred an annual cost to the Council of £2.695m. The unfairness of the system inherited from legacy authorities was noted, aside from East Northamptonshire's subscription costs, residents who did not have gardens or generate green waste were expected to contribute fully to the cost of the service through general taxation.

Cllr Lawman referenced the outcomes of the public consultation noting that the vast majority of respondents wished to see the service harmonised across the Council area, acknowledging the desire for the service to remain universal through general taxation.

The meeting was advised that given the need for the Council to make significant financial savings in the forthcoming year in line with its Medium-Term Financial Plan, it was recommended that a 12-month service be funded through subscription charges. It was noted that it was likely that such a service model would have been considered even if the former East Northamptonshire area was not being charged a subscription. Over 80% of local authorities nationally charged for green waste collection services and it was stressed that even with the implementation of a subscription service, the Council would still face a significant financial pressure as the subscription charge would not fully fund the cost of operation. The Council would continue to cover the remaining cost of operation through general taxation and Council funding.

Brief details were provided as to how subscriber's bins would be identified should a subscription service be approved, with alternative options to bin collections detailed, including an enhancement to the current subsidised home composting container scheme to promote more home composting as an environmentally sustainable option and to support residents who do not wish to subscribe to the garden waste service. An initial total of 1000 composting bins would be available at a cost of £5 plus delivery to residents. In addition, properties which were not suitable for wheeled bins could

access the collection service by way of a compostable sack which could be presented in the same way as the wheeled bin available through an ad hoc pre-pay solution costing £16.50 for 10 x 75 litre sacks.

Cllr Lawman concluded by recommending Executive adopt Option C as detailed in the report, a 12-month subscription-based service to start with effect from 1st April 2023 with the annual subscription charge set at £40/bin/year (for the first bin) and £16.50 for the ad hoc sack collection service. Additional bins would be charged on a full cost recovery basis.

The Chair invited the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Wendy Brackenbury to address the meeting. Cllr Brackenbury stated that at the meeting of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 16th August, to which members of the Scrutiny Commission had been invited, all members had requested to see a harmonised green waste collection service, with the majority believing this should be provided from general taxation. It was noted, however, that a number of attendees were concerned that continuing the service without a subscription charge would negatively impact the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Chair reiterated for clarity that the Council would not be making a profit from the subscription service, if approved, a deficit would remain to be picked up by general taxation.

Members of the Executive then spoke in relation to the proposals. All members noted the difficulty of the decision, acknowledging that in the current financial climate a subscription service was not an imposition that the Council wished to make on its residents, however, there was a responsibility not to run the Council into fiscal difficulties.

Furthermore, there was a view to promote home composting as the most environmentally sound use for green waste and this accorded with the environmental commitments of the Council.

Cllr Matthew Binley stated that he had taken part in the public consultation. To ensure transparency, members of the Executive were asked to indicate who had also taken part in the consultation as set out below. Members confirmed that they were approaching the decision with an open mind, voting on the decision based on the debate detailed above:

- Cllr Matthew Binley
- Cllr David Howes
- Cllr Graham Lawman
- Cllr Helen Howell

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Agreed to harmonise the garden waste collection service across North Northamptonshire;

- b) Recover some of the costs of providing the service only from those who use it by charging a subscription fee for a service operating 12 months of the year (option C as set out in the report).
- c) Agreed that, from 1st April 2023, for North Northamptonshire, the annual subscription charge will be set at £40/bin/year (for the first bin) and £16.50 for the ad hoc sack collection service. Additional bins will be charged on a full cost recovery basis.
- d) Agreed to change the current subscription charge of £55/bin/year in East Northamptonshire to £40/bin/year (for the first bin) for all residents in East Northamptonshire from 1st December 2022. Additional bins will be charged on a full cost recovery basis.
- e) Agreed to apply a rebate of £20/bin/year for all existing garden waste customers in East Northamptonshire who renew their subscription (and only on their next renewal) after 1st December 2022, for a period of 12 months only,
- f) Agreed to provide subsidised home composting bins, as set out in the report, to promote home composting as an environmentally sustainable alternative to kerbside collections of garden waste.
- g) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Economy to take any further decisions and / or actions required to conclude this process and implement any approved service updates. This will include, but not be limited to:
 - i. finalising the Terms and Conditions of the service;
 - ii. approving the updates to the Council's Waste and Recycling Policy in relation to any changes to the garden waste service.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The recommended option will harmonise the garden waste service across all North Northamptonshire which will ensure parity across North Northamptonshire
- Option C makes a contribution to the overall financial stability of the Council and to its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). It reduces the need to use budgets allocated for other services to fund a garden waste service.
- The recommended course of action will reduce the Council's carbon footprint by reducing the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles used for service delivery, assuming participation is at 40%.
- Current staffing issues, which have been experienced by many local authorities across the country, have reduced the reliability of the garden waste service for

some residents, particularly in the Wellingborough area. Reducing the number of crews required to deliver the service reduces the number of staff members required and thus reduces the risk of disruption caused by staff vacancies and absences.

- A subscription service provides residents who need to dispose of garden waste with the choice of whether they wish to use, and pay towards, an opt-in service or whether they wish to use another legitimate disposal route, such as home composting or visiting the Council's Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The tax contribution from those who do not need the service, such as those without a garden, would be reduced considerably by covering most of the operating costs through the subscription charge. This is considered a more equitable method to fund this optional service.
- The option to use the compostable sacks service provides residents with the choice to have their garden waste collected on an ad hoc basis for a lower price. This seeks to provide an alternative for those with smaller gardens or who are not in a position to subscribe for the 12-month, fortnightly service.
- Home composting is an environmentally sustainable alternative to kerbside collection of garden waste, which the Council wishes to encourage and promote. The subsidised offer for home composting bins seeks to encourage this environmental practice.
- The rebate of £20/bin/year for existing garden waste customers in East Northamptonshire who renew after 1st December 2022 acknowledges the disparity that has existed since Vesting Day in the way in which the garden waste service is funded. It also seeks to retain their custom during the period of transition to the new service.
- The charge for the first bin has been set below the cost recovery threshold in an effort to make it more affordable for residents, particularly in light of the current cost of living pressures. For additional bins, it is not considered appropriate that the cost of providing these bins is met from general taxation and therefore they will be charged on a full cost recovery basis.

Alternative Options Considered – to fully inform the decision on the future of the garden waste service in North Northamptonshire, an analysis of service delivery options has been conducted by an officer working group to identify impacts and benefits for each of the alternative options.

The option to retain the service under the current legacy arrangements was considered, which would continue the situation with different areas receiving different services. The Council had received significant feedback from residents living in the area of East Northamptonshire, who were only able to access the subscription service, whilst other residents in North Northamptonshire had access to a service which did not require a subscription payment. Residents expressed their expectation that parity for chargeable services was one early benefit to them of the recent

formation of the new Council. Delaying the harmonisation of the service across North Northamptonshire would not resolve the concerns raised by residents in the area of East Northamptonshire and has therefore been dismissed.

Providing a universal service funded by general taxation has been considered and forms part of the analysis later in this report. It has been rejected on the basis that it does not support the Council's MTFP and requires all taxpayers to contribute towards its operating costs, even if they do not require or use the service. Delaying the implementation of a subscription-based service beyond the recommended date would delay the financial contributions to the MTFP, which are required as a contribution towards balancing the Council's budget in 2023/24 and beyond.

It would be possible to continue charging residents in East Northamptonshire £55/bin/year until 1st April 2023 and offer no rebate. This option has been discounted as it further exacerbates the disparity in the current garden waste services operating across North Northamptonshire and would likely lead to existing customers delaying their renewal until 1st April 2023, which could have further operational and financial implications for the Council. The disparity between those residents located in East Northamptonshire and other North Northamptonshire residents exists due to local government reform. The Council notes that East Northamptonshire residents have paid for a service that other residents have not and therefore to address this unfairness, the rebate of £20 seeks to reduce this disparity. The £20 has been determined by the new subscription rate of £40 less the current rate of £55 plus a small financial sum to acknowledge the disparity.

The subscription charge could be set at various levels to reflect the Council's approach to funding the service. A higher subscription rate would reduce the financial burden on the Council and require individual residents to pay more for the service if they choose to subscribe. The recommended level of subscription charge reflects the Council's objective to recover most of the operating costs from those who use the service whilst being mindful of the current economic conditions putting pressure on households.

Delivering the service via a third-party commercial operator has been considered, but rejected, as it does not align with the Council's current delivery model, whereby waste services are delivered by in-house teams in three of the four operational areas.

It would be possible to reduce garden waste collections to a monthly service. This option has been discounted for operational reasons and because it would be unpopular with residents given recycling and general waste are both collected once a fortnight. A garden waste bin left for 4 weeks becomes compacted, begins to rot (and smell) and produces liquid. This leads to bins that are very heavy and often overweight, which either become unsafe to manoeuvre (for residents and employees), or they break when lifted on the vehicle. The consultation indicated that 10% of properties expect to need two bins under a fortnightly collection service. This is expected to rise significantly with a 4-weekly service. Not all properties will have space for an additional garden waste bin and there is an additional capital cost in providing additional bins to those that request them.

287 Hackney Carriage Fares Tariff

The Chair invited Cllr Martyn Reuby to address the meeting. Cllr Reuby noted his regular contact with Corby Hackney Carriage Association and the concerns raised regarding proposed increases to fares and the potential for these to be unaffordable for residents. Cllr Reuby noted that Corby as a town was more reliant on taxis than other areas in North Northamptonshire and may not benefit from harmonisation of fares in this regard. An increase in fares had the potential to decimate the taxi industry locally and leave the Council unable to operate certain statutory services.

Ian Robb was then provided with the opportunity to speak. Mr Robb requested that the harmonisation of fares proposal be rejected as it imposed an increase on the people of Corby in a price-sensitive industry. Mr Robb stated that a petition totalling 1300 signatories had been gathered against the fare increase and that the proposed increase went against the Department of Transport best practice guidance and would disenfranchise taxi drivers.

Tam McGuirn then addressed the meeting and stated harmonisation of fares would cause unfair harm to the people of Corby and enquired how fare charging would be monitored given current enforcement staffing levels. He concluded by stating that a rise in fares would result in unlicensed taxi operation.

Neil Rielly was provided with the opportunity to speak to the Executive and stated that the recommendations before members indicated a lack of knowledge and understanding of the taxi industry which would result in taxi owners being forced to leave the trade and leave customers confused as to pricing. He considered that harmonisation would benefit nobody except the Council.

Cllr John McGhee then addressed the Executive and noted the case of an individual who would see monthly taxi costs rise significantly as a result of the proposals, with harmonisation impacting a great many other people at a time of severe financial crisis.

The final speaker was Roy McArther who stated that on-street negotiation of fares was not good practice, and that harmonisation would damage Hackney Carriage operators to the benefit of the private hire trade that was not subject to the recommendations. He concluded by stating that elderly and vulnerable customers would not be able to afford increased prices and requested harmonisation take place gradually over a three-year period.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their comments before asking Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration to introduce a report that provided information regarding requests received from Hackney Carriage proprietors to implement fare increases for Hackney Carriage journeys and requested that Executive consider the requested fare increases and decide whether these should be accepted, and if so, whether in whole or in part, noting that any revised Fares Tariff recommended were the maximum amount that could be charged, with Hackney Carriage proprietors being at liberty to charge a lower fare.

Cllr Brackenbury thanked the speakers for their input as well as officers, members of the taxi trade and members of the public who had engaged with the formal consultation process.

It was considered to be important that fares were harmonised across North Northamptonshire to provide clarity for residents wherever they engaged a Hackney Carriage in the area. It was also recognised that a request for a fair fare increase reflected an increase to motoring costs and the cost of living.

It was further considered that Option Two as set out fully in Appendix F to the report would be the fairest solution for the trade and its customers, officers having taken onboard feedback to amend the proposed 50% night-time uplift timing from 6am to 5am.

Cllr Brackenbury stated that the Council did not wish to price any operator out of the market and suggested that as the Hackney Carriage trade was well-organised in Corby that operators come together and set their own maximum fare rate, provided it was less than the maximum recommended by the report.

Cllr Brackenbury concluded by noting that this was a difficult decision and had formed a very complex piece of work, but that the proposal before members could be of benefit by providing a justifiable uplift in fares in the face of an increased cost of motoring and living.

Cllr Graham Lawman spoke and noted that drivers in Wellingborough had not had an increase in fares since 2011 and the work that had gone into the report was to be welcomed.

Cllr Binley echoed the suggestion of Cllr Brackenbury that Corby-based operators agree as a whole to set their own maximum fare below that proposed in the report.

The Chair then invited the Chair of the Licensing and Appeals Committee, Cllr Jonathan Ekins to address the meeting. Cllr Ekins noted that it was understood that setting tariffs for the Hackney Carriage trade was a difficult decision in light of the current financial climate. Cllr Ekins reiterated the point that the recommendations before the Executive were the maximum fare that could be charged and there was nothing to prevent operators coming together to charge a lower fare if they wished to do so. Harmonisation of fares across the whole of the North Northamptonshire area would allow operators or drivers the equal opportunity to work wherever they wanted within the area without financial penalty.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive;

- a) Approve an increase in fares in the Corby zone based upon the harmonised fare tariff detailed as option two in **Appendix F** to the report
- b) Approve an increase in fares in the East zone based upon the harmonised fare tariff detailed as option two in **Appendix F** to the report
- c) Approve an increase in fares in the Kettering zone based upon the harmonised fare tariff detailed as option two in **Appendix F** to the report

- d) Approve an increase in fares in the Wellingborough zone based upon the harmonised fare tariff detailed as option two in **Appendix F** to the report
- e) Refuse the automatic increases proposed every second and fourth year by the Wellingborough Hackney Carriage Association (WHCA)

Reason for Recommendation: The trade have made representation that an increase in fares is required to ensure that the increased costs of running the service are covered. Alignment of fares is considered to be important, so that all residents within North Northamptonshire will be subject to the same maximum fare, regardless of where they reside or work.

Alternative Options Considered: The alternative options which were also considered by the Licensing and Appeals Committee are;

- a) Corby Zone;
 - i) To recommend the approval of the Corby Hackney Owners Association (CHOA) proposed increase in fare tariff
 - ii) To recommend a different increase in fares
 - iii) Refuse any increase
- b) East Zone
 - i) To recommend a different increase in fares
 - ii) Refuse any increase
- c) Kettering Zone
 - i) To recommend the approval of the Central Taxis/Trade Proposal/Kettering Hackney proprietors proposed increase
 - ii) To recommend the approval of the Kings Kabs proposed increase
 - iii) To recommend the approval of the Burton Cabs/ Easy Cab/Kettering Hackney proprietors proposed increase
 - iv) To recommend a different increase in fares
 - v) Refuse any increase
- d) Wellingborough Zone
 - i) To recommend the approval of the WHCA proposed increase
 - ii) To recommend a different increase in fares
 - iii) Refuse any increase

288 Cannock Road Housing Development- Budget Amendment and Procurement Strategy

The Chair invited Cllr Jean Addison to address the Executive. Cllr Addison spoke briefly to enquire as to when development on the stalled Cannock Road Housing Development would recommence.

The Chair then asked Cllr Matthew Binley, the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up to introduce a report which sought approval to amend the project budget for the Cannock Road, Corby housing development following a full review of the project, cost plan and risk register. The report also sought approval to procure a principal contractor via an open tender process as well as to delegate

authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-up, in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions/actions to deliver the project.

Cllr Binley stated that the Cannock Road housing development was a scheme to convert a vacant commercial building into five new council homes in Corby specially designed to be accessible for disabled people, including a three bed home specifically designed for a family in need to be owned, managed, and maintained by the Council as part of its portfolio of Housing Revenue Account properties. The capital costs of the project would be covered over the longer-term by the rental income collected from the completed properties once occupied.

Following approval for the scheme from Corby Borough Council in 2019 and a contract awarded in 2020 for the construction of the homes, the appointed contractor had been liquidated in May 2021 resulting in a partly demolished building with no principal contractor to deliver the project. A full review of the project including an updated cost plan had identified that a budget of £1.49m would be required to deliver the project, with 40% of this funded from Right to Buy receipts. Due to the increase in the budget a full open tender process should be undertaken to allow a larger number of contractors and ensure that value for money was achieved.

It was anticipated that the technical design and award of contract would take approximately 20 weeks, with a further 52 week build programme assumed, although an exact programme to be agreed during the contract award process. It was hope that work could start on site in early 2023. It was noted that once complete, the development would increase the Council's supply of affordable and disability-accessible properties which would be exempt from the Right to Buy scheme to ensure this housing was retained to meet needs.

The Chair noted that Council was being requested to approve the budget virement element of the recommendations with Executive to approve recommendations b) and c).

Councillors Brackenbury and Howell spoke to welcome the recommencement of the development, understanding the reasoning behind the escalated costs from the originally approved contract. Councillors Howes and Pentland welcomed the positive environmental credentials of the proposed development.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive recommended that Full Council

- a) Approves that the budget for the Cannock Road project be increased to £1,490,000

That the Executive

- b) Approved the proposal to procure the project via a competitive open tender
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing,

Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults Communities and Wellbeing to take any decisions necessary to complete the project without the need to return to Executive.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To enable the delivery of the Cannock Road development, which has been paused since May 2021 and ongoing since 2018.
- To bring a redundant brownfield site in a residential area, which is currently partly demolished, back into use.
- To increase the supply of affordable rented housing available in North Northamptonshire, which meets the corporate objective of enabling safe and thriving places.
- To increase the supply of housing suitable for disabled people, which meets the corporate objective of helping people to live healthier, more active and fulfilled lives in North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered-

- Do nothing- this was discounted because it would not deliver any of the objectives set by the Council and would not deliver additional housing.
- Cease the development and sell the site- this was discounted because the site is required by the Council to deliver its existing programme of housing development, increase the supply of affordable housing and housing suitable for people with disabilities and enable spend of Right to Buy Receipts, which would otherwise have to be returned to the Government.
- Further pause the development and redesign the scheme to achieve lower per unit costs/increase rental income- this was discounted because it would not allow the provision of additional housing suitable for disabled people and would deny Family A the only feasible option of suitable housing. Family A were allocated this property in 2018 and have been waiting for the development to be delivered since that time. It would also require the project to be restarted as a new planning application would be required and all spend to date would be abortive cost.

289 First Homes Early Delivery Programme

The Chair invited Cllr Matthew Binley, the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up to introduce a report which sought to provide an outline of the Government's First Home scheme and requested that Executive note the officer decision taken under delegated authority to apply the national eligibility criteria, level of discount, income cap and price cap for First Homes being delivered in North Northamptonshire. Executive were also asked to approve the decision to apply discretionary local connection criteria to First Homes so that they were sold to first-time buyers with a local connection to North Northamptonshire and that this would apply to any future First Homes being delivered.

The Executive was also asked to delegate authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy to enter Deeds of Variation on the basis set out above to enable the delivery of additional First Homes, where deemed appropriate.

It was noted that First Homes were a type of affordable housing introduced into the National Planning Policy Framework on 28th June 2021. They comprised discounted market sale units which:

- a) must be discounted by at least 30% against the market value;
- b) be sold to households who meet the First Homes eligibility criteria;
- c) remain discounted and sold to eligible households in perpetuity by way of a restriction registered on the title at HM Land Registry in favour of the Council; and,
- d) cannot be sold for the first time at a price higher than £250,000 after the discount has been applied

The Council could set its own eligibility criteria, discount levels and income caps, however the decision to do so must not be arbitrary and must be implemented via the Local Plan-making process. The Council was therefore not permitted to divert from the national First Homes policy until the Local Plan was updated to include an adopted local policy on First Homes in North Northamptonshire.

To expedite the delivery of First Homes, developers had been invited to bid for a grant from Homes England under the First Homes Early Delivery Programme to meet the costs associated with First Homes being sold at 70% of the open market. Funding had been secured by Persimmon to provide six First Homes at Glenvale Park, Wellingborough. These homes were in addition to the affordable housing at the development secured via the Section 106 (S106) agreement. To secure the delivery of these six homes, a Deed of Variation was required to the existing S106 agreement to include the First Homes and the criteria that applied to them to ensure that the homes were legally protected as affordable homes in future, and that the relevant criteria would always be applied to any future sales.

It was noted that the Council could recover a £150 fee for each First Home sold to cover administration costs, although it was noted believed that this would cover the full costs of the work involved. There was a risk that increased demand for such properties could put pressure on Council resources.

Both Councillors Lawman and Brackenbury spoke to welcome the initiative, with the latter making reference to the work required to implement an updated Local Plan.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the officer decision taken under delegated authority to apply the national eligibility criteria, level of discount, income cap and price cap for First Homes being delivered in North Northamptonshire.

- b) Approved the decision to apply discretionary local connection criteria to First Homes so that they are sold to first-time buyers with a local connection to North Northamptonshire.
- c) Approved that the above will apply to any future First Homes being delivered under Homes England's First Homes Early Delivery Programme, and on any other First Homes delivered in North Northamptonshire. This will be the case until the Local Plan is updated to include any alternative First Homes policy for North Northamptonshire.
- d) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy to enter Deeds of Variation on the basis set out above to enable the delivery of additional First homes, where deemed appropriate.

Reason for Recommendation: The decision to enable the early delivery of First Homes will lead to an increase in the overall supply of affordable homes in North Northamptonshire and improve access to homeownership for local first-time buyers. Early delivery also provides the Council with an opportunity to pilot the legal and sales procedures for First Homes, ahead of their delivery through the planning system, and will help officers to refine this process and make any necessary adjustments or improvements prior to larger numbers of First Homes being delivered via Section 106 agreements.

Alternative Options Considered: The alternative option is to refuse requests to vary existing section 106 agreements to provide First Homes. Taking this approach was discounted as it would mean the Homes England grant being diverted to another local authority area and it would mean the loss of additional affordable homes for local people.

290 Family Hubs Model Programme

The Chair invited Cllr Jean Addison to address the meeting. Cllr Addison spoke favourably of Pen Green's Children Centre, Corby as a potential location as a Family Hub given its current structure and value to the community.

Cllr John McGhee was then invited to speak, noting that the award of grant funding was very beneficial for North Northamptonshire and also spoke positively of Pen Green as an existing internationally recognised centre. Cllr McGhee queried why a decision as to where to site hubs was not being considered by the Council's scrutiny function.

Phil Bromhall was asked to address the meeting and noted the tight deadlines to have the Family Hubs model programme mobilised and noted that Pen Green was well placed to become a prototype family hub, especially given its established partnership working and place in the community.

Anthony Lee attend and spoke to detail his positive experiences of Pen Green and requested the Executive look favourably on the centre when a decision was made as to where Family Hubs were to be sited.

The Chair then invited Cllr David Howes to introduce a report on behalf of Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills that sought to appraise Executive on successful confirmed funding allocations, spending criteria, milestones and expectations set for the Family Hubs and Start for Life transformation grant.

The Executive was also asked to delegate authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Service to distribute and administer the grant between 2022-2025 in accordance with the grant criteria.

Cllr Howes stated that the location of Family Hubs would be taken as a separate decision and was not a factor of the report before members, which was purely to mobilise allocation of grant funding. It was heard that a total of £996,000 of the grant funding was required to be spent before the end of the current financial year, with a further requirement to develop and submit the full three-year delivery plan by 31st December 2022, followed by publication of the Start for Life offer by 31st March 2023, as required within the criteria of the programme and grant conditions.

Both Cllrs Lawman and Pentland spoke to welcome the report and the associated grant funding.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the funding allocation under the Family Hubs and Start for Life grant which will be between £3.93m and £4.11m over the three-year period.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Service, to distribute the full grant amount over the next three years.
- c) Receive an annual report detailing distribution of the grant and progress on the delivery of the programme.
- d) Noted that needs analysis work will continue to be undertaken and delegates authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services the authority to determine the allocation of the prototype locality in accordance with the required timescale.

Reasons for Recommendation: This is being recommended due to the time sensitive nature of the grant deliverables and spend requirements within the criteria of the grant allocation. This means that the Council must make arrangements to spend £996k

before the end of the financial year, this money must be spent in accordance with the grant headings shown in the table under para 7.1.

To ensure member oversight, it is recommended that an annual review process is put into place with the Executive to provide assurances of the programmes deliverables and spend against the grant allocation. This will further support the implementation of the programme at the pace required.

Alternative Options Considered: That delegated authority is not granted in relation to grant allocation. This is not recommended as it will add delay in developing the programme at the pace required and the Council would lose the opportunity to enhance and co-ordinate services for families. Furthermore, the Council would lose the opportunity to spend the allocated funds within the short timescales which will impact on driving the required activity and reduce investment into the local area. Any unspent grant for the 2022/2023 allocation will have to be returned.

291 Procurement of Fuel for the Council Fleet

The Chair invited Lee Forster to address the meeting. Mr Forster spoke to note the lack of sustainable, green vehicle provision within the report, querying whether the Council was considering moving to electric vehicles as part of its fleet. Mr Forster also noted that the Council's fuel hubs were located in Kettering and Wellingborough and queried whether it was environmentally friendly for vehicles from other areas to travel there to refuel.

The Chair thanked Mr Forster for his comments before inviting Cllr Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought approval from the Executive to procure a new contract for the supply of fuel for the bulk tanks in the depots at Kettering and Wellingborough.

Cllr Lawman stated that the Council would champion use of electric vehicles for its fleet as soon as it became viable to do so and noted that use of an already established framework agreement to access one or more fuel supply companies would offer a flexible fuel supply accessing low carbon fuels.

Cllr Pentland spoke to note that the Council had a specific plan to reduce its fleet emissions, while Cllr Howell stated that it was important for the Council to obtain value for money for residents when considering how it procured fuel.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Confirmed the preferred procurement route of using an established framework agreement as set out paragraph 5.3 of the report;
- b) Delegated authority to procure and sign the necessary contracts to secure the fuel contract to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place and Economy.

Reasons for Recommendation

- The recommendation provides a cost-effective solution for the purchase of essential fuels and ensures the authority is compliant with its obligations under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's contract standing orders.
- The proposed option will provide a reliable fuel supply, providing reliable services for North Northamptonshire residents.
- The proposed framework route will allow flexibility to secure preferential fuel rates, including access to low carbon fuels should the Council choose to do so.

Alternative Options Considered: The only other realistic option would be to procure bulk orders via suppliers or rely on forecourt supplies. Neither of these options provide the cost benefits or greater security of supply presented via the recommended option.

292 Full Asylum Dispersal Model

The Chair invited Cllr Matthew Binley, Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up to introduce a report on behalf of Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing that sought to brief the Executive on the Government approach to Full Asylum Dispersal, on the recent consultation undertaken, the emerging regional model and on the Property Procurement (contingency hotel and private sector lease) arrangements being delivered in the Council area by SERCO.

Cllr Binley reported that in May 2022 the Government had announced a shift from an opt-in model for asylum dispersal to a Full Asylum Dispersal model where asylum seekers would be placed across all local authority areas due to the increase in the number of asylum seekers entering the country.

Although the Council had a limited direct role in asylum dispersal as the work was delivered by Government contractors, it was a key partner in a local multi-agency forum that would receive demographic data on how the dispersal model was operating and consider any impact on local communities and service delivery.

It was heard that the Government was providing funding of £3,500 per person for 2022-23 to councils for every asylum seeker accommodated in the council area to support them to fully integrate into communities. For North Northamptonshire Council the allocation would be 289 asylum seekers in dispersed accommodation by December 2023, subject to final review. To date the Council had been notified of five properties being progressed by SERCO for asylum dispersal.

Challenges faced by the Council relating to service pressures and recruitment of resettlement staff were outlined to the meeting.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the government's adoption of the Full Asylum Dispersal Strategy and the rationale for it.
- b. Noted the East Midlands model and approach for delivering the strategy in the region.
- c. Noted the role of North Northamptonshire Council in delivering the strategy in the Council area; and the approach Council Officers are taking to work with SERCO, the contract holder for Asylum Accommodation and Support Services across the North West, Midlands and East of England regions, on contingency accommodation (hotels) and property acquisitions (leases) in the private rented sector.
- d. Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions and/or actions required, including use of the funding, to support the dispersal and settlement, temporary or otherwise, of asylum seekers in North Northamptonshire.

Reasons for Recommendation: To ensure that the Council fulfils its obligations under the national Full Asylum Dispersal Strategy and works with SERCO and other partners to effectively support asylum seekers to integrate into local communities.

Alternative Options considered: There is no alternative as this is a national policy, although the Council has worked closely with the Regional Migration Partnership in developing the model for the region. If the Council did not fully engage with SERCO over the selection of contingency hotels and dispersal properties then there is a risk, as the decisions will stand regardless, of negative impacts on community cohesion, local service provision and successful integration of asylum seekers into local communities.

293 Raunds Library (Community Managed Library programme)

The Chair invited Cllr Helen Howell, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture & Tourism to introduce a report that sought to brief the Executive on the competitive process undertaken in July 2022 to determine the best organisation to take on the community management of Raunds Library and to seek approval to enter into a lease with the organisation with a reduction of 40% on the market rent in line with all other community managed libraries in North Northamptonshire.

Cllr Howell reported that following a final call for expressions of interest in May 2022, two organisations had expressed an interest in taking on the running of Raunds

Library as a community managed facility. Both organisations had submitted business cases and a competitive process was undertaken in July with the successful business plan submitted by Creating Tomorrow Multi-Academy Trust in partnership with Raunds Community Library Trust. A decision to proceed with handover had been approved by Executive in June under delegated authority.

It was noted that this was the final stage of a long process started under the former County Council and would result in a positive outcome for the future of Raunds Library with no service interruption for customers.

Cllr Howell thanked all those who had been involved in the process, including the trust and volunteers operating the service since 2018.

Cllrs Brackenbury, Pentland and Lawman spoke to welcome the report and its outcomes and looked forward to a continuation of the service for the people of Raunds.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved entering into a lease for the Raunds Library property with Creating Tomorrow Multi-Academy Trust at 40% reduction on the market rent in line with the community managed libraries that transferred under NCC.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member Sport, Leisure, Culture, Tourism in conjunction with the Executive Director, Adults, Communities and Wellbeing to take any action necessary to complete the lease arrangements.

Reason for Recommendations: The approval of this recommendation will enable the officers to proceed with the transfer of Raunds Library to be community managed, whilst maintaining the integrity of the Community Managed Library transfer programme as a whole and the duty of NNC to obtain best value.

Alternative Options Considered: The Council could choose not to enter into a lease at 40% reduction on the market rent, but this has been discounted as it would not be in keeping with the approach taken across the rest of the Community Managed libraries programme and could lead to significant reputational damage and the potential for community organisations to pull out of the process.

294 Waste Management 3 Year Plan (2022-2025)

The Chair invited Lee Forster to address the Executive. Mr Forster made reference to waste incinerators in the North Northamptonshire area and queried how waste incineration accorded with the Council's environmental pledges.

The Chair thanked Mr Forster for his attendance before inviting Cllr Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought Executive approval for the Council's Waste Service to undertake the action plan within the Waste Management Three Year Plan (2022-2025) that set out activities necessary to harmonise the systems designed to manage the increasing waste arisings, to align with new statutory burdens in respect of provision of recycling opportunities for materials such as food waste, to ensure appropriate future provision for facilities such as Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC), to engage new contracts and prepare for the direction of future waste services in North Northamptonshire.

The report also sought approval to commence Options Appraisals as set out in the Action Plan to inform future decisions, particularly in relation to the future of the HWRC service and waste and street cleaning services in the East Northamptonshire area and recommended commencing the procurement of the Council's future waste disposal contract.

Cllr Lawman noted that many of the Council's waste and recycling disposal and processing contracts were set to expire in 2025 and required re-tendering and rationalisation. This process would enable the Council to take account of new statutory burdens and as well as factor in the growth of housing locally. In order to do this, the Options Appraisals would be necessary to inform later decision-making to provide clarity for the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the Waste Management 3-Year Plan (2022-2025), to be the waste services plan attached at **Appendix A** to the report;
- b) Authorised options appraisals for the kerbside collection services and street-cleaning services in East Northamptonshire;
- c) Authorised appraisal of infrastructure and best delivery options for provision of Household Waste Recycling Centres;
- d) Commenced procurement of the Council's future waste disposal contract;
- e) Delegated to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with Executive Director for Place & Economy, Executive Director for Finance and the Executive Member for Finance, the authority to take any further decisions and/or actions required in connection with the procurement and award of the waste disposal contract, without the need to return to the Executive.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The recommended course of action allows the waste service to undertake projects that will improve the services for the communities of North Northamptonshire in a considered and methodical approach.
- Undertaking the options appraisals, and any subsequent procurements, is the most cost-effective way of ensuring new contracts for the Council's disposal and collection services are fit for purpose and achieving best value.
- This approach enables the Council to make informed decisions regarding its medium-term financial planning for its Waste Management services.
- This approach ensures the Council has legally procured and compliant contractors in place for its waste collections and disposal.

Alternative Options Considered: As the Waste Management 3-Year Plan sets out the direction for the waste service, the plan offers transparency to councillors/elected Members and members of the public as to the work the service will carry out in the coming years, identifying opportunities to engage with changes that will enhance our services and delivery. This includes the necessary procurement activities for the disposal and processing of waste and recycling. The alternative option is not having an agreed plan to direct the service development, which is not recommended.

The alternative to procuring a waste disposal contract would be for the Council to enter the waste disposal and processing sector either by building its own facility or developing a commercial relationship with another provider to build a facility on a joint venture basis. It is unlikely that these complex arrangements could be put in place by 2025, which is when the Council needs disposal arrangements in place, and it is therefore not recommended. If the Council wishes to pursue this route, it would be recommended that they develop this option in tandem with a view to implementing it at the end of the initial contract period of the new waste disposal contract.

295 Youth Justice Plan 2022-23

The Chair invited Cllr David Howes, Executive Member for Rural Communities and Localism to introduce a report on behalf of Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills which detailed the Council's statutory duty to publish an annual Youth Justice Plan providing specified information about the local provision of youth justice services. The Executive was requested to recommend to Council that the plan be adopted.

The meeting heard that the report covered performance for the period 2021/22 and provided details of service budgets, operational and strategic developments within the service and partnership, service structure and the Service Improvement Plan for 2022–2023.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Plan had been placed before Northamptonshire Youth Offending Service Management Board in August 2022, where it was approved.

RESOLVED

That Executive considered and endorsed the Youth Justice Plan and recommended its approval to Full Council

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To provide the Youth Offending Service with the strategic direction for their service area
- To accord with the policy of the Council, the Youth Justice Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and is therefore a matter for Council to approve.

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

296 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report 2021-22

The Chair introduced a report, the purpose of which was to present the annual letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman that detailed complaints that had been received as a final stage for complaints about Councils and social care after the Council's own complaints procedure had been exhausted.

It was noted that certain complaint investigations dated back several years covering the period of the Council's legacy authorities. Total complaint numbers had fallen from 91 against legacy authorities in 2020-21 to 55 in 2021-22. Details of individual cases and remedies agreed were outlined, with the meeting noting that in all cases the Council had been able to conclude complaints fairly.

The Chair stated the Executive looked forward to receiving the report for 2022-23 to understand how the Council had made a difference to the quality and outcomes of its residents.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the content and recommendations of the LGSCO's annual review letter, and the outcomes of its investigations completed in 2021-22 that relate to the Council.

Reason for Recommendation: To appraise the Executive of the annual review letter and relevant information.

Alternative Options Considered: It would not be considered good practice to not provide the annual Ombudsman report to the Executive and as such there are no alternative options to be considered.

297 Capital Programme Update 2022/23

The Chair introduced a report on behalf of Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation 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.

Four schemes were highlighted as per the report and recommendation below.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes to the capital programme:
 - a. Disabled Facilities Grant – to increase the capital budget available in 2022/23 for associated works and services to £2,561,759 in accordance with the grant award. An indicative sum of £1.9m was already included in the budget assumptions for 2022/23 and, therefore, this represents an increase of £0.662m.
 - b. Kingswood Urban Development - £86,900 increase to the capital budget funded through external contributions.
 - a. Housing Stores Project – virement of £162,820 to this scheme – funded from an existing capital budget underspend within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget.
 - b. Cannock Road Housing Development – virement of £454,000 to this scheme – funded from existing capital budget within the HRA capital budget.
- ii) Recommended to Council to approve the additional virement in support of the Cannock Road housing development as the total virement requested for this scheme, including previous transfers, exceeds £0.5m.

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

- To expand the capital budget available to support disabled facilities within homes.
- To replace and improve the skate park as part of Kingswood Urban Development.

- To improve the stores arrangements at Corby and Kettering depots through a new single system designed to hold appropriate stock levels to meet housing repair needs.
- To improve and expand the housing provision in North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered:

- For external funding (DSG and Kingswood Urban Development) - use of the funding is in line with the agreements, there is no alternative option proposed.
- By not approving the stores recommendation the Council would not be able to improve productivity in respect of housing repairs.
- There is not an alternative option for the Cannock Road housing development. This is an approved scheme that is already in progress.

298 Budget Forecast 2022/23 as at Period 4

In the absence of the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, the Chair again introduced a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the Council based on the Period 4 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 4 was a forecast overspend of £4.608m against the approved budget, an increase of £331,000 since the last report to Executive. It was reported that the main changes had arisen from inflationary cost pressures and a drop in the level of income, especially in regard to the Place and Economy directorate. The overall financial position was driven by the significant pressure of Northamptonshire Children's Trust current forecast overspend as a result of volatility in the placements market for looked-after children and increased transport costs, the cost to the Council being £3.489m.

Further budgetary pressures were highlighted across council service areas, the meeting specifically noting that rising utility costs had impacted budgets for street lighting and traffic signals. These overspends were being offset by a number of underspends from staffing budgets and disaggregation costs.

The meeting heard that the Council's Housing Revenue Account was currently forecasting a £335,000k underspend, although this did not take into account ongoing pay award negotiations that could result in an overspend should other factors remain unchanged.

It was noted that elected members and officers were working exceptionally hard to identify opportunities to mitigate budgetary impacts while delivering front line services. The full impact of the mini-budget announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the previous week had yet to be fully understood.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the Council's forecast outturn position for 2022/23 as summarised in Section 4, alongside the further analysis, risks and other considerations as set out in Section 5 and Section 6 of the report.
- b) Noted the assessment of the current deliverability of the 2022/23 savings proposals in **Appendix A**.

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2022/23 as at Period 4 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 2022/23 and makes recommendations for the Executive to note the current budgetary position as such there are no specific choices within the report.

299 Urgent Items

It was reported that there were no urgent items of business to be transacted.

300 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers, informed members of the press and public that the remaining business for the meeting would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information and he was therefore proposing that the press and public be excluded in accordance with the provisions of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

RESOLVED:- That the press and public be excluded from the meeting in order that consideration could be given to the following item of business which was exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:-

- Item 19 – Knuston Hall

301 Knuston Hall

The Chair invited Cllr Jon-Paul Carr to address the meeting. Cllr Carr referenced the longevity of adult learning operations at the site and noted the beneficial impact that the site had offered prior to its closure. A query was raised as to how the impact on users of the site was measured and the potential for alternative future uses of the site. Cllr Carr concluded that it was positive that ward members would be consulted as part of the marketing of the site.

The Chair then invited the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets Cllr Graham Lawman to introduce a report that sought to advise the Executive on options for the future use of Knuston Hall and to seek a resolution in that regard.

Cllr Lawman provided an overview of the facilities at the site, noting that it had formerly operated as an adult learning residential college prior to closure as part of the Government response to the COVID19 pandemic. It had briefly opened in 2021 with heavily restricted guest numbers until it closed again in January 2022, prompting a review of the building, the business operations, and potential alternative uses.

Members considered potential future uses for the building and discussed marketing of the site.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the preparation and launch of a marketing campaign to offer the site for sale on the open market.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel & Assets in consultation with the Assistant Director of Assets & Environment to authorise the completion of the land sale and finalise sale terms.

Reasons for Recommendations

- Knuston Hall is a Grade II listed heritage asset, which is currently run as a residential adult learning centre within the Assets & Environment service. It has, until recently, provided conference facilities and short courses. Revenue investment is required in the hall which combined with a limited market demand has meant that the Hall's current use is no longer viable as an asset of the Council.
- As a Grade II listed heritage asset, the Hall is protected through planning, associated heritage land and property policy. The Council will, therefore, as the Local Planning Authority continue to regulate development of the site.
- The asset requires investment and, without a viable local authority use, it is not considered appropriate to invest public funds.
- The Council supports Chester House Estate, which is less than three miles away from Knuston Hall, and this could provide an alternative location for conferences supported by the Hall with accommodation located close to the Estate.
- There is opportunity to redeploy the staff employed at Knuston Hall to suitable alternative employment within the Council, following a consultation process; a redundancy situation does not therefore arise.
- Whilst the council provides an Adult Learning service as part of its core business, the residential service provided at Knuston Hall is separate to this. Running a hotel service is not part of the Council's core business

Alternative options considered:

- To use the site for alternative Council uses, such as a public care home. The Hall does not comply with the regulations for such uses and has, limited development options imposed by the heritage status
- The site has limited infill residential development opportunity. It is not suitable for Council housing use.
- The site could be continued to be operated as a residential learning centre, under the current business model, however, as detailed in the report and appendices, this would require significant upfront and ongoing investment in the building and the business model, which is not considered an appropriate use of public funds.
- Options have been considered for alternative Council uses but without expending substantial public funds the Council can only sustain a limited number of heritage assets and without a viable use; it is not in the public interest to commit funding to Knuston Hall.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 12.58pm