

## Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 11th May, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, NN17 1QG

### Present:-

#### Members

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

Also in attendance – Councillors Wendy Brackenbury, Jean Addison, Jim Hakewill, Melanie Coleman and Martyn Reuby (Corby Town Council)

### 430 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Chair of the Finance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Mark Pengelly and the Executive Director of Children's Services, AnnMarie Dodds.

### 431 Members' Declarations of Interest

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

### 432 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 4 - Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 12 – March 2023)	Cllr Valerie Anslow
Item 5 – North Northamptonshire Vision	Cllrs Jean Addison and Jim Hakewill
Item 6 – Family Hubs Programme Update	Cllrs Jean Addison, Valerie Anslow and Mark Pengelly
Item 8 – Procurement of Grounds Maintenance Consortia Contract	Cllr Valerie Anslow

Item 9 – Road Maintenance in North Northamptonshire – Petition Referral from Full Council	Cllrs Martyn Reuby (Corby TC) and Jim Hakewill
Item 10 – Capital Programme Update	Cllr Jim Hakewill

Cllr Mark Pengelly had provided his apologies for the meeting and consequently did not speak on Item 6.

Cllr Jean Addison arrived in the meeting after Item 5 had been debated and consequently did not speak on this item.

Cllr Valerie Anslow was not in attendance at the meeting and consequently did not speak on Items 4 and 8.

#### **433 Performance Indicator Report 2022/23 (Period 12 - March 2023)**

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

Cllr Bunday reported that the Period 12 report indicated a positive picture of Council performance and an encouraging direction of travel. A total of 58% of indicators were performing above target, with 11% within tolerance levels and 28% below target. The remaining 3% had insufficient data to provide a direction of travel at the current time. It was heard that of the 135 PIs reported for the period, 29 had shown improvement, with 29 deteriorating since Period 11.

Cllr Bunday noted that the 0% response rate in period for Individual Rights Requests completed within statutory timescales was the result of a single point of failure arising from unforeseen absence within the Governance Team. All six cases had now been responded to and closed, with steps taken to prevent a similar occurrence in future.

The meeting heard that although Customer Services call percentages answered within target had fallen, the volume of calls received had risen by 10,000 from the previous reporting period, largely as a result of enquiries relating to Council Tax, green waste and tree felling. In addition, Customer Services had assisted over 11,000 more customers than in Period 11.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to welcome the improvement in the PI relating to NHS Health-checks, with provisions put in place to improve performance having had a positive impact on the number of health-checks offered.

Cllr Harriet Pentland commended the work of the Council and its officers in relation to the high percentage of waste being diverted from landfill.

Cllr David Brackenbury welcomed the report overall and noted that the Council remained consistently above national benchmarks in terms of planning performance and made reference to the 5-year housing land supply that continued to be maintained.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 12 (March) 2022/23, 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 12 (March) 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.

### **434 North Northamptonshire Vision**

The Chair invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the meeting. Cllr Hakewill made reference to the cost of engaging consultants during the initial phase of the North Northamptonshire Vision development process, stating that setting up public meetings to allow residents and local businesses to contribute to the vision would be more beneficial. Cllr Hakewill then made extended reference to Kettering Leisure Village and was informed by the Council's Monitoring Officer that comments relating to this matter were not relevant to the item under consideration.

In response to Cllr Hakewill's comments, the Chair spoke to note that there had already been an initial engagement process involving community representatives, local businesses and elected members where Cllr Hakewill had been an enthusiastic participant.

The Chair then introduced a report that sought to present the rationale, thinking and work undertaken to date in the creation of a North Northamptonshire Vision for the future up to 2050. The report also requested that the Executive support further work being undertaken, including testing the priorities and refining the wider vision, developing formal and informal partnerships to deliver on the goals set, and coalesce this work through a Big 50 Conference to be held in late Spring 2023. The report also sought approval to bring a further report back to the Executive in late Summer/early Autumn 2023 with the outcomes of the conference alongside a commitment to deliver the Council's role within the action plan.

The Chair noted the Council's wide aspirations for the whole of North Northamptonshire, to be shared and co-designed by involving key stakeholders and providing a great opportunity to collectively look to the future and imagine what could be for the area. External consultants had been commissioned in October 2022 to work alongside a small team led by the Chair and the Chief Executive to undertake preparatory work that had resulted in the initial draft vision presented as an appendix to the report before members.

It was heard that the current document detailed what was and was not included as part of the vision, the need for collective work, outlined the proposed future vision and highlighted three key priorities to drive further work required to achieve the vision. Work was now required to refine the document and widen its ownership via the Big 50 Conference that would further engage stakeholders.

The meeting noted that the development of the North Northamptonshire Vision would provide an opportunity for everyone across the area to be involved in providing input to a process that would result in North Northamptonshire becoming a better place by 2050, where everyone was able to lead their best lives.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to welcome the report and noted the importance of partnership working to maximise the impact of the vision outcomes and make North Northamptonshire better than it already was.

Cllr David Howes also welcomed the report, noting the positive opportunity such a piece of work offered in improving the lives of residents and made reference to the issues of population growth and rural transport issues.

Cllr Helen Howell commended the report and the work that had gone into the production of the draft vision, noting the importance of wide engagement from stakeholders.

Cllr Graham Lawman spoke to note the opportunity for residents and businesses to influence the direction of the vision as it was shaped. Cllr Lawman noted that having just three key priorities made the vision workable and its outcomes achievable.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the document and the need to involve as many stakeholders as possible. The Council wished to promote a balanced economy, with varied and high-quality employment opportunities and work relating to the shaping of the North Northamptonshire Vision would provide valuable evidence for all of the Council's directorates.

Cllr Harriet Pentland also spoke to emphasise the need for broad engagement with residents and businesses and to build upon joint-working opportunities.

The Chair concluded the debate by noting the importance of getting the vision right, to involve all areas of the community in its development and to create real buy-in from stakeholders in the process.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive:

- a) Noted and commented on the work undertaken to date on the development of the North Northamptonshire Vision (attached as **Appendix A**)
- b) Agreed that the Leader and Chief Executive lead on the development of the Big 50 Conference, to be held late Spring 2023.

- c) Noted that the outcomes of the Conference and the final vision document will be further considered by the Executive along with a proposed commitment to deliver the Council's role within the action plan.

Reason for Recommendations – Local councils are ideally placed to act as place shapers and enablers of change in their area. North Northamptonshire Council, in its Corporate Plan adopted in December 2021, made a clear commitment to working in partnership with a wide range of organisations from public, private and voluntary sectors to help improve the quality of life in North Northamptonshire. The work on setting out a broader, longer-term vision for North Northamptonshire represents the next natural step in the achievement of this aim. A shared vision for the future of North Northamptonshire will help focus the efforts of organisations working locally on achieving a common set of priorities and goals for the area. The recommendations ensure that progress to date on setting out a wider vision is understood and that the future activities required to manage a transparent, inclusive and engaging process are in place.

Alternative Options Considered:

- i) Continue 'as is'. In practical terms, this would mean continuing to focus on the Council's own vision and leaving partner agencies to focus on theirs. There is nothing wrong with this approach. Indeed, there is already a lot of activity focused on aligning approaches and target outcomes which are embedded in the current ways of working. It does however still leave a gap in terms of a common and widely accepted vision for the area that cuts across all sectors and partners.
- ii) Develop a future vision without facilitating wider partner engagement this is not considered a viable option. For the future vision to be effective, it needs to be jointly developed and jointly owned. In writing a future vision in isolation the Council would do little to engage partners and encourage ownership and would not be utilising its unique position as an enabler and shaper of future place.

#### **435 Family Hubs Programme Update**

The Chair invited Cllr Jean Addison to address the meeting. Cllr Addison queried why Corby's Pen Green facility was not being utilised as the Corby base for Family Hub service provision for those aged 5-19 years, when it already offered an excellent service for those aged between 0-5 years.

The Chair thanked Cllr Addison for her comments before inviting the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, Cllr Scott Edwards to introduce a report that sought to provide the Executive with an annual report on the progress in relation to the implementation of the Family Hubs Programme in North Northamptonshire, as well as identifying the first two localities to develop Family Hub Networks in North Northamptonshire, a decision reached based on data, intelligence and information gathering.

Cllr Edwards noted that a previous report on the subject had been submitted to the Executive in September 2022, detailing the award of approximately £4m of funding from Government to enable the Council to develop and operate a Family Hubs

Programme alongside a variety of partner organisations and stakeholders. The programme would offer support to families with children aged 0-19 years (and up to 25 for SEND), to ensure children were given the best start in life and were school-ready.

It was heard that following the Council's successful application for funding, a Family Hubs Programme Board had been created and an implementation plan for the programme devised and a summary of the key milestones delivered within 2022/23 as per the delivery plan was highlighted.

Cllr Edwards reported that the first new Family Hub Network prototype would be developed in the Wellingborough locality, with the town selected based on intelligence and data gathered regarding the level of need and lack of historic development in services to support families. Simultaneously, a hub would also be developed in the Corby locality offering a 5-19 years Family Hub Network. Further hubs in Kettering and the former East Northamptonshire area would be developed in due course.

Details of the finances involved as the programme rolled out were highlighted and it was noted that the University of Northampton had been appointed as the research and evaluation partner to take the lead for active liaison with stakeholders to develop a Social Impact Evaluation framework for ongoing monitoring and reporting for benefits, outcomes and success.

The Chair spoke to welcome the report, noting that the decision for the location of the initial Family Hubs was based upon need identified as a result of data and intelligence gathering. The Chair also recognised the excellent existing provision at Pen Green for 0-5 years family support.

Cllr Helen Harrison spoke to welcome the report and the level of work that had gone into the programme to date, noting that gaps in existing family support provision had been identified with a clear outcome indicating that Wellingborough should provide the prototype family hub. Cllr Harrison stated that there was confidence the hubs would make a big difference to local areas and looked forward to the future development of additional hubs in Kettering and the former East Northamptonshire area.

Cllrs Matt Binley and Graham Lawman welcomed the report and the use of a wealth of data to formulate the decision to proceed with Wellingborough as the prototype hub, noting the importance of a positive start in life for families with young children.

Cllr Helen Howell also welcomed the report and spoke to emphasise the need for the family hubs to be accessible for all residents.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Executive noted:

- a) Progress to date in meeting the key milestones, as set out in Table 1 (section 4.7) which align with the DfE requirements and grant terms.
- b) The planned roll out of implementation of the development of Family Hubs in NNC as set out in section 5.3 of the report

- c) The allocation and breakdown of the £4m grant funding secured for the Programme period 2022-25, and the process to date of spend and carry over for 2022/23, as set out in Table 4 (section 7.1.3) of the report

Reason for Recommendations – Consistency with previous decision resolved by Executive on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (see section 8. Background Papers)

Alternative Options Considered – The alternative option would be to not provide an update and approve the allocation of the funding however this option was discounted due to the nature of this report being an Annual Update report and the need to allocate the funding as per the Executive resolved decision on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (see Section 8. Background Papers)

#### **436 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Contractor Procurement**

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Housing Communities and Levelling-up, Cllr Matt Binley to introduce a report that sought approval from the Executive for the procurement of Capital Programmes and Projects for Housing Property Services and, via delegation of authority, to appoint appropriate contractors and enter into respective contracts.

Cllr Binley reported that the Council was responsible for the repairs, maintenance and refurbishment of its 8084 properties. Whilst a considerable amount of these works were carried out by in-house teams, there remained a requirement to contract out certain works, especially those requiring specialist and niche skills, if the work was seasonal or for other operational reasons.

The meeting noted that, when it came to outsourcing capital works, the Council had a responsibility to ensure best value for money, operational viability and to consider whether specialist skills or equipment were required.

Cllr Binley stated that discounted alternative options considered as part of the of the report would be revisited before the expiration of the contracts through a viability study. The five service areas requiring contracts were noted as being:

- Electrical installation condition reports
- Energy efficiency
- Kitchens and bathrooms
- Roof replacements
- Homes for the Future

Should the recommendations be approved, it would result in the harmonisation of four of the service areas across both the Kettering and Corby neighbourhood accounts, with the kitchen and bathroom contract being solely for the Kettering account.

An open procurement process would be followed for the majority of options, with a mini competition framework being used for electrical testing and energy improvements contracts, the contracts being procured for between four and five years. The procurement process was anticipated to commence in June 2023 and conclude by February 2024.

The Chair welcomed the feedback of the Scrutiny Commission as part of the process whilst Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the report as a whole.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing, to procure, negotiate, award, and enter into contracts for the delivery of Electrical Installation Condition Reports, Energy Efficiency upgrades, Kitchens & Bathrooms replacements, Roof Replacements and Homes for the Future retrofit upgrades, to ensure that the Council's housing stock is maintained.

Reasons for Recommendation: By approving this recommendation, Council officers will be able to: -

- Closely align services with Government legislation, regulation and initiatives, through the use of procured contractors across the two Housing Property Services team areas.
- Procure the new contracts in the most efficient and timely manner, to ensure a fully compliant procurement process is in place for the delivery of its services.
- Provide better value for money to the Council.
- Ensure tenants benefit from the investment in the housing stock across North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered –The main alternative to procuring contractors to complete these capital works programmes would be to expand the Council's in house Direct Labour Organisation. This option has been rejected at the present time whilst we focus on harmonising our approach to other areas of the Housing Property Services team. Our Direct Labour Organisation resources are currently being fully utilised to reduce our responsive repairs backlog and undertake void repairs, meaning that we do not currently have capacity within the team for these additional capital works. Some of the projects, such as roofing, are also only expected to occur during a set period of time each year. The option to expand the Council's in house Direct Labour Organisation will be explored further, via a viability study, during the lifetime of the proposed contracts within this report. A further option that will also be explored as part of this study is the suitability of a hybrid model of part contractor and part in house.

### **437 Procurement of Grounds Maintenance Consortia Contract**

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, Cllr Graham Lawman to present a report that sought approval from the Executive to commence a procurement project for the provision of grounds maintenance services



for the legacy East Northants green space locations and for local town and parish councils.

Cllr Lawman reported that the current consortia contract had been in operation since 2000 for four parishes that formed part of the former East Northamptonshire area. This contract was set to end in December 2023 and Consortia members had agreed in principle to the continuation of the arrangement under a new contract for an initial term of three years with two additional one-year extensions, subject to the tender price being received and formal approval from the Executive to progress the contract procurement. The client and monitoring function for the service would be provided by the Council, for which it would receive an annual management fee of £25,000 per annum.

The meeting heard that the cost of the new contract remained unknown until procurement had been undertaken and this could either be through an open process or utilise a framework; the latter potentially providing a quicker and cheaper outcome but having the possible disadvantage of preventing local businesses from applying. Should the procurement process not conclude by the end of the current contract, an interim contractual arrangement would be required.

Concluding, Cllr Lawman noted that the grounds maintenance services in question could not viably be provided in-house by the Council or by the parishes forming part of the consortia.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome the report, noting that it would provide certainty for the parishes involved and further welcomed the outcome of the procurement process.

## **RESOLVED**

### **KEY DECISION**

That the Executive:

- a) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Assistant Director for Assets & Environment, to commence and conclude a procurement process to identify a preferred bidder and enter into legal agreements to appoint a preferred bidder for the provision of this service. Contractual arrangements will be subject to the Consortia members formally committing to the contract.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Assistant Director Assets & Environment, to enter into suitable interim arrangements to ensure continued provision of the Grounds Maintenance Services should the procurement process not complete before the expiry of the current contract.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- a) This approach ensures the Council has a legally procured and compliant contract in place for the provision of Grounds Maintenance Services.
- b) This approach provides best value for the Council in terms of the amenity land which is not already managed as part of the in-house arrangements.
- c) This approach allows the Council and its Consortia partners to ensure that any contract price has been market tested and allows the Council to compare its own service costs against that of commercial providers, which will enhance the Council's own commercial services.
- d) The recommendation presents an opportunity to provide a quality and cost-effective solution to local parish councils.
- e) This approach contributes to the resourcing of a multi-disciplinary team who deliver additional benefits such as patrols and promoting environmental quality by utilising education and enforcement techniques where appropriate.

## Alternative Options Considered:

- Officers have explored whether the Council's in-house teams could take on the Town & Parish Council contract, however, as most of the land is not the responsibility of the Council, including cutting of highway verges delegated to the parish councils, there would be significant setup costs for equipment and vehicles, along with additional resource required to do this. Further, the Council would not be able to make a return on the contract above its operating costs, therefore, an outsourced model is the preferred method of providing this service.
- As the Council has limited land ownership and the local highway verges are the responsibility of the Consortia members, the Council could step away from the contract management role it takes in this area and allow the local Town and Parish Council to make their own contractual arrangement, however, it would still need to make provision for the maintenance of locations within the operational area that are the responsibility of the Council.

## **438 Road Maintenance In North Northamptonshire - Petition Referral from Full Council**

The Chair invited Cllr Martyn Reuby of Corby Town Council to address the meeting. Cllr Reuby stated that he was speaking in support of a petition that had been submitted to the March meeting of Full Council and subsequently referred onto the Executive regarding potholes affecting the roads of North Northamptonshire. Cllr Reuby noted that the petition had gained significant traction and residents were very concerned regarding the state of the roads in the Council area, querying the status of an action plan to rectify issues. Cllr Reuby stated that the Council's contractor, Kier,

should be held to account and a clear action plan presented to indicate how the situation would be addressed.

The Chair thanked Cllr Reuby for his attendance before inviting Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the Executive. Cllr Hakewill called for the matter to be considered by the Council's scrutiny function to understand why the roads were failing so badly compared to neighbouring areas when a new highways contract had only been awarded in September.

The Chair then invited the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, Cllr Graham Lawman to introduce the petition referral report. Cllr Lawman thanked the petition organisers for bringing the issue to Full Council and stated that the matter was of great concern to the Council, with weekly meetings being held with the Council's Highways contractor, Kier to address the problem. The Council remained keen to receive advice as to the location of road defects which would be actioned utilising the relevant criteria for repair. In addition, Kier had surveyors out across the road network to identify defects for repair.

Cllr Lawman stated that the issue of highway maintenance was a national one, with a significant funding gap resulting in the Council undertaking repairs within its budget envelope, although a further £1.5m of taxpayers' money had been committed towards highways upgrades in North Northamptonshire, with a further £1.4m provided by Government.

The meeting heard that a new annual plan with a listed schedule of works had been agreed and would be published on the Council website before the July meeting of Executive. A variety of other highways-related plans were also in the process of being finalised as the Council continued to look at every opportunity to improve the road network whilst seeking to ensure that as many quality first-time repairs were undertaken. In conclusion, Cllr Lawman noted that the answer to the issue lay in receiving additional funding from Government, an area that it continued to pursue.

Cllrs Helen Harrison and David Howes spoke to note that the Council was fully aware of the condition of roads in North Northamptonshire and wanted them to be in the best possible condition for its residents and businesses, although recent progress was being made in this regard.

Cllr David Brackenbury welcomed the ongoing work to prioritise road defects, whilst Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to note that the Council understood the frustrations caused by the current condition of the road network and assured the public that the Executive was committed to addressing the matter.

The Chair spoke to reiterate that work on a highway improvement plan was already well underway and noted the additional £1.5m of funding from the Council and the £1.4m from Government that was beginning to make a positive difference to the roads of North Northamptonshire. The Chair stated that he was meeting with Kier later that day, with the Council and the contractor aligned to ensure the best roads road possible inside the available budget envelope.

The Executive noted the petition from Full Council and would continue to explore opportunities to address the situation as set out above.

## 439 Capital Programme Update

The Chair invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the Executive. Cllr Hakewill welcomed the investment in Mawsley Primary School SEND Unit but requested improved communication with ward members on such projects due to a lack of awareness of the proposal coming forward.

The Chair thanked Cllr Hakewill for his comments before inviting 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.

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

The Chair thanked officers for their work in allowing the Council to be able to invest in its schools and nurseries, while Cllrs Edwards, Brackenbury and Howes all spoke to welcome the investment in SEND places.

### **RESOLVED**

#### KEY DECISION

That Executive approved the following changes into the capital programme, to be moved from the Development Pool:

- a. Mawsley Primary School SEND Unit - £186.4k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital grant.
- b. Thrapston Primary School SEND Unit - £372.3k in 2023/24 which is to be funded from Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital grant.

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

- To support the statutory delivery of SEND school places across North Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered:

- As both the schemes in this report are grant funded, the use of the funding is in line with the agreements, so there are no alternative options proposed in this report.

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Chair

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Date

The meeting closed at 11.03 am