

Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing 23/01/23

Officers provided an overview of the service. It was noted that from 2023/24 Public Health & Communities would form a separate directorate for budgetary purposes.

Housing & Communities

- Council Housing stock in Corby and Kettering, Temporary Accommodation, Homelessness prevention services
- Community Safety, Voluntary Sector, Community Development, Asylum Seeker Dispersal, Afghan Resettlement Scheme, Homes for Ukraine programme*
- Leisure services including running of council leisure services and contract management of external leisure services outsourced from previous sovereign councils contracts*
- Town and Parish Council liaison*

Adult Social Care

- Adult social care assessments and provision of care and reablement services
- Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Provider Services including delivery of in-house provider services (regulated and non-regulated), coordination of safeguarding activity, and auditing of delivery of safeguarding activity
- Commissioning and Performance, contact commissioning, market oversight and market management. This department has also taken on the coordination of the transformation functions that transferred into the Directorate following structural changes implemented in Autumn 2022

Public Health*

- Health protection, Lifestyle services, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Adult Learning

*subject to changes and development of Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate in 2023/2024 – current reporting lines maintained pending recruitment of DPH

Housing & Communities

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for both Housing & Communities. These included: -

Housing

- Stabilise frontline services by recruitment to staffing vacancies & reduce agency spend.
- Engage with new ICS Place Delivery model with a greater focus on community asset and strengths-based practice and prevention and early intervention and requisite learning & development and cultural change for staff.
- Complete the comprehensive review of our use of Temporary Accommodation to drive down costs and improve consistency of best practice, including new DPS procurement framework.
- Demonstrate how we can meet the need for affordable housing and which provide homes for the future for our tenants.

- Develop an overarching Housing Strategy; a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to ensure we meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act and provide more preventative solutions; and an approach to providing Housing for Care which will enable older people and vulnerable residents to retain independence for longer in their own homes.

Members were keen to know what future plans for building more NNC council houses would be. There had been a good record of accomplishment by former councils of building new houses, and members were keen for this to continue. Ensuring that RTB receipts were spent before deadline was imperative, otherwise receipts would be lost.

Future plans for new build were currently being explored. This was subject to reprofiling as both increases in cost of construction and increase in interest rates were having a negative impact. Any future capital programme needed to be sustainable.

It was noted that temporary accommodation was still being used, and members recognised that this facility would be required in the future given increasing demands on the service. Members were keen to have assurances that NNC was maximising its stock and any individual's residency in temporary accommodation was minimised.

It was confirmed that a review of the Council's use of temporary accommodation was currently subject to review to drive down costs and improve consistency of good practise. NCC was seeking to achieve a £200k reduction in costs for 2023/24.

Members asked when the review of temporary accommodation would be completed.

Likely to be the early part of the new financial year.

Members recognised the work that had been commenced on integrating the two former housing services into one service. Whilst recognising this was a process that needed to be appropriately planned and managed the creation of a single service was key to the Council's transformation agenda and ensuring that costs were minimised and savings reinvested. Given that trades at the DSOs were a particularly high-level of agency spend this needed to be prioritised.

There was one HRA however there were still two separate trading accounts. The intention was to amalgamate these two accounts, though no deadline for this was in place. It was a complicated issue that needed to be addressed in a step-by-step approach ensuring that all appropriate checks and balances were in place.

Work on amalgamating frontline services to customers was well underway and ensuring both former housing services were working in unison and at a consistent level.

The corporate work being undertaken on Pay & Grading would hopefully assist in the retention and recruitment of staff. Where necessary following this exercise, the use of market supplements may be considered.

Members queried regarding the placement of residents outside of the NNC area. Was this still the case and could it be minimised.

Placement outside of the NNC area was a last resort. Currently there were two households in this situation. Numbers had been successfully driven down, as had the length of placement outside of the NNC area. There was increasing demand but the service was attempting to mitigate any negative impact on residents.

Communities

- Development of a Communities Strategy, framed within the context of the emerging Place model, to include Devolution Framework, VCSE infrastructure proposals and approaches to strategic investment in the VCSE
- Plan and implement alignment and refresh of Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities strategies; review and progress current capital programmes for leisure. Scope and deliver a new Healthy Active Lifestyles Strategy as a wider Leisure Strategy
- Develop a refreshed Community Safety Plan, a Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Commissioning framework and a strategic response to the requirements of the new Serious Violence and Victims Bill agendas.
- Successfully mobilise Cornerstone as a cultural hub for NN and bring all culture, heritage and tourism services and venues under one business plan and Profit and Loss account to maximise resources and income opportunities.
- Develop the refugee Resettlement programme to find innovative solutions which will help to successfully resettle those coming to the UK under the Afghan, Homes for Ukraine or Full Asylum Dispersal programme.

Members queried the “one business plan and Profit and Loss account.”

Currently all of the Council’s community and leisure facilities operated under different plans and strategies. It was intended to amalgamate these so there was one clear business plan. There were likely to be some facilities that would require subsidy, or may break even, whilst others were able to maximise income and make a profit. An assessment could then be made as to what facilities or services required subsidy and where new income streams could be generated. This exercise would result in a robust, sustainable delivery of service to residents covering both sporting, community and cultural facilities and programmes.

Members queried how easy it would be to scrutinise this account.

Members were assured that the amalgamation would still allow Members to scrutinise individual facilities or service areas, but it would ensure that data was more easily accessible and business planning simplified.

Members queried whether trading data for Chester House could be made available as soon as possible. There were now several months figures available and access to these figures would be helpful in assessing the 2023/24 budget proposals.

Housing & Communities

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for both Housing & Communities. These included: -

- Income targets remain challenging across Communities, Leisure and Cultural services
- Potential risks of increase in housing need due to Homes for Ukraine sponsor placements reaching their initial expiry periods.
- Budget not identified for pathways, highways, street lighting maintenance on NN housing stock land but not related to our stock.
- Kettering Library – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost .
- Wellingborough library – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost.
- Kettering swimming pool – Existing roof requiring urgent work – capital cost
- Increasing energy costs remains a risk within leisure.
- Refresh of leisure /sports facilities and PPS strategies could require future capital investment.
- Exec ambition to extend the Greenway across the whole of NN area will require further capital investment.

Members recognised that the increase in energy costs would have a significant impact on many facilities and an impact on council house residents. There was also an objective on reducing the Council's own carbon footprint. Members sought assurances that every opportunity was being taken to both reduce costs and reduce the Council's carbon footprint.

Rising utility costs was a corporate issue and colleagues from all service areas were seeking measures to minimise the impact on Council finances. Measures had been implemented and further measures would be considered to reduce the Council's carbon footprint during repairs or maintenance of facilities, including switching to LED lighting etc.

MTEP

It was noted that the increase in utility costs were a major pressure.

Councils were lobbying Government, together with the wider leisure sector, for further assistance in relation to rising utility prices.

The increase of £679k in Domestic Abuse Duty Funding was noted. It was felt important that victims were supported appropriately.

This increase would be covered by Government funding.

It was noted that the income targets for Lodge Park Sports Centre required reprofiling and resulted in a reduction in the income target by £95k.

Whilst this was obviously impacted by Covid, with attendance numbers not recovering after lockdown, it was also due to unachievable income targets being set. The new income target was more robust.

With regard to Fees & Charges concern was expressed that these had not been made available for scrutiny as part of the budget scrutiny process. Fees & Charges were a vital income stream and Members felt that these should be available for perusal, whilst recognising that any increase/reduction to these was a delegated Executive responsibility.

In addition, there was concern that figures presented across the budget presentations gave no indication of the 2022/23 base figures, or an indication of the % increase over 2022/23, thus making it difficult for Members to assess the robustness of the proposals or the indication of trends.

Concern was expressed by several Members regarding a proposal to reduce funding to devolved community centres. This concern regarded both the proposal generally but also the lack of notice provided to these centres. Members noted that these centres were generally managed by volunteers and that the continued operation of these centres, which were important community hubs, was dependant upon the goodwill of local residents.

Devolved centres had only been contacted the previous week regarding this proposal, which greatly restricted their ability to constructively respond as part of the consultation process.

Members were reminded that other devolved centres did not have the same level of financial support and were able to function appropriately for the benefit of local residents. Consultation responses from devolved centres would be presented as part of the report to the Executive.

There was debate regarding the continuing NNC subsidy to Chester House and the lack of parking charges.

It was noted that the subsidy to Chester House was reducing in 2023/24. Income generation from the facility was ahead of target. There were significant income streams from events and facilities at the site. It was noted that NNC were bound by funding agreements, and that the cost of closure of the site in full or part would result in significant claw back from funders. The aim was to maximise public usage of the site for organised events and for casual usage.

Neighbourhood Accounts Budget Changes 2022/23 to 2023/24

Members noted the 7% rental increase proposed for 2023/24, whilst recognising that this would still leave the HRA with significant financial pressures. It was noted that the current estimate for future years was 4%.

Members queried debt repayment for the HRA and whether payments were on schedule.

It was confirmed that both former CBC & KBC debt repayments were on schedule. The two repayment strategies were slightly different but neither were currently causing any concern.

With regard to the proposed move of reserves to cover increased investment in Repairs and Maintenance clarity was requested.

Primarily as a result of lockdown there was a backlog in repairs to Council properties. Whilst new repair requests could be met there was a need to invest further funds in reducing this backlog. It was being proposed that there was a one-off increase in funding in 2023/24 to achieve this. The availability of trades to complete this work was also a factor.

It was noted that the stock valuation was going to result in an increase of Revenue Contribution to Capital of £999k Corby & £540k Kettering. This was positive and resulted as a consequence of the increase in house prices. Members recognised that should house prices fall in the future this may need to be reviewed.

It was confirmed that this was a technical adjustment to comply with Government accountancy rules.

Members were keen to ensure that the two DSOs shared best practise and that economies of scale could be achieved.

It was noted that the DSOs were working towards a single supplier contract which should result in both savings and efficiencies.

Members again expressed a desire to see the unification of the two accounts into one.

This was being worked on and officers had started to map out the process for achieving this. It would not be a simple task but it was stressed that NNC does have a single HRA with two neighbourhood accounts. There was no deadline for this work to be completed however progress was being made and could be monitored by Members.

Members queried reference made during the presentation to the Tenant Advisory Panel and queried the composition of this.

It was stated that there were 8 representatives from each neighbourhood (Corby & Kettering) and the composition of this and membership would be provided.

It was noted that in 2023/24 there were increases in Repairs & Maintenance proposed of £500k Corby & £400k Kettering, then a reduction in growth bid to £100k for each.

It was confirmed that this was to address the backlog in both areas during 2023/24 then reduce in subsequent years to a more sustainable increase in budget.

Capital Programme

There was a brief discussion regarding the Capital Programme. It was recognised that there was a planned programme of maintenance and replacement. This was based on an assessment of housing stock. The service was seeking to standardise equipment and stock, although the variety of house types etc would need to be assessed. Items that required immediate replacement would be actioned under the repairs budget outside of the pre-planned maintenance budget.

Members queried the number of boiler replacements in a year and the cost of these. In addition Members sought assurance that other energy efficient and “greener” boilers were being considered.

The data on boiler replacements would be provided. Confirmation was given that where suitable “greener” options were explored and any replacement equipment future-proofed, although this was dependent upon the type and construction of the property in question.

Adult Services

Commissioning & Performance

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Commissioning & Performance. These included: -

- Increase collaboration within the 4 localities for population outcomes and less transactional commissioning, working with the VCS for embedding enabling and diversion services
- Complete homecare re-tender moving to dynamic purchasing system and tiered funding to support rural communities.
- Develop the micro provider and PA market to meet needs in hard-to-reach rural locations
- Recommission the advocacy contract to ensure there is a North Northamptonshire dedicated service.
- Mobilise contracts that use 'Individual Service Funds' for individuals with complex needs –supporting greater flexibility and allowing for fluctuation in need, achieving better outcomes
- Improve the utilisation of the Shaw PPP beds.
- Disaggregate Personal Budget Support Service (cost £125k)
- Support our CQC registered services to achieve a minimum of 'Good' in their CQC ratings
- Embed place-based model of commissioning and contract oversight within 4 key localities in North Northants supporting better community links and enhancing the quality of our commissioned services

Members requested clarification regarding the term dynamic purchasing system, particularly in relation to rural areas.

It was confirmed that the rates applying to customers in rural areas were higher, to cover higher travel/mileage costs. This was to ensure that customers in rural areas were able to receive a comparable level of service to customers in urban areas.

Members queried the saving of £125k with regard to the Personal Budget Support Service.

It was confirmed that this would be hosted by NNC and there would be a consequential staffing budget saving to the Council.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Commissioning & Performance. These included: -

- Increasing difficulties sourcing home care availability – competition with other industries for recruitment and retention of staff is high. This impacts on

individuals awaiting care in their own home and needing support on discharge from hospital.

- Risk of provider failure as costs of running continue to increase due to cost of living rises – particularly if the fair cost of care is not possible to implement due to new burdens not being adequately funded.
- Social Care reform – care cap delayed but still an expectation to move towards Fair Cost of Care and to develop sustainable social care markets.
- Social Care reform – fair cost of care: grant funding for implementation but unclear whether new burdens funding to support implementation.

Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider. These included: -

- Provider Services Transformation – Review consultation feedback, decision and implementation.
- Linked to Provider services Transformation - Recruitment to staffing vacancies – reduce agency spend.
- Shared Lives Disaggregation, development and growth of service
- Preparation for Liberty Protection Safeguards.
- Finalise negotiations for running of Thackley Green Specialist Care Centre.
- Strengthen Safeguarding practice - further improve response for vulnerable adults and promote safety of local residents.
- Regulated service improvement plans (KLOEs) and fully embed self-audit programme.
- Further develop the assistive technology offer to provide greater independence.
- Develop ongoing Emergency Duty Team proposals alongside Children's Trust.

In relation to the consultation outcomes regarding Provider Services Transformation this was delegated to the Executive Member to implement.

Members would be kept updated.

It was recognised that there was a high dependency on agency staff.

The service would be seeking to reduce spend on agency staff, and retain and recruit permanent staff. This was a corporate issue and the outcome of the current Pay & Grading exercise was awaited.

It was noted that there was a backlog of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard cases.

The number had reduced from 1800 to 900 and this was commended, however further work was required ahead of the introduction of Liberty Protection Safeguards.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Safeguarding, Wellbeing & Provider. These included: -

- High number of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard assessments and authorisations remain with no clear date for implementation of Liberty Protection Standards (LPS)
- Provider services – facilities upgrading/service offers – may require investment in the short term to maintain service/reduce health and safety risks.
- Provider services, staffing and quality challenges – improvements set out in transformation consultation concluded on 15 January 2023
- Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) recruitment challenges.
- Thackley Green Specialist Care Centre – ongoing negotiations, contractual agreements and services development requirements may delay implementation further in to 23/24

Members requested an update with regard to Thackley Green.

Discussions were underway regarding NNC taking over the facility from WNC. Currently negotiations were being conducted with the NHS regarding their potential usage of the site. It was hoped that mobilisation on site would commence from 1st April 2023, however it was important that NNC conducted full due diligence and so if this target date slipped into early 2023/24 that decision would be taken. Members would be kept updated.

There was a general discussion regarding the assumption often cited by hospitals that “bed blocking” was caused due to deficiencies in local Adult Services.

The numbers awaiting transfer from local hospitals into Adult Services care were relatively low. There were a number of factors that could cause over stay in hospitals. Adult Services monitored the situation on a daily basis and action taken to minimise delays.

Members requested a breakdown of data in relation to the transfer of residents from NHS to Adult Services care.

MTFP

It was noted that the £1,788m cost under Specialist Care Centre, was largely off-set by a saving under Adult Services MTFP.

Adult Services

Service Objectives

Members received a presentation detailing the service objectives for Adult Services. These included: -

- Undertake statutory assessments of need in line with the Care Act 2014.

- To fully embed the practice and quality improvements focussing on strengths-based practice associated with the “Three Conversations model.
- To review the first year implementation of the Target Operating Model and develop the next phase implementation and embedding of the approach, including whether the team and staffing structures are appropriate to the delivery of the model.
- To continue to consider and deliver the benefits associated with integrated working with health, in particular in relation to the Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire (iCAN) programme and place based working arrangements (Community Wellbeing Forums and Local Area Partnerships).
- Promote and enable people to regain independence or become more independent
- Assess and support the needs of informal carers in their caring roles.
- Continue to develop the performance management approach to provide assurance to the council of the efficacy of the services’ approach to supporting people that have or may have social care support needs.

Members queried whether performance on adaptations to properties had improved. That often resulted in delays of patients being discharged from hospital.

It was noted that significant adaptations were conducted under DFG, the responsibility of Place & Economy. There were not significant delays for minor adaptations or equipment.

Service Risks

Members received a presentation detailing the service risks for Adult Services. These included: -

- Availability of external social care provision continues to impact on the ability of adult services teams to support people in a timely way.
- Key roles such as social workers remain difficult to recruit to.
- Social care reform – additional demand for assessments of need may require further staffing to implement - delayed but still need to plan.
- Ordinary Residence whilst believed to be resolved has resurfaced related to disaggregation – intensive activity required to minimise risks of transfers of cases from WNC.
- Hospital pressures remain and require intensive support to ensure costs are appropriate for NNC. Flu season has exacerbated this in 2022/2023 winter.

It was noted that there was currently a 50% vacancy figure for social workers.

Work on seeking to recruit to vacancies was ongoing, and benchmarking of pay rates undertaken. Increases in the National Living Wage may also impact on future years’ budgets.

Public Health

An overview of existing Public Health services was provided.

Core services	Current status
Substance Misuse	Commissioned
Sexual Health	Commissioned
Management & Admin	NNC Staff
Health Protection	West Lead (CWA)
Health Improvement	NNC Staff
Health Promotion	NNC Staff
Falls Service	NNC Staff
Commissioned Health	Commissioned
Mental Health	NNC Staff
0-19 Services	Commissioned
Adult Learning Fund	NNC Staff

It was noted by Members that the service was seeking to disaggregate from contracts over time.

An overview of key areas of activity was provided. It was noted that the service had disaggregated in October 2022.

- Core public health services delivered in line with grant funding, strategy and statutory requirements.
- Supporting the re-shaping of NNC PH Team post disaggregation e.g. interim capacity; service equity.
- Service gaps to be identified and addressed.
- Services with exit plans (includes CWAs, identified realignment opportunities etc)
- Project related activity (funded through Reserves, linking to other grant activity and delivering public health outcomes in line with ambitions).

- Working with Finance colleagues to establish PH budget position post disaggregation.

Overview

An overview of Public Health funding and income was provided.

- All ALS funding allocations are ringfenced, funding from the ESFA and actual funding received is dependent on delivery up to the maximum allocation. ALS is a hosted service for West. The current make up of funding allocations are as follows:
- Community Learning grant allocation of circa £2.05m
- Currently spending and drawing down full allocation within funding rules
- Accredited 'Skills' funding grant allocation of circa £450,000.
- Currently spending approximately £120,000 of allocation resulting in circa £330,000 claw back per year
- This has been the profile for the past 3 years.
- Study Programme grant allocation.
- Reduced funding allocation of circa £19,000 for 2022/23. Previous profile of circa £100,000. Reduction is due to lagged funding following lower delivery during and post covid-19. Ongoing inherited operational deficit of £50-£100,000 per annum
- Multiply grant of circa £1.9m across three years
- Year one allocation (circa £580,000); grant awards being made to deliver projects meeting the vision of the council.
- Year two and three allocation (circa £670,000 p.a.)

Actions and next steps

- Launch new 'skills' courses – March 2023.
- Appoint Multiply and "Skills" posts to enable delivery: Nov 2023 – Jan 2024.
- Roll out revised Curriculum Planning process – Dec 22, planning for 2023/24 to commence March 2023.
- Improved marketing of courses to increase learner numbers and start to develop growth of income and capacity – March 2023.
- Formal proposal and review of Study Programme approach and staffing –roll out August 2023.
- Review accommodation strategy for Study Programme – Jan 2023.
- Develop and launch commissioning model for L2B courses – launched by March 2023.
- Review staffing and consider restructure for ALS to deal with potential funding change – Feb 2023 (subject to formal completion of public consultation).

Members asked for confirmation that the Public Health (PH) grant would be used in line with the requirements.

It was confirmed that part of the NNC PH Strategy included a paper setting out the financial framework for the service including how the PH funds can be used.

END