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Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 9.00 am on Thursday 22nd December, 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 Graham Lawman
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Harriet Pentland

Also in attendance – Councillors John McGhee, Lyn Buckingham, Dorothy Maxwell, Peter McEwan and Mike Tebbutt

342 Apologies for absence

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

343 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 10th November 2022

RESOLVED that: The Executive agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2022 as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to a minor addition to the Declarations of Interest relating to Cllr Pentland.

344 Members' Declarations of Interest

A personal interest was declared by Cllr Harriet Pentland relating to a number of agenda items having attended meetings where the items in question had previously been discussed.

A personal interest was declared by Cllr Graham Lawman relating to Agenda Item 6c, specifically the Development Pool item regarding the proposed expansion of Sir Christopher Hatton Secondary School.

345 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	Speakers
Item 5 – Performance Indicator Report	Cllr John McGhee
Item 6 – Draft Budget 2023-24 and MTFP	Cllr John McGhee Cllr Mark Pengelly, Cllr Lyn Buckingham (6B - HRA)
Item 11 – Planning Advisory Service Peer Review	Cllr Mark Pengelly
Item 12 - Corby Town Fund – Multi-use Building	Cllr Mark Pengelly

Cllr Mark Pengelly was not in attendance at the meeting and consequently did not speak on Items 6, 11 and 12.

346 Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 7 - October 2022)

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr John McGhee to address the Executive. Cllr McGhee queried extra resources allocated in regard to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulation requests and whether these resources were temporary or permanent. Cllr McGhee offered his congratulations regarding Council invoices being paid on time, noting the importance of this issue. A final query regarding agency staff use and total spend was made by Cllr McGhee.

The Chair thanked Cllr McGhee for his 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.

Picking up on the comment of Cllr McGhee, Cllr Bunday reported that over 97% of Council invoices were paid within the target of 30 days. A new performance indicator had been added at the request of Cllr Matthew Binley detailing the percentage of housing rent collected, currently being 91.11%. The percentage of Environmental Information Regulation Requests completed within the specified target time had fallen, resulting in additional resource being provided to rectify this position. Cllr Bunday also referenced low figures for data breaches, the number of customer complaints upheld and Local Government Ombudsman complaints made against the Council.

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to welcome new performance indicators relating to the Council's Carbon Management Plan and Cllr Matthew Binley thanked officers for their positive work in regard to tackling the number of households living in temporary accommodation.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 7 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 7, 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.

347 Draft Budget 2023-24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Proposals

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr John McGhee to address the meeting. Cllr McGhee noted his disappointment in the budgetary pressures associated with the Children’s Trust and called for the Council to lobby Government in regard to changes made to the level of Business Rate retention due to the likely impact on the Council going forward.

The Chair then invited the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the Draft Revenue Budget for 2023-24 and the indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council and sought approval from the Executive to commence consultation on the draft budget. It was noted that, if approved, the consultation process would run until 27th January 2023 and would provide residents, local partners and other stakeholders with the opportunity to review the proposed budget and provide feedback. The draft budget would also be presented to the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for feedback.

The meeting heard that, taking into account the comments from the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and the wider consultation response, the Executive would consider the final draft budget proposals and Council Tax Resolution report for 2023-24 at its meeting on 9th February 2023, with a view to recommending its approval by Full Council at its budget meeting on 23rd February 2023.

Cllr Bunday stated that the draft budget was the culmination of months of hard work and therefore there were no reasonable arguments for Full Council to accept any amendments to the recommendations on the day of the meeting if they were not brought forward during the consultation period, which elected members were encouraged to take part in.

The meeting heard that during September 2022 each directorate had entered into Capital Programme challenge sessions, reviewing capital plans and aspirations to enable the Council to provide a better forecast of planned borrowing and serviceability of funding for the general fund going forward. Following these sessions, each directorate had embarked upon a budget challenge session with each one offering economies, savings and sharing the challenges envisaged over the next year and into the medium term. Forecasts for this were based upon the results for the financial year 2021/22 and the forecast as at Period 6 of 2022/2023. A further Scrutiny review for the current year also took place in November 2022 for each directorate. Consequently, it was reported that the draft budget had already been the subject of over 36 hours of scrutiny, with further sessions planned in January 2023 during the consultation period.

The report before members focused on the general fund and also noted the planned use of the dedicated school's grant, a ring-fenced grant allocated to the authority by the Government to support a range of education related services. The level of funding received for North Northamptonshire Council in this regards was approximately £348m. Appendix C to the report set out in detail the background of the grant, and the pressures and risks that children's education posed, predominantly in the rise in special educational needs and disabilities demands.

Cllr Bunday noted the significant pressures faced by the Council having emerged from pandemic restrictions into an environment where further events nationally and globally had presented new financial challenges and unprecedented inflation levels. This had resulted in significant changes to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan compared to the position modelled just less than a year previously.

It was noted that the revenue account for the Council had five main income sources; Council Tax, Business Rates, Government grants, fees and charges and, where necessary, the use of reserves. Cllr Bunday stated that it was imperative that the Council did everything possible to maintain and grow local resources that were within its control. Council Tax revenue was the most stable form of income that the Council had and there was a very clear assumption by Government that councils would set their Council Tax to the maximum allowed.

Although there was a balanced draft budget for 2023/24, there was a forecast budgetary gap of nearly £18m for 2024/25, rising to nearly £54m in 2025/26. By not raising Council Tax, the Council would forgo £36m of income over the medium term to 2026/27. It was noted that the Council was in the bottom third of unitary councils when comparing Band D Council Tax, although the majority of properties within the Council area were Band A, which would result in a weekly Council Tax increase of £1.01.

Cllr Bunday concluded by providing the main headlines of this draft budget as follows:-

- A balanced budget for 2023-24
- Further investment to protect vital services and invest in service change and improvements of around £57m
- Efficiencies and income generation including new direct service grants of around £17m and continuation of savings already included as part of the 2022-23 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and which remain deliverable, with the remainder being met through improved Business Rates income, Council Tax and Government grants
- Planned savings and pressures from the previous MTFP would remain to be delivered, unless there was a requirement to change the assumptions following review
- The use and retention of reserves to support non-recurring investment in service improvement, fund time limited projects, pump-prime invest to save schemes and help manage risk
- The investment in Social Care recognised the increase in the National Living Wage from 1st April 2023 to £10.42 per hour and the reversal of a 1.25% increase in National Insurance contributions for care providers
- An increase in Council Tax consisting of 2.99% for the "core" Council Tax and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept, resulting in a new Band D equivalent Council Tax of £1,657.51, an annual increase of £78.78p or a weekly increase of £1.52.

- No change to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme which would continue at 25%.
- Inclusion of a contingency to mitigate against uncertainty, totalling £3.8m and equivalent to around 1% of the Council's Net Budget.

The meeting noted that officers would continue to seek efficiencies in order to help address the budget requirements from 2024/25 and into future years.

Cllr Bunday stated that between since the report before members had been published, the Government had published the provisional local government finance settlement setting out the detailed funding allocations to individual councils. This had resulted in a shortfall of £138,000 against the original estimate for around £336m of general fund resourcing. This was the net result of several changes and an addendum to the report had been published setting out these movements. Use of a reserve previously established to smooth the risks associated with Business Rates was recommended to meet this shortfall.

Councillors Harrison, Pentland, Brackenbury and Lawman all offered thanks to officers for producing the balanced draft budget before them, noting the pressures faced by the Council from a variety of sources and praising the continued investment and maintenance of services offered.

The Chair noted that although the Council faced a challenging time financially, it continued to invest in its services, staff and equipment, spending in a prudent fashion to provide residents with beneficial results of their Council Tax payments.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved for consultation the 2023-24 Draft Revenue Budget, which includes:
 - i. An estimated net revenue budget of £335.9m (£683.9m including the Dedicated Schools Grant) as set out in Appendix A, noting that this is subject to further update and change following the publication of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.
 - ii. A Band D Equivalent Council Tax of £1,657.51 for North Northamptonshire Council, representing an increase of 2.99% in the 'core' Council Tax and a further 2% for the Adult Social Care Precept.
 - iii. Pressures of £57.0m, including adjustments for the reversal of one-off funding in 2022-23, and savings, efficiencies and income proposals of £17.0m as detailed in Appendix B of the report.
 - iv. Corporate budget requirements as set out in paragraph 8.1, including a contingency sum of £3.8m as set out in paragraph 8.2 of the report.

- v. The draft planned use of, contribution to, and movement in, reserves as identified in paragraph 5.57 and section 9 of the report, noting the reserves will be reviewed again, post Finance Settlement and prior to the final budget proposals, to consider the risk applying at that time.
 - vi. The provisional dedicated schools grant budget of £347.97m for 2023-24, pending the Final Settlement, as detailed in Appendix C of the report.
- b) For the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG):
- i. Noted the provisional allocations of the increased funding for the Schools Block and High Needs Block for 2023-24 and reduced Central School Services Block for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations.
 - ii. Following consultation with the Schools Forum, delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Executive Director for Children's Services, and the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (S151 Officer) to determine the DSG 2023-24 schools funding formula, high needs funding arrangements and, in consideration of the outcome of the scrutiny review to Executive, the early years funding formula in line with Department for Education guidance.
- c) Endorsed the budget consultation process as outlined at paragraphs 13.16 to 13.20 of the report which commences following the approval of the recommendations in this report.
- d) Noted that the funding allocations are estimates only at this stage and will not be confirmed until the publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- e) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive Director of Finance and Performance (S151 Officer) to amend the draft budget following the publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

Reason for Recommendations: To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution and legislative requirements in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire Council from 2023-24.

Alternative Options Considered – This is the start of the formal budget consultation for the General Fund and any comments from the consultation will be considered as part of this process.

348 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan Proposals

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham noted the level of work required to bring the Council's two current Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) together as one, alongside its provision and understanding as a landlord. Cllr Buckingham stated that a balanced budget was nothing without the necessary improvements and standards required to fix problems faced by elements of the Council's housing stock. Investment was required to Council properties and the £40,000 allocated to reduce the repairs backlog was deemed insufficient. In addition, Cllr Buckingham stated that the Council did not have to raise rents by the proposed 7% figure. Concluding, Cllr Buckingham queried standards that would be adopted for the HRA moving forward and how tenants' voices would be heard.

The Chair then invited the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the proposed draft budget for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2023/24 and the key principles on which it is based, together with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that covered the following four years (2024/25 – 2027/28). The report also set out the proposals regarding rent increases for 2023/24.

Cllr Bunday noted that the HRA did not directly impact on the Council's wider General Fund budget or on the level of Council Tax, with income to the HRA primarily received through the rents and other charges paid by tenants and leaseholders. The Council was required to run a single HRA, but for a short period continued to operate two neighbourhood accounts to reflect stock holding from the two legacy councils of Kettering and Corby.

The Council had commenced work on consolidating these two accounts into a single HRA, however this required a 30-year business plan that would be informed by the Housing Strategy for North Northamptonshire. This strategy was currently in development and due to be reported to members during 2023/24.

The meeting noted that the HRA formed a ring-fenced account within the Council for the income and expenditure associated with its housing stock. The Council owned 8160 properties ranging from one to four bed houses, bungalows and flats, with a further 893 leasehold properties. This amounted to a projected annual rental income in excess of £35m.

Details of historic Government guidelines regarding rent increases were provided to the meeting, who noted that the current formula was CPI plus 1%. CPI in July 2022 had been 10.1% meaning that rent increases for April 2023 would be 11.1%, however, after consultation it was announced by the Chancellor in September 2022 that social housing rent increases for 2023/24 would be capped at 7%. In line with previous years, the proposed increase in rent for both Neighbourhood Accounts would be the maximum permitted helping to maintain and protect levels of service. Taking into account this proposed increase, the draft Neighbourhood Accounts for 2023/24 showed a balanced position.

The medium-term position showed the Corby HRA in deficit and the Kettering account in surplus, resulting from the structuring of the self-financing of loans associated with

the housing stock. The medium-term position also assumed an annual rent increase of 4% going forward.

The meeting heard that the Council was required by law to avoid budgeting for a deficit on the HRA. In practice, the Council was expected to maintain a reasonable balance of reserves to cover contingencies, with the Chief Finance Officer reviewing the level of balances required to support the HRA spend annually as part of their risk assessment of the budget. It was proposed that the assessed minimum level of balances, taking all known risks into account, should remain unchanged at £800k for the Corby Neighbourhood Account and £650k for the Kettering Neighbourhood Account, around 4% of the total budget.

Cllr Bunday stated that the numbers of Right to Buy (RTB) properties and the number of empty properties must also be taken into account. The number of RTB sales assumed during 2023/24 and the medium-term for the Corby Neighbourhood Account was 50, and for the Kettering Neighbourhood Account was 30. Void property levels were assumed at 0.9% of stock for Corby and 1.5% for Kettering.

The meeting heard that the current economic climate made provision of new social housing challenging, however it was envisaged a further 18 homes would be added to the Corby stock at Cheltenham Road during 2023/24. Further schemes would be reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Plan when there was more certainty around the timed delivery of future housing schemes.

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers spoke to note the lack of historic investment in the Corby housing stock and to highlight that investment was now ongoing in order to provide the best social housing possible. It was noted that the tenants' forum had overwhelmingly supported the proposed 7% rent increase, understanding that for the housing stock to be improved there needed to be investment made.

Cllr Matt Binley thanked all those involved in formulating the budget proposals for the Housing Revenue Account. Cllr Binley noted that a large percentage of the Council's housing stock was ageing and had seen under-investment for a long period of time. A reduction in outstanding housing repairs of 20.2% since May was reported, with finances in place within the proposed budget to help reduce this further.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a. Noted the draft 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account Budgets consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account as set out in Appendix A of the report, which will be consulted upon with Tenants, which includes:
 - i) an increase in dwelling rents for 2023/24 of 7% which adheres to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) amended Policy statement on rents for social housing.

- b. Notes the draft Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan beyond 2023/24 consisting of the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account, for 2024/25 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix B of the report.
- c. Noted the forecast reserves for the Corby Neighbourhood Account and the Kettering Neighbourhood Account up to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix C of the report.

Reason for Recommendations: To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered – This is the start of the formal budget consultation for the HRA and any comments from the consultation will be considered as part of this process.

349 Capital Programme 2023-26

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the baseline Capital Programme for 2023-24 and the indicative Medium-Term Financial Plan for North Northamptonshire Council.

The meeting heard that the Capital Programme alongside the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets would form the basis of the budget consultation process that would commence once the draft budget had been approved by Executive.

During September 2022 each directorate entered into capital programme challenge sessions, with each required to revisit capital plans and aspirations for the coming years, with the desired outcome to review each one as to its deliverability and profiling. Projects were re-profiled or deferred into the development pool until further business cases could be considered as part of a wider North Northamptonshire scheme. As part of this challenge process 71% of the general fund and 79% of the HRA underspends had been reviewed.

The meeting noted that the Capital Programme proposals before members would be taken to the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, with its comments from that meeting considered on 9th February 2023 by the Executive.

Cllr Bunday reported that the total Capital Programme amounted to £94.9m, consisting of the General Fund programme of £52.1m and HRA programme of £43.7m. Members were reminded that there was also a Development Pool of £173.6m, including schemes awaiting formal business cases. Throughout the year Capital Update requests had been brought to Executive meetings to bring forward further items. The meeting noted that the report also set out the proposed Capital Programme for the medium-term up to 2026.

Key principles that underpinned the Council's capital strategy were highlighted along with details of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) that reflected the minimum amount a council must charge to the revenue budget each year to set aside

a provision for repaying external borrowing. The increase in the MRP provision of £1.549m for 2023-24 to provide for this was noted.

Members further noted that the disaggregation of capital assets, balances and debt were still to be finalised and subject to audit of the 2020-21 financial accounts for the former Northamptonshire County Council and Corby Borough Council and this may have implications for the current assumptions. The report also set out the policy of the Public Works Loan Board with regard to future funding.

Councillors Lawman, Pentland and Brackenbury spoke to welcome the full and varied investment programme and noted the Council's strong track record in securing external investment.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved for consultation the General Fund Capital Programme 2023-26 and HRA Capital Programme 2023-26.
- b) Noted the Development Pool 2023-26 and that schemes within the pool will be subject to further approval prior to inclusion in the programme.

Reason for Recommendations: To ensure that the Council complies with its Constitution and legislative requirements in setting the budget for North Northamptonshire Council for 2023-24.

Alternative Options Considered - This is the start of the formal budget consultation for the Capital Programme and any comments from the consultation will be considered as part of this process.

350 Specialist Care Centre - Due Diligence and Recommendations

The Chair invited Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to introduce a report that sought to provide information regarding the various negotiations, terms of prospective agreements, financial implications and risks in order to make an informed the decision regarding committing the Council to take on operation of a Specialist Care Centre (SCC) at Thackley Green in Corby for the benefit of residents. It was noted that work to finalise agreements would be subject to satisfactory negotiations regarding the respective variations, and terms of the agreement having no additional adverse financial or contractual implications not already considered..

Cllr Harrison provided a brief history of SCCs in the county, noting that occupancy levels of the centres was low, often not more than 50% of capacity. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) had communicated an intention to reorganise services within the SCCs and had approached both the Council and other health partners regarding potential interest in taking over the centres in their entirety. In April

2022, the Council's access to SCC beds had been capped at 25 by WNC, based on historic usage, and these would be ringfenced at Thackley Green, ceasing Council usage at Spinneyfields in order to enable WNC to use all beds at that site.

As a result, due diligence had been undertaken by the Council to consider taking on the running of one SCC, as well as developing the service required and consideration as to how that would be delivered within the overall budget available as well as any potential additional investment that may be required. WNC had confirmed that should the Council be unable to take on the operation of Thackley Green the site would close.

The meeting heard that the proposed option before members would provide the best opportunity to develop a positive service for residents and financial modelling was being undertaken in great detail.

The Chair, Cllr Smithers welcomed the proposal as offering a better outcome for residents using the service, and wholly supported the report and thanked those involved in its preparation.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Considered and noted the content of the report, in particular the due diligence undertaken, legal considerations in sub-letting a specialist Care Centre and risks identified
- b) Noted the ongoing negotiations and commitments with systemwide partners to utilise various funding sources such as Winter Discharge monies, and Better Care Fund
- c) Considered and noted the various financial modelling scenarios set out in Appendix A and section 7.1 of this report
- d) Approved Option 4 (as set out in section 3.3 of the report) which authorises the progression of work to finalise agreements to take on the running of one Specialist Care Centre (Thackley Green in Corby), subject to satisfactory negotiations with West Northamptonshire Council and Shaw Healthcare regarding the respective variations and terms of the agreement having no additional adverse financial, legal or contractual implications that are not already referenced in this report.
- e) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partners and Housing (DASS) to finalise and complete any legal agreements in relation to this decision

Reason for recommendations:

- a) Having access to newer facilities will enable us to provide the environment for our staff to deliver better quality services & the right environments to maximise assessment, re-ablement, enablement and opportunities for independent living for people that use the services.
- b) Having direct control over both bed-based and domiciliary care re-ablement provides the ability to flex and evolve services to meet changing needs in the most agile ways possible and delivering better re-ablement outcomes for our residents.
- c) To minimise the financial and legal risks to the Council and ensure best value.
- d) To provide an understanding of the complexities surrounding national funding to support integrated care and the work being undertaken to access these funds in order to support the delivery of services within the Specialist Care Centre.

Alternative Options Considered:

Option 1 – Continue “as-is” purchasing reablement beds from the West Northants Council run Specialist Care Centre and commissioning residual shortfall capacity from the independent care market in North Northamptonshire. **(Not recommended)**

Option 2 – Take on the running of two Specialist Care Centres **(Not recommended)**

Option 3 – Commission all bed-based reablement capacity from the independent sector care market **(Not recommended)**

Option 4 – Take on the running of one specialist care centre (Thackley Green in Corby) **(Recommended option)**

Further detail around each of these options is available in paragraphs 4.15 to 4.27 of this report.

351 **Disaggregation of the Joint Sensory Impairment Service to North Northamptonshire Council and Establishment of a New Operating Model**

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought to provide an overview of the Sensory Impairment Service revised model Outline Business Case, as well as seeking approval to implement the proposed recommendation as set out within the report.

It was noted that the current service was invaluable to those residents requiring it and was considered to be highly-regarded. The proposal before members was to create a commissioned service model arrangement between the Council and West Northamptonshire Council and, subject to consultation with affected staff and schools and legal input, the recommended option would also see the potential transfer of some specialist peripatetic staff who already worked within schools, directly under school employment. This would realise a potential saving of £310,000 from the current budget provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

The meeting noted that the Council had a statutory duty to provide specialist support services to children with a hearing or vision impairment in mainstream and in special schools. The Department of Education insisted on a mandatory qualification for teachers in this regard.

It was heard that there were significant risks relating to disaggregation, potentially providing a direct impact on delivering a safe and effective service model. It was noted that there was a national shortage of specialist qualified teachers, and this exposed the Council to the risk of not meeting its statutory requirements and therefore failing vulnerable young people.

The cost of service was just over £2m, funded through contributions from West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and NNC via the Dedicated Schools Grant with service costs split 56% to WNC and 44% to NNC. A similar report would be tabled at WNC in January 2023.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the creation of a single model of delivery for the Sensory Impairment Service within education across Northamptonshire, located within North Northamptonshire Council, which could be commissioned by others.
- b) Approved the proposal to seek transfer of Access and Communication Support Workers (ACSWs) employment from the Sensory Impairment Service directly into schools (as outlined in the recommended new delivery model and explained within Sections 5.7 to 5.10 of the report), subject to full staff consultation and HR processes.
- c) Granted delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with Monitoring Officers and Section 151 Officers for North and West Northamptonshire, to take any further decisions and actions necessary and complete any legal agreements required to effect the decision.
- d) Noted that a report will be considered by the Joint Shared Services Committee in relation to the removal of the service from the Inter Authority Agreement between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council
- e) Noted financial implications as set out within Section 7.1 of the report and the impact on the allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant funding.

Reason for Recommendations: This option has been recommended following a detailed investigation of possible service delivery models and completion of a comprehensive Impact and Options Assessment, which demonstrated that a traditional disaggregation approach created significant risk that could not be fully

mitigated. Implementing a single commissioning-based model utilising the existing service framework with North Northamptonshire Council would ensure that both Councils are able to fulfil the obligations set out by the original Local Government Reform 'Future Northants' blueprint through the delivery of an alternative remodelled service. This also safeguards services delivered to vulnerable children and their families and provides a sustainable and resilient model for the future.

Alternative options considered:

- Do nothing – retain the current lead authority arrangement governed under the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) between North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Councils
- Disaggregate the service equally between the two Councils in line with original Blueprint

The alternative options shown above have been discounted as they would not provide an effective and sustainable delivery model for either Council whilst working towards full disaggregation of shared services. Splitting the service equally would pose significant risk to vulnerable service users and cause untenable strain on already very limited specialist resources.

352 Asset Disposal Policy

The Chair invited Cllr Graham Lawman, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought the approval of an Asset Disposal Policy for the Council.

The meeting heard that as a result of unitarisation, the Council had inherited a portfolio of properties and assets both operational and commercial, with this portfolio currently being assessed to ascertain whether assets fitted in with the Council's future plans and needs. An Asset Strategy would be brought before the Executive in Spring 2023, accordingly a policy was required to ensure that any asset disposals were appropriate and well governed as well as clear and transparent.

It was noted that such a policy would support the Council's Capital Strategy and would reduce revenue costs. Any proposed asset disposals would include the involvement of relevant ward members, service directorates and external partners where appropriate.

Cllr Lawman concluded by offering his thanks to the Asset Rationalisation Scrutiny Panel that had considered and agreed both the report and policy before members.

The Chair spoke to welcome engagement with local ward members regarding the potential disposal of assets in their areas.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the Asset Disposal Policy at Appendix A of the report for adoption.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- i) The Council has fiduciary responsibilities to progress surplus vacant sites within a reasonable time, which government policy recommends is no later than two years, to ensure value for money is achieved. The Asset Disposal Policy supports this outcome.
- ii) Progressing disposals of surplus properties in a co-ordinated way will contribute to the Corporate Plan and the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- iii) The Asset Disposal Policy supports a timely process, which will reduce revenue costs and assist the council to achieve capital receipts as identified in the Capital Strategy.
- iv) The Policy supports centralised current record keeping; a requirement of the constitution.

Alternative Options Considered: The Council could choose not to adopt a co-ordinated asset disposal policy, but this would lead to uncertainty and increased risks of unplanned expenditure.

353 Carbon Management Plan

The Chair invited Cllr Harriet Pentland, Executive Member for Climate and the Green Environment to introduce a report that sought consideration and approval of the draft Carbon Management Plan that set out how the Council would achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Cllr Pentland noted that the document before members was much anticipated and of vital importance in assisting the Council in its commitment to tackling climate change locally. It was noted that the plan was a living document and would be regularly reviewed to reflect progress made and advancements in technology, with progress reports provided to the Climate Change, Environment & Growth Executive Advisory Panel.

Cllr Pentland stated that 1m of funding had been set aside to support the Council on its climate change journey to be carbon neutral by 2030, and the management plan identified various actions for which funding would be required. It was noted as being vital that funding was used to secure the greatest carbon reduction benefits.

The meeting heard that as part of the project the Council would work with Investors in the Environment, an environmental organisation who would audit and review progress made by the Council towards its aims and offered an additional layer of accountability.

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers welcomed the report and the in-depth work carried out by the Executive Member and officers in a short period to cement the carbon neutrality plan within the document.

Councillors Harrison, Howell, Brackenbury and Lawman all spoke in support of the Carbon Management Plan and referenced de-carbonisation of the leisure sector,

landfill emissions and the opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of the Place and Economy sector by introducing zero emission vehicles, reducing the reliance on polluting vehicles as well as working with contractors to reduce their own carbon footprints.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the Carbon Management Plan at Appendix A of the report and priority areas for investment of the £1m climate change funding allocation.

Reasons for Recommendation:

- The plan sets out the key areas of focus for the Council in order to achieve its target to be carbon neutral by 2030
- The plan supports the Council's ambition for climate change mitigation as set out in the Corporate Plan.
- Whilst the projects deriving from the plan will require financial investment, they will provide both cost and environmental savings.
- The measures set out in the report complement existing environmental policies, such as the Pollinator Strategy and Tree Management & Care Policy.

Alternative Options Considered: The alternative option is not to progress a carbon management plan, or to scale back the target date of carbon neutrality by 2030. However, this would not align with the Council's declaration of a climate and environment emergency, and wider strategic priorities. These options are therefore not recommended.

354 Planning Advisory Service Peer Review – Report and Associated Action Plan

The Chair invited Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration to present a report which sought to advise the Executive of the findings of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Peer Review of the Council's Planning Service, requested consideration of the proposed Action Plan developed to respond to the issues raised and the recommendations arising from the report.

It was reported that in September 2022, the Council had invited a peer review of the Council's Planning Service by a PAS Peer Review Team. The review was wide-ranging and included an extensive set of interviews and focus groups with a range of internal and external stakeholders and users of the service. Cllr Brackenbury thanked all those who had taken part in what he considered to be a valuable exercise.

The meeting noted that the appendix to the report contained the findings of this review and contained details of positive existing practice within the Council's Planning Service that welcomed growth and renewal, had a commitment to transformation and development and the implementation of a single service. Furthermore, there existed a strong relationship between elected members and Council officers and the commitment of hard-working staff was also noted, with thanks offered by Cllr Brackenbury for the enthusiasm and desire to offer the best possible service. The

service also maintained good relations with regional and strategic partners in terms of developing planning policies and engagement on a regional basis. The Council was delivering planned growth in terms of housing numbers and employment opportunities across a balanced range of sectors offering high quality jobs. The meeting heard that there was a strong record in the delivery of planning policies and the good work of the former Joint Planning Unit and Committee was noted.

There were, however, areas for improvement that had arisen from the review. Although it had been noted that the Council was still in the process of harmonisation, there was a recommendation to alter the planning committee structure from the current four committees representing the former sovereign authority areas to a more unified mix. This would be considered as part of the proposed Action Plan. In addition, there was a need to rapidly convene a Planning Transformation Board and associated governance arrangements to address shortcomings in the Planning Service, noting that careful resourcing and time management of officers was required. The membership of the board had been agreed, with the initial meeting to set Terms of Reference and consider the proposed Action Plan to take place in the first week of 2023.

The Chair, Cllr Smithers spoke to welcome the report and recommendations from the Planning Advisory Services, noting that publication of the findings was mandatory to ensure that Council was open and transparent about the issues it faced within the Planning Service. Cllr Smithers noted that a speedy turnaround was required, and pressure would be exerted to ensure satisfactory delivery of the Action Plan occurred.

Cllrs Howell, Lawman, Harrison and Howes all spoke to welcome both the report and the findings of the Planning Advisory service, noting that the Council welcomed scrutiny of its processes, both internally and externally. Members looked forward to seeing a significant improvement within a department that had previously attracted a high level of resident complaints.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the content of the PAS Peer Review Report and its recommendations
- b) Considered and approved the PAS Peer Review Action Plan (as set out in Appendix B of the report)
- c) Approved the formation of a Planning Transformation Board and associated governance arrangements (as set out in Appendix C of the report) to oversee the planning transformation activities associated with the Peer Review and Action Plan
- c) Agreed that the progress of transformation in response to the PAS Peer Review recommendations is reported back to Scrutiny Commission on a six-monthly basis
- d) Agreed that the PAS Peer Review Report and associated NNC Action Plan are published on the Council's website as soon as reasonably practicable

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To maximise the benefit of the advice and recommendation received from PAS through their peer review of the Council's Planning service
- To ensure that the Council puts in place an appropriately resourced detailed transformation plan that will lead to a single harmonised
- Planning service that maximises efficiency and cost effectiveness
- To ensure that customers and stakeholders of the Planning service receive maximum benefit from a harmonised and efficient service

Alternative Options Considered: The alternative option would be to reject the findings of the PAS Peer Review and to either continue operating the current planning service delivering business as usual, or to formulate transformation plans for the service having no regard to the advice and recommendations of the PAS Peer Review Team. These options are not advised as not implementing the recommendations would not see the service develop.

355 Corby Town Fund - Multi-use Building

The Chair invited Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration to present a report which sought approval for the submission of a Business Case Summary Document for the Grosvenor House, Multi-use Building in Corby that formed the fourth and last project included in the Corby Town Fund. If the Business Case was subsequently approved by the Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC), the £1.5m of allocated funds for the project would be made available for drawdown and its commencement.

Cllr Brackenbury provided an overview of the funding bid made by the former Corby Borough Council to the Government's Towns Fund, noting that the Council had been awarded £19.9m of funding for four projects detailed within Corby's Town Investment Plan. This specific project proposed to provide a multi-purpose facility in the Corby town centre area, offering permanent accommodation for a modern cultural and Community Centre, while also meeting the identified demand for creative, media and third sector uses. It was anticipated that the project would assist in increasing footfall and spend across the town and make the town centre a more attractive location.

Cllrs Howell, Pentland and Harrison all spoke to welcome the investment and to support the recommendations before members, noting the possibility of the building partially being used as a community hub, as well as forming part of North Northamptonshire's cultural offering.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Delegated to the Executive Director of Finance, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Economy, authority to prepare and submit

the Business Case Summary Document for the Multi-use Building (which is the final project in the Corby Town Fund) to the DLUHC.

- b) Approved the drawdown of funding for this project once released by the DLUHC and delegate to the Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Economy the authority to spend such funding on those projects outlined in the Business Case

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The submitted Business Case Summary Document, if approved by DLUHC will unlock the funding for these projects to the sum of £1.5m.
- Once funds are received, each project can commence. It is estimated these projects will commence to their next stage in spring 2023.

Alternative Options Considered - The Executive could decide not to submit the Business Case Summary Document and therefore not to drawdown the remaining funding of £1.5m (less the 5%, approx. £75k already received from DLUHC). The consequences of this would mean that the Multi-use Building project could not be delivered. This project is a deliverable project which benefits Corby and the surrounding area. It proposes to provide a multi-purpose facility in the Corby town centre area, to provide a permanent accommodation for a modern cultural and Community Centre. the project will also meet the identified demand for creative, media and third sector uses. It will help to increase trips, pedestrian flows and spend across the town, and will improve the town's overall permeability. This option is, therefore, not recommended.

356 Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021-22

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce the Annual Report of the Northamptonshire Corporate Parenting Board for 2021-22 which also sought approval of the implementation of key priorities for the board as below:

- Approval of the establishment of Corporate Parenting Operational Groups as set out in Section 3 of the annual report.
- Consideration of the inclusion of corporate parenting responsibilities being set out in every North Northamptonshire Council job description
- The Council to consider becoming a Fostering-Friendly employer, with authority delegated to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills in consultation with the Chief Executive to approve.

Cllr Edwards thanked the members of the board for their work in the preceding year and outlined the role, structure and activity of the Corporate Parenting Board. It was noted that should the recommendations before members not be approved, an opportunity would be missed to promote the Children's Trust's corporate parenting strategy, encourage greater fostering sufficiency, and to ensure that all employees of the Trust and the Council were aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities.

The meeting heard that in order for the report to progress through appropriate approval stages, culminating in approval by Full Council, an implementation plan for the recommendations would be produced to be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2023.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the implementation of four key priorities for the corporate parenting board, specifically:

- a) Approved the establishment of Corporate Parenting Operational Groups as set out in Section 3 (page 19) of the annual report.
- b) Noted that the Head of Paid Service will consider the inclusion of corporate parenting responsibilities being set out in every North Northamptonshire job description as set out in Section 3 (page 19) of the annual report.
- c) Noted that North Northamptonshire Council will further consider becoming a Fostering-Friendly employer, as set out in Section 3 (pages 19-20) of the annual report and delegates authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education & Skills in consultation with the Chief Executive to approve.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- To promote and monitor the Trust's corporate parenting strategy.
- To encourage all members and employees to recognise their role as corporate parents.
- To promote in-house fostering sufficiency.

Alternative Options Considered: The alternative option to the recommendations set out in the annual report, are: For the Corporate Parenting Board to continue operating in its current form, Corporate Parenting Responsibilities not being included in NCT and NNC job descriptions, and that NCT and NNC do not become Fostering-Friendly Employers.

The above options would not promote the Trust's corporate parenting strategy, nor encourage more employees to become foster carers, nor encourage all members and employees to recognise their role as corporate parents.

357 Schools Minor Works Programme

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval of the School's Minor Works Programme, the budget approval for 2022-24 coming through the Capital Programme Update report submitted to the meeting as Agenda Item 18. It was noted that the programme would be funded by the Department for Education (DfE) 'School

Condition Allocation' grant and allow the Council to fulfil its statutory obligation of keeping pupils 'safe, warm and dry'.

The meeting heard that the total School Minor Works Budget for 2022-2024 was £3,893,829, allowing condition surveys on property within the Council's school estate to be commissioned and any remedial work required classified into one of four categories identified below:

- 1: Urgent - works required immediately or within one year;
- 2: Essential – required within 2 years;
- 3: Desirable – required within 5 years;
- 4: Desirable – works not anticipated to be required within 5 years

It was anticipated that the budget would be sufficient to progress the required condition works in categories 1 and 2 as above, whilst leaving a small contingency sum within the wider budget to address any emergency works that may be required at maintained schools within the Council area over the course of the 2022-2024 financial period.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the Council's allocation of 'School Condition Allocation' funding for 2022/23 & 2023/24 confirmed by the DfE at a total of £3,893,829 and that the grant funding will be utilised as the Council's 'School Minor Works' budget for 2022/24;
- b) Noted that the budget approval to complete works to rectify condition issues within schools, to support the Council to fulfil its statutory obligation of maintaining its school estate is included within the Capital Programme Update report elsewhere on the Executive agenda;
- c) Noted that any works undertaken under the 'Schools Minor Works' budget will be delivered as part of a rolling programme of conditions surveys and schemes at maintained schools in the Local Authority;
- d) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Capital Portfolio Board, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of condition schemes.
- e) Schemes of £500,000 or more will be managed as stand-alone schemes and will be managed via the existing governance process for Capital Approval Process.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The proposal supports the Council to continue to fulfil its statutory obligation of maintaining its school estate;

- The recommended course of action is the most effective as it facilitates the delivery of a proactive, responsive condition and maintenance programme;
- The recommendations are consistent with previous decisions made by the Executive. This is the 3rd year of the 'School Minor Works' programme, the previous decision was made in 2021.

Alternative Options Considered: Any other option would involve managing the minor works programme on a scheme-by-scheme basis which would be inefficient and fail to deliver the necessary response to the emergency situations which would impact on Health & Safety and potentially result in school closures.

358 Rowan Gate Special School Mobile Unit Replacement

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval to proceed with a Capital Project to replace the double temporary mobile unit classroom at Rowan Gate Special School, Wellingborough with two additional permanent classrooms, the costs to be funded primarily by Department of Education High Needs Provision Capital Allocated Grant funding.

The works would assist the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations of providing a sufficiency of SEND places and fulfil the specific need at Rowan Gate. It was heard that the construction programme for the proposed works would take approximately 12-months to complete commencing in Summer 2023 and concluding in Summer 2024 in time for the September school term with the works to project managed by the school with the Council acting as the funding body only.

Cllrs Lawman and Howell welcomed the report, with Cllr Lawman noting the impressive existing facilities and staff at the school and the positivity that the proposed works would bring to the site.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the Project to replace the Temporary Mobile Units at Rowan Gate Special School, Wellingborough with permanent classrooms.
- ii) Noted the scheme will be funded via High Needs Provision Capital Grant funding received directly from central government; The budget approval is included within the Capital Programme Update report to Executive elsewhere on this agenda.
- iii) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Economy and the Executive Director of Children's Services, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the scheme.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- There is a double classroom mobile unit on the site. The mobile unit is coming to the end of its life expectancy. The temporary planning approval **(WP/15/00779/CRA)** dated 22nd January 2016 has lapsed and requires the removal of the mobile unit [on for before 31st December 2020]. We must remove the classrooms as we are in breach of the planning permission.
- The school is oversubscribed with a shortfall of teaching and circulation spaces and currently does not comply with the Building Bulletin BB104 Standards Guidelines for Special Schools. The replacement classrooms provide the necessary teaching and circulation space needed to comply with BB104.
- There is a deficit of SEND places across North Northamptonshire currently and will be in the forthcoming 2022/23 academic year. This proposal ensures that there is good quality permanent capacity at Rowan Gate school.
- The Council has a statutory obligation to provide a sufficiency of SEND places across the county, if the Council cannot provide sufficient places in its maintained or academy provision in Northamptonshire, then it is required to utilise far more expensive independent and out of county provisions to meet demand. Places in independent or out of county provisions are significantly more costly than those within the Council's own provision.

Alternative Options Considered:

There are three options for consideration:

Option 1. Do Nothing. This is not a viable option as this relates to the fulfilment of the Council's statutory obligation of providing sufficiency of places its schools' estate. We are already in breach of the existing planning permission.

Option 2. Replace the existing mobile units in a similar position with similar footings but as a modular construction. We consulted with the Planning Authority who indicated they would not support this option based on existence Tree Protection Orders (TPO).

Option 3. There is only one option other than a temporary or modular solution and that is to construct a new permanent classroom on the school site. After consulting with Sport England and the Planning Authority and the school we arrived at the preferred solution as the most effective way of providing the pupil places at Rowan Gate School.

359 **Kingswood Secondary School Bulge Funding**

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought approval for the Kingswood Secondary School Funding Agreement that would allow for the provision of suitable educational accommodation at Kingswood Secondary School, Corby to temporarily increase the Published Admission Number (PAN) equivalent to 54 pupils in a year group, which would roll through from years 7-11, before reducing back down to the original PAN. The works would be funded by the Department for Education Basic Need Grant.

It was reported that the funding would support adaptations to ancillary circulation and teaching spaces to facilitate a temporary increase in pupil numbers to bridge the gap until the new Weldon Village Academy opened in 2023. The capital investment would also provide a permanent capacity for future growth when needed.

The meeting heard that the works would be project managed by the school with the Council acting as the funding body only, with a legally binding funding agreement between each party restricting the Council's maximum financial liability in respect of this scheme.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the proposed scheme to be delivered through the Funding Agreement with Greenwood Academies to enable the Kingswood Secondary School to temporarily increase its PAN and enable the Local Authority to perform its statutory duty to provide sufficiency of places in Corby.
- ii) Noted that budget approval of £553,849 for this scheme is included within the Capital Programme Update report elsewhere on this Executive agenda.
- iii) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education, in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Children's Services Capital Portfolio Board, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the project.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- Under school place planning duties (s13-14 Education Act 1996) the Council as an education authority has a duty to promote high standards of education and fair access to education. It also has a general duty to secure sufficient schools in their area. This includes a duty to respond to parents' representations about school provision. These are referred to as the school place planning duties.
- The Council is required to provide the following additional capacity to ensure it fulfilled its statutory obligations for September 2022: Corby: 54 temporary 'bulge' places added at an area school to provide sufficient capacity for the 2022/23 academic years.
- Failure to provide sufficiency of places would also result in increased home to school transport costs as students would need to be transported to other areas of the County. An increase in complaints from parents and pressures on schools through the Fair Access Process (FAP) and reputational damage. FAPs exist to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are

having difficulty securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible.

Alternative Options Considered: A deficit of sufficient capacity has been experienced in Northamptonshire since the 2020/22 academic years and the Council has been required to provide significant temporary bulge places in each academic year across other existing schools in the area. The level of temporary bulge capacity provided at other schools in previous academic years means that options for the provision of further bulge capacity are extremely limited and other schools have reached the maximum number of students they can safely accommodate on site.

360 Earls Barton Primary School Expansion

The Chair invited Cllr Scott Edwards, Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills to introduce a report that sought consideration and approval of the Earls Barton School Expansion Project that would be funded primarily by S106 funding and supplemented by the Department for Education School Condition Allocation Grant.

Cllr Edwards stated that demand on pupil places in Earls Barton had increased as a result of new housing developments, supported by S106 developer contributions allocated specifically to increasing the capacity of primary school places. The works would allow the linking of two currently separate school buildings to provide safe and secure access around the school, the replacement of two mobile classrooms and relocation and expansion of staff car-parking as well as allowing for the potential increase in Published Admission Number from 75 to 90 pupils.

It was reported that the anticipated cost of the works was £2.798m, with the project set to start in February 2024, completing in February 2025.

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers welcomed the investment at the site and noted the Council's ongoing commitment to future generations through continuous investments in educational settings.

Cllrs Pentland, Lawman and Brackenbury also spoke to welcome the project and the upgrades at the site, including the use of renewable energy technology.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That Executive:

- i) Approved the progression of the proposed scheme and to note that the scheme will be funded via S106 Funding and Basic Capital Grant Allocations funding received directly from central government;
- ii) Noted that budget approval **£2.798m** for the project is included within the Capital Programme Update report elsewhere on this Executive agenda.

- iii) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families and Education in consultation with the Executive Director of Children’s Services, in consultation and the Executive Director of Place and Economy, to authorise all necessary legal, property and financial agreements to ensure effective delivery of the scheme.

Reason for Recommendations: The demand on pupil places in Earls Barton has been triggered by the commencement of new housing developments by Housing Developers Redrow and David Wilson Homes which looks to deliver over 300 homes. S106 Developer funding has been allocated specifically to towards increasing the capacity of primary school places serving the development at Earls Barton Primary School that have been forecast as needed by the new development.

Alternative Options Considered: The S106 Funding is specifically assigned to Earls Barton school expansion and cannot be used as Capital investment elsewhere as stipulated in the Funding Deed. The Options explored as part of the Feasibility Study therefore focus on identifying the optimum design solutions to deliver the necessary expansion which delivers the identified project objectives and realises the identified benefits.

361 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.

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

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to welcome the Local Authority Treescape Fund that was a positive step in helping the Council in reducing the impact of harmful emissions.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes into the capital programme totalling £9.696m:
 - a. Isebrook SEND College expansion of school - increase of £341k to the capital programme for 2022/23, which is to be funded from the SEND Capital grant.
 - b. Schools Minor Works programme – budget approval for £3.894m; £1.95m in 2023/24, £1.95m in 2024/25, which is to be funded from the DfE Schools Condition Allocation (SCA) grant.

- c. Kingswood Secondary School Bulge funding – budget approval for £554k; £213k in 2022/23, £341k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from DfE Schools Basic Need grant.
- d. Earls Barton Primary School Expansion – budget approval for £2.8m; £215k in 2022/23, £1.29m in 2023/24, £1.29m in 2024/25 which is to be funded £2.084m from S106 and £713k from DfE Schools Basic Need grant.
- e. Rowan Gate Primary School – budget approval for £1.661m, £172k in 2022/23, £1.006m in 2023/24, £482k in 2024/25 which is to be funded from DfE Schools Basic Need grant.
- f. Wrenn Spinney installation of mobile classroom – budget approval for £190k for 2022/23 which is to be funded from the SEND Capital grant.
- g. Local Authority Treescape Fund (LATF) – budget approval for £260k; £90.5k in 2022/23, £56.4k in 2023/24, £56.4k in 2024/25, £56.4k in 2025/26, to be funded from external capital grant.

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

- To support the statutory delivery of school places and SEND school places across North Northamptonshire.
- To access funding for planting and caring for trees across North Northamptonshire, helping to meet the priorities of the Corporate Plan, particularly:
 - Active, fulfilled lives
 - Thriving places

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.

362 Budget Forecast 2022/23 as at Period 7

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the Council based on the Period 7 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 7 was a forecast overspend of £6.176m against the approved budget. Cllr Bunday reported that that the overall increase was predominantly as a result of further pressures within the Children’s Trust and higher spend associated with Home to School Transport arising following the outcome of the recent contracts awarded for the start of the academic year and the latest in-year monitoring position.

It was noted that the Council would seek further efficiencies in year to offset the forecast overspend, however for Period 7, the remainder of the Council's contingency budget has been applied to reduce the in-year impact of the costs arising from Home to School Transport alongside the pressures from the national pay award which had exceeded budgetary expectations of 3%. Although the Council maintained financial reserves for any balance remaining, it would look to achieve in-year mitigations in the first instance.

Cllr Bunday reported that the Housing Revenue Account had a current overspend totalling £281,000.

The meeting heard that the impact of unprecedented inflation, increased use of demand-led services and general economic downturn had adversely impacted income generation. It was recognised that the Council continued to face extremely challenging circumstances in maintaining balanced finances while protecting services, particularly for its most vulnerable residents.

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.
- c) Noted the release of the contingency budget, totalling £2.450m, to fund the pay award (£1.532m) and to partially mitigate the additional pressures on Home to School Transport (£918k).

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2022/23 as at Period 7 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 11.38am