

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

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

Present:-

Members

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

Also in attendance – Councillors Keli Watts, Anne Lee, Lyn Buckingham, Dorothy Maxwell, Robin Carter, William Colquhoun, Mike Tebbutt and Jean Addison

385 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Chair of the Scrutiny Commission, Cllr Wendy Brackenbury.

386 Minutes of the Meetings Held on 12th January 2023

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

387 Members' Declarations of Interest

A personal and prejudicial interest was declared by Cllr Scott Edwards in relation to Agenda Item 6 – Security Services Contract. Cllr Edwards left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on this item.

A personal and prejudicial interest was declared by Cllr Graham Lawman in relation to Agenda Item 7 – Concessionary Travel Reimbursement in 2023/24. Cllr Lawman left the room for the duration of the debate and voting on this item. Cllr Lawman also declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 – Determination of Admission Arrangements for Local Authority Maintained (Community and Voluntary Controlled) Schools in North Northamptonshire for the 2024 Intakes.

388 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

It was reported that there were requests to address the meeting as set out below:

Agenda Item	Speakers
Item 5 – Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 9 – December 2022)	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell & Anne Lee
Item 6 – Security Services Contract	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell & William Colquhoun
Item 7 - Concessionary Travel Reimbursement in 2023/24	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 8 - Public Health & NHSE Integrated Sexual Health and HIV services	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 9 - The Former Grange Methodist Church, Stamford Rd, Kettering	Cllrs Lyn Buckingham, Anne Lee, Robin Carter & William Colquhoun
Item 11 - Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled North Northamptonshire schools for 2024	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 12 - Local Authority Housing Fund (Refugee Resettlement)	Cllrs Dorothy Maxwell & Lyn Buckingham
Item 13 - Capital Outturn 2022/23 – Draft Outturn as at Period 9	Cllrs Lyn Buckingham & Anne Lee

Cllr Dorothy Maxwell opted not to speak in relation to Agenda Items 5 and 6.

389 Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 9 - December 2022)

The Chair invited Cllr Anne Lee to address the Executive. Cllr Lee spoke to query the percentage of the eligible population receiving an NHS Health-check, noting the importance of these checks. Cllr Lee also made reference to the increase in breastfeeding rates due to the cost-of-living crisis and requested that an educational campaign be undertaken to promote breastfeeding.

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

Cllr Bunday noted that staff vacancy data previously reported did not accurately reflect the current position within the Council. As such, the data relating to vacancies had been removed from this and future reports while a review was undertaken. The review was likely to take around six months and would not impact staffing budgets or the ability to recruit where required.

Cllr Bunday reported that Freedom of Information request response rates had improved but remained below target, with figures relating to data breaches also showing a positive trend. Registrations of deaths within five calendar days had fallen, however this reporting period partially covered the Christmas period, and the Council was reliant on informants making contact. Registration of births within 42 days had

improved. The meeting heard that customer complaints had reduced, and the Council continued to see a low number of complaint escalations. It was reported that 98.6% of Council invoices were paid within the 30-day target.

It was noted that the Period 9 report indicated a positive picture of Council performance and an encouraging direction of travel. Over half the indicators were performing above target, with 27% below target. Performance had improved across 34 indicators, with 15 deteriorating since the previous Period 8 report.

Cllr Helen Howell responded to Cllr Lee's queries to note the huge pressure that GP surgeries were under regarding service provision. It was anticipated that alternative avenues of health-check provision may start to show beneficial outcomes going forward. The number of health-checks offered had increased, but take-up remained low. Cllr Howell also noted that education regarding breastfeeding was delivered to new mothers through health visitors and Strong Start, however more work needed to be undertaken to improve breastfeeding figures.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the performance of indicators relating to the Place and Economy sector, particularly those pertaining to the planning service.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 9 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 9, 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.

390 Security Services Contract

(Cllr Scott Edwards left the room prior to consideration and voting on this item)

The Chair invited Cllr William Colquhoun to address the Executive. Cllr Colquhoun queried the timescales involved in procuring a single Building Security Services provider and whether any consideration would be given to the staffing situation of the new contractor to ensure terms and conditions for their staff would be fair for all.

The Chair thanked Cllr Colquhoun for his contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, Cllr Graham Lawman to introduce a report that sought permission to procure a single Building Security Services provider to secure a cost-effective and consistent service across North Northamptonshire Council.

The meeting heard that current security arrangements were discharged through five separate contracts totalling £370,000 per annum. The largest of these contracts was due to expire in March 2023 increasing the need to move to a harmonised and consistent approach that offered value for money and met the needs of current and future service users. Interim arrangements would be made with current service providers to cover the procurement period which was anticipated to last approximately six months.

It was noted that procuring a single Building Security Services contract would offer a number of benefits, allowing the Council scope to specify requirements including investment and systems expectations while offering flexibility and ensuring as many companies as possible had the opportunity to bid for the contract, including local Northamptonshire based firms. Any contract awarded would allow the Council oversight of the terms and conditions for staff employed by the provider.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Confirmed the preferred procurement route of procuring a single Building Security Services provider through a dedicated competitive tendering exercise to deliver all services across North Northamptonshire
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel, and Assets in consultation with the Assistant Director for Assets & Environment to:
 - i. finalise the scope of services, and the preferred service standards to be specified
 - ii. ensure scalability and willingness for the contractor to invest are included as key requirements
 - iii. commence the procurement process and award the contract.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The recommendation provides a cost-effective solution, which can be deployed to suit the changes in service need and delivery throughout the contract period.
- The proposed option will provide a reliable security service and provision to monitor contractor performance, providing quality services for North Northamptonshire residents.
- The proposed framework route will allow flexibility to add and remove the buildings covered by the contract as the Council's estate is reviewed and evolves over the coming years.

Alternative Options Considered - A number of alternative options were considered by both operational managers and procurement colleagues, including building an in-house team, using an established Security Services framework agreement or incorporating Security Services within a wider Facilities Management (FM) contract.

The preferred option was deemed to offer the best value for money to the Council in terms of access to providers, risk and overall value for money.

(Cllr Scott Edwards returned to the meeting following the conclusion of voting on this item)

391 Concessionary Travel Reimbursement in 2023/24

(Cllr Graham Lawman left the room prior to consideration and voting on this item)

The Chair welcomed Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell made reference to the start time of concessionary bus travel and queried whether this could be made earlier, the importance of rural bus services as well as current funding levels for concessionary travel.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before Cllr Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation introduced a report that sought agreement for the arrangements for reimbursing bus operators for concessionary bus travel in 2023-24.

Cllr Bunday stated that the Council had a statutory duty to reimburse bus operators for free travel by eligible older persons and disabled persons pass holders under the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme. It was heard that since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, concessionary bus travel had been significantly below pre-Covid levels. Consequently, the Government was requesting the Council to continue reimbursement at pre-Covid levels through the 2023/24 financial year.

In North Northamptonshire, operators were reimbursed at 100% of pre-Covid levels until 30th September 2022 and had since been reimbursed at 90% of pre-Covid levels. It is recommended that, subject to Parliament approving the necessary secondary legislation, reimbursement continues at 90% of pre-Covid levels until 31st March 2024 to provide consistent funding for operators to minimise the likelihood of further reductions to bus services.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive agreed to reimburse bus operators for concessionary travel at 90% of pre-Covid levels until 31st March 2024 (this is subject to the passage of appropriate secondary legislation through Parliament)

Reason for Recommendation – To support bus operators in North Northamptonshire following the decline in passenger numbers caused by the Covid pandemic with the intention of securing current bus provision.

Alternative Options Considered – The Council could provide a lower level of concessionary reimbursement than proposed; however, this would be likely to lead to a reduction in the level of bus service for North Northamptonshire communities. The Council could provide a 100% reimbursement based on pre-

Covid levels. This would reverse the recent reduction to 90% and is considered to set an unrealistic expectation that patronage levels (and related funding) will reach 100% of pre-Covid levels in the foreseeable future. It is, therefore, not recommended. Except for the small number of subsidised services provided under contract to the Council, the level of service provided is a matter for the commercial bus operators and not a decision which the Council can make or directly influence.

(Cllr Graham Lawman returned to the meeting following the conclusion of voting on this item)

392 Public Health & NHSE Integrated Sexual Health and HIV Services

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell spoke to query whether specialist nurses were in education settings providing specialist advice on sexual matters and contraception and noted the importance of confidentiality in this regard.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Helen Harrison to introduce a report that sought to update the Executive on the Northamptonshire Integrated Sexual Health Service contract and sought approval to extend for two years in line with the current option to extend clause in the contract.

Responding to Cllr Maxwell's query, Cllr Harrison stated that the service being discussed did not cover education in schools, although children received education regarding sex and relationships in these settings.

The meeting heard that the Council currently had a contract in place with NHS England for the delivery of mandatory sexual health and HIV services funded through the Public Health ring-fenced grant. The current service was provided by Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT), GPs and pharmacies across the county as an open access service, with the Council also holding the commissioning responsibility for the service on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council.

It was noted that the contract had commenced in April 2019 and was due to expire on 31st March 2023. However, the contract had a two-year option to extend, ending the current arrangements on 31st March 2025. Extending the contract for a further two years would incur a total cost of £18.512m, with the Council's contribution being £4.655m as per the agreed contribution agreement.

Cllr Harrison reported that work had commenced to review areas requiring further development and improvement and to refresh the current performance monitoring schedule, with service improvement plans introduced to closely monitor for improvement in activity. Evaluation frameworks would also be introduced to measure the impact of the service, benchmarked against regional and statistical neighbours.

It was noted that HIV treatment services were currently delivered by NHFT, in full alignment with the Integrated Sexual Health Services commissioned by the Council. Any disruption of this existing alignment was expected to increase costs, impact on recruitment and retention of high-quality clinical staff and reduce accessibility for

service users. Agreement to extend the current contract would allow the Council and the Northamptonshire Integrated Care system to review the profile of need for the service, as well as to creatively look at delivery options to develop a service that best suited the population requiring it.

Both Cllrs Pentland and Brackenbury spoke in favour of the recommendations noting the importance of supporting those requiring access to the service and the opportunity to review the existing offer in the additional time afforded by agreeing an extension to the contract.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Director of Public Health and the Executive Director of Finance and Performance to extend a Section 75 agreement (or equivalent public sector agreement) for up to two years with partners, NHS England, to jointly commission the Integrated Sexual health and HIV service from April 2023 – March 2025.
- b) Agreed to extend the current Northamptonshire Integrated Sexual Health and HIV contract with Northamptonshire NHS Foundation Trust (NHFT)

Reason for Recommendations:

- The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective and likely to match future services with the changing profile of North Northamptonshire's population
- Accords with legislation or the policy of the Council
- Enables development of the previous decisions of Northamptonshire County Council in September 2018,
- An extension of the NISHH contract with NHFT will provide time to undertake a needs assessment and benchmarking of the service and introduce new KPI's and targets required to meet the new and emerging needs of the population, identified through this process

Alternative Options Considered – The options available to North and West Northamptonshire are as follows:

- a) Extend the current contract with NHFT. This will provide time to undertake a needs assessment and a benchmarking exercise to better understand the emerging needs of the local population. The KPI's and targets would be updated through a contract variation to ensure the service is fit for purpose and delivering value for money while meeting local need. This will also give time to understand how services have changed and how the learning can be further used to inform future re-commissioning of the new sexual health service in 2025 in line with the wider transformation and strategic aims.

Give time for the current Provider to reset and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- b) Do not extend the contract, and reprocure the service – the risk is that this would not be completed in time, and risk service disruption. The transformation and strategic ambitions are still being refined and the risk is that the intentions may not be fully embedded in the new service design for 2023.

393 Housing Development – Former Grange Methodist Church site, Kettering

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham spoke to welcome the report and the proposed development that would bring social housing to the fore and potentially be the start of an ongoing development programme. Cllr Buckingham referenced the proposed budgetary increase, noting the uplift in construction costs due to a number of external pressures.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Anne Lee to speak. Cllr Lee raised concerns at the delays to commencement of the development and noted that the site had attracted anti-social behaviour during the time it had remained derelict. Although Cllr Lee stated her support for the recommendations, concerns were raised regarding the increase in costs and the apparent lack of biodiversity in green spaces surrounding the development.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lee for her contribution and invited Cllr Robin Carter to address the meeting. Cllr Carter fully supported the recommendations and requested that consideration be given to the sustainability of the development, with solar panels and electric vehicle charging points potentially forming part of the new homes. Cllr Carter queried whether the appointed contractor would have a fixed price for construction as part of the awarded contract.

The Chair thanked Cllr Carter for attending before inviting Cllr William Colquhoun to speak. Cllr Colquhoun also welcomed the report but queried the delay in implementation, whether the proposed budget would prove to be sufficient and whether the biodiversity net gain assessment referenced in the report had been completed.

The Chair thanked the speakers for their input before inviting the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up, Cllr Matt Binley to introduce a report that sought approval to amend the project budget for the Former Grange Methodist Church, Kettering housing development and further sought to procure a principal contractor via an open procedure tender process, subject to planning approval for the site.

Cllr Binley reported that a budget increase of £313,000 was required in addition to the £1.86m approved by the Executive of the former Kettering Borough Council in January 2021 to be able to complete the redevelopment, taking the total required to £2.173m, subject to planning approval. The budgetary increase was required following the redesign of the site to meet planning requirements and to be able to cover general build cost inflation since January 2021.

It was noted that the development would bring back into use a brown field site in a “left behind” area that had become a focal point for crime and anti-social behaviour. Proceeding with the development would reduce such activity in the local area.

The meeting heard that the development would consist of eight new affordable homes that would become part of the Council’s Housing Revenue Account (HRA), four 1-bedroom and two 2-bedroom bungalows, plus two 3-bedroom houses. Six of the eight homes would be accessible for disabled tenants, comprising four disabled access bungalows and two specially designed 3-bedroom houses with disabled access to the ground floor. It was noted that properties of this type were difficult to secure via private sector developers and whilst costs for building such properties was higher, they would be constructed to an Energy Performance Certificate rating of B or above.

It was reported that a construction contractor would be secured via an open tender process ensuring greater competition. The projected timeframe anticipated an expected practical completion by September 2024. Sufficient budget was available within the HRA housing development capital budget, with 40% of the funds for the project will coming from Right to Buy receipts. The capital costs would be recovered through the property rentals.

In response to queries raised by speakers, Cllr Binley stated that officers would be working to ensure there was sufficient biodiversity and greenery surrounding the development and that the proposed budget would cover the build costs, incorporating as it did a contingency, potential risks having been considered. The delay to commencement of the project was noted as stemming from an objection received to the initial planning application for the site.

Cllrs Harrison, Edwards, Pentland, Lawman and Bunday spoke to welcome the report, noting the importance of delivering specialist, disabled-accessible housing whilst improving a derelict site that had caused issues for local residents. Councillors also welcomed the opportunity for local builders to potentially apply for the construction tender as well as the sustainability of the development.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the amendment of the budget to £2,173,000 for the Former Grange Methodist Church, Stamford Rd, Kettering - Housing Development
- b) Noted that the construction works will then be procured via an open procedure tender process
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing to take any decisions necessary to complete the project including decisions to conclude procurement and award contracts

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To enable the delivery of the housing development.
- To bring back into use a redundant brownfield site in a residential area, which is currently subject to vandalism and attracts anti-social behaviour.
- The Avondale Grange ward within which the proposed development is located has been designated as a “left behind” area and in need of additional investment under the Government’s levelling up agenda.
- 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 would not deliver any of the objectives set by the Council and would not deliver additional affordable housing.
- Cease the development and sell the site- not recommended 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- not recommended because it would not allow the provision of additional housing suitable for disabled people. 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.

394 Highways and Transport Block Funding 2022-25

The Chair invited Cllr Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought to inform the Executive of the grants received from the Department for Transport (DfT) for infrastructure improvements and to confirm the allocation of spend on the highways network in accordance with the priorities laid out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan.

Cllr Lawman reported that a three-year grant funding allocation had been announced by Government in February 2022 with the report before members covering the second annual tranche. It was noted that figures relating to Integrated Transport Block Funding had been adjusted from that provided in 2022 due to a DfT miscalculation. Highways improvement schemes were based on need, with input from officers, residents and stakeholders taken into account.

Cllr Pentland spoke to note the importance of the Integrated Transport Block Funding in relation to walking and cycling networks as a priority for local residents.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Noted and accepted the revised allocation of Integrated Transport Block funding of £1.364m in 2022/23.
- ii) Noted and accepted the receipt of the government grants totalling £9.768m per annum in 2023/24 made up of the following:
 - Highways Maintenance Block needs element - £3.735m
 - Highways Maintenance Block incentive element (subject to confirmation) - £0.934m
 - Potholes Fund - £3.735m
 - Integrated Transport Block Funding - £1.364m
- iii) Approved the distribution of spending of the grants on maintaining and upgrading the highways network as set out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan.

Reason for Recommendation – To support delivery of the priorities laid out in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan by utilisation of the government grant to support and maintain the Council’s Highways infrastructure and transport network.

Alternative Options Considered: Options would include not spending the money and allowing DfT to recoup it. Alternatively, the Council could choose to spend the money on schemes that are not a priority in line with the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan

(Following the conclusion of voting on this item, a brief comfort break was taken at 11.05am)

395 Determination of Admission Arrangements for Local Authority Maintained (Community and Voluntary Controlled) Schools in North Northamptonshire for the 2024 Intakes

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to speak. Cllr Maxwell made reference to the need to assist gifted children and those from less affluent backgrounds in accessing the school of their choice even if it was outside their catchment area, with particular reference to transport costs.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her comments before inviting the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, Cllr Scott Edwards to introduce a report that asked the Executive to discharge its statutory duty to consider and determine admission arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled North Northamptonshire schools for 2024 intakes and the Primary and Secondary Co-ordinated Schemes for the 2024 intakes.

Cllr Edwards, in response to Cllr Maxwell, stated that it would not be possible for the Council to pay transport fees for children applying to schools outside their catchment area, noting that there were charities that may offer bursaries for such travel.

Cllr Edwards reported that the admissions arrangements remained unaltered as those published for 2023, but the Council had a legal duty to consider and approve them. Reference was made to Appendix A of the report which detailed how the admissions process operated and provided admissions criteria for schools in North Northamptonshire. It was heard that this document should be circulated to all elected members to help assist with enquiries from the public.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to echo the need for admissions criteria to be made widely available to provide better understanding of the admissions process.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Agreed the Admission Arrangements as detailed in **Appendix A** of the report
- ii) Agreed the two Co-ordinated Schemes for the 2024 intakes as detailed in **Appendix B** and **Appendix C** of the report

Reasons for Recommendations: It is the duty of admission authorities to determine the admission arrangements for all their schools annually. It is the duty of local authorities to formulate and publish a co-ordinated scheme for the admission of pupils to all schools in the area.

Alternative Options Considered: All the above are statutory requirements therefore there are no alternative options available.

396 Local Authority Housing Fund (Refugee Resettlement)

The Chair invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell spoke to welcome the report and the support being offered to refugees and queried whether the Council would receive back the 40% match-funding it needed to contribute towards the cost of purchasing housing and whether these houses would later form part of the Council's housing stock once they were no longer required. Cllr Maxwell stated the importance of housing being near to employment and amenities, queried funding for furniture and household items and how additional staffing would be resourced.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her comments before inviting Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham also welcomed the report and queried the impact of repurposing funding from the Homeless Prevention Service given the need of the homeless community.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her input before inviting the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up, Cllr Matt Binley to introduce a report that sought approval for the Council to enter into an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities to acquire 30 homes during 2023-2024 to deliver additional housing for refugees. The report also sought approval to repurpose capital funding already committed to the Homelessness Prevention programme to enable the Council to provide the required match funding against the Government grant for this programme.

The meeting heard that the Council had committed to supporting ten Afghan families in bridging hotels and sponsorship placements for Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn country. Families had struggled to move out of bridging hotels due to the size of the families and some sponsorships had ended resulting in the use of more expensive temporary nightly paid accommodation.

Cllr Binley reported that of the 374 Ukrainian guests that went into 229 sponsorship homes, only 181 guests remained due to the remainder either returning home, moving out of the area, having made their own arrangements or been supported into the private rented sector. Cllr Binley thanked all those sponsors who had invited those fleeing war into their homes.

Details of the funding involved in the proposal, including the Council's contribution, was outlined to the meeting that noted the total budget for the purchase of 30 properties would be £6.965m. These properties would be added to the Council's temporary accommodation stock and comprise two 1-bed, twenty 2-bed, four 3-bed and four 4-bed properties.

It was heard that properties would be sourced on the open market and the Council would also look to buy back any suitable ex-Right to Buy properties which were subject to first refusal. The property purchases would be focused in the towns of Kettering, Corby, Wellingborough and Rushden to ensure families were located near to local amenities. Any properties purchased from developers would not be counted towards their Section 106 affordable homes allocations.

In response to queries raised by speakers, Cllr Binley noted that the purchased housing may form part of the Council's own housing stock in future, but this possibility would be explored at a future date. Staffing resources would be funded with a mix of Council and Government funding and match funding for the purchases was being utilised from the Homeless Prevention programme as this fund was not under pressure due to the sterling work of the Council's Housing Options team and, although being repurposed, was still being used for temporary accommodation purposes.

Cllr Helen Harrison welcomed the report, noting that the purchase of the properties would reduce the stress on the Council's homeless service. Details of Government funding to offer wraparound services for refugees would be submitted to the next meeting of the Executive.

Cllr Graham Lawman spoke to welcome the report and stated that it would be positive to utilise new build homes through developers to allow for suitable support networks to be localised.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved that the Council enters into an agreement with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to acquire 30 homes during 2023-2024 to deliver additional housing for refugees.
- b) Approved the proposal to repurpose £3.711m capital funding already committed to the Homelessness Prevention programme to enable North Northamptonshire Council to provide the required match funding against the central government grant for this programme.
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing to take any decisions and actions necessary to complete the programme.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To ensure the recent humanitarian refugee schemes (Afghan and Ukraine), provide sufficient longer-term accommodation to those they support.
- To mitigate the increased pressures on the Local Authority's homelessness and social housing resources which arise as sponsorship / family placements / bridging accommodation arrangements end, by increasing the provision of affordable housing to those in the cohort who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in bridging accommodation.
- To increase the overall supply of affordable rented housing available in North Northamptonshire, which meets the corporate objective of enabling safe and thriving places.

Alternative Options Considered-

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

397 Capital Outturn 2022-23 – Draft Outturn as at Period 9

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to speak. Cllr Buckingham noted the apparent lack of budget for works associated with waterways in North Northamptonshire and stated that many were in need of investment.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Anne Lee to address the Executive. Cllr Lee echoed comments regarding funding for waterways capital projects. Cllr Lee also raised concerns regarding ongoing works relating to the Alfred East Gallery and Museum (Cornerstone Project) in Kettering and extensive repairs required to the roof and lack of Wi-Fi functionality.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lee for her contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the provisional capital outturn position for 2022/23 as at Period 9, including requests to rephrase scheme expenditure profiles. The report also detailed the latest capital budgets for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, including new schemes which had been approved since 1st April 2022.

In response to the queries raised by speakers, Cllr Bunday noted that there was a modest budget for waterways funding. Cllr Bunday also noted the issues at the Cornerstone Project and stated that funding would need to be identified for the roof repairs required.

Cllr Bunday reported that of the £63.8m estimated slippage/underspend to the General Fund Capital Programme, £43.8m of the underspend related to schemes that had been reviewed or reprofiled into the Capital Programme or Development Pool for 2023/24, resulting in a revised estimated variance as at Period 9 of £20m.

Details of schemes completed or in progress were highlighted to the meeting, with a focus on those with grant funding to ensure that any grant terms and conditions were met to minimise the potential risk of repayment and/or loss of grant.

The outturn for the HRA Capital Programme showed a revised budget for 2022/23 of £28.9m, including slippage from 2022/23 of £15.6m. There had been no further approvals since budget setting. The outturn was showing a spend of £11.8m, representing an underspend of £17.1m compared to budget which would be reviewed and reprofiled considering the latest position. A significant portion of the underspend related to delays in contractual arrangements.

Cllr Helen Howell, responding Cllr Lee, noted that Kettering Library was not included in the original scope of works for the Cornerstone Project and officers were working hard to address the issues raised with roof repair funding streams being explored.

Cllr Brackenbury and Lawman spoke to note that the Environment Agency and Anglian Water were the responsible bodies for the upkeep of waterways in North Northamptonshire.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the draft capital outturn position as at period 9 for the General Fund (GF) Capital Programme and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2022/23.
- b. Noted the new schemes that have been approved since 1st April 2022.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- This is in line with the Council's constitution and financial regulations in relation to governance.

Alternative Options Considered: This report is for noting and alternative options are not proposed.

398 Capital Programme Update 2022/23

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

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

RESOLVED

KEY DECISIONS

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes into the capital programme:
 - a. The Grange Housing development - virement of £313k from the Housing Development capital programme for 2023/24.
 - b. Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) (Refugee Resettlement) – budget approval for £3.234m in 2023/24, which is to be funded from the DLUHC LAHF grant.
 - c. Integrated Transport Block Funding – budget reduction in line with revised funding allocations from £1.551m to £1.364m for 3 years from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

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

- To support the delivery of housing provisions across North Northamptonshire.
- To provide access to temporary accommodation across North Northamptonshire, helping to meet the priorities of humanitarian schemes announced by DLUHC, particularly in relation to the Afghan and Ukraine refugee resettlement programme.

Alternative Options Considered:

- As all the schemes in this report are grant funded/S106 funded, the use of the funding is in line with the agreement, so there is no alternative option proposed in this report.
- Where schemes are over £500k, individual reports are presented elsewhere on the agenda that set out the wider options that were considered before reaching the proposed schemes identified for grant funding/S106 funding.

399 Budget Forecast 2022/23 as at Period 9

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation introduce a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the Council based on the Period 9 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 9 was a forecast overspend of £5.242m, a favourable movement of £510,000 since the last report to Executive. It was reported that the main pressures included a number of vacant posts in Children's Services being filled by agency staff to allow continuity of service, and the ongoing overspend of the Children's Trust totalling £12.653m and showing an increase of £900,000 since the last reporting period. The cost to the Council of this overspend was £5.588m.

The meeting heard that additional rental income of £290,000 had been received, alongside a grant for subsidised bus services totalling £199,000. Interest receivable was £1.1m above the amount budgeted for and a further £100,000 saving had been identified in regard to the Internal Audit service.

Cllr Bunday reported that the Housing Revenue Account had a current overspend totalling £154,000, the main pressure being the recent pay award.

It was noted that although the Council maintained reserves to call on for any overspend remaining, it continued to look to achieve in-year mitigations in the first instance. The impact of inflation and changes within demand-led services were an ongoing challenge as the Council continued to seek to balance its finances whilst maintaining services for its most vulnerable residents.

Cllr Harrison spoke to note the excellent work achieved in Adult Services by managing to deliver a balanced budget and in-year savings while facing an increase in demand-led services. Cllr Harrison offered her thanks to the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing and the Finance Team in this regard.

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** of the report.

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2022/23 as at Period 9 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.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 11.33 am