

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 18th January, 2024 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 David Howes
Councillor David Brackenbury	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Mark Rowley
Councillor Scott Edwards	

Also in attendance – Councillors Wendy Brackenbury, Valerie Anslow, Jim Hakewill, Lyn Buckingham and Matt Keane

562 Remembrance of Councillor Michael Tebbutt

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers paid tribute to Cllr Michael Tebbutt who had recently passed away. Members and officers were then invited to stand to observe a minute's silence in remembrance of Cllr Tebbutt.

563 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Executive Director of Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing, David Watts.

564 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

565 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 2023/24 (Period 8 – November 2023)	Cllr William Colquhoun, Valerie Anslow
Item 5 – Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan 2024-25	Cllr Jim Hakewill, Valerie Anslow, Dorothy Maxwell

Item 6 – Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy and Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Northamptonshire	Cllr Jim Hakewill, Lyn Buckingham, Dorothy Maxwell
Item 7 – Specialist Drug and Alcohol Treatment for Rough Sleepers, or at risk of Rough Sleeping	Cllr Jim Hakewill, Valerie Anslow
Item 8 – Making of a Public Spaces protection Order (PSPO) for Rushden Town Centre	Cllr Dorothy Maxwell
Item 9 – Adoption of the Corby LCWIP	Cllr Lyn Buckingham, Dorothy Maxwell, William Colquhoun
Item 10 – Cleaning Service Contract Procurement	Cllr Lyn Buckingham
Item 11 – Budget Forecast 2023-24 at Period 8	Cllr Lyn Buckingham, Jim Hakewill, William Colquhoun

Cllr William Colquhoun was not in attendance and consequently did not speak in relation to agenda items 4, 9 and 11.

Cllr Dorothy opted not to speak in relation to agenda items 5, 6 and 9.

566 Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 8 - November 2023)

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to speak. Cllr Anslow noted a reduction in the number of rough sleepers and commended officers for their role in moving people into accommodation. Cllr Anslow stated homelessness remained an issue for the Council, with figures for temporary accommodation (TA) use and the Keyways housing waiting list rising, referencing the need for a Housing Strategy alongside a vision for affordable homes and new social housing. Cllr Anslow concluded by requesting figures for the number of people in TA in each of the major towns in the area, the number affordable homes built and occupied during 2023/24 and the number of new social houses constructed in the same period.

The Chair then 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 (PIs), as well as setting out the progress that was being made in the development of the Council's performance monitoring arrangements.

It was heard that the Period 8 report contained 56 indicators, of those, 53 were reported in-month and three were annual targets. Of the 28 PIs with established targets, 16 indicators were on or exceeding their target, with three inside tolerance levels and nine performing below target levels. It was noted that of the 46 PIs that had a determined polarity for direction of travel, performance had improved for 19, with 15 deteriorating since the previous reporting period.

Cllr Bunday referred to the Council's Corporate Priorities, noting that the Better, Brighter Futures commitment was the only priority currently below target. The Safe and Thriving Places commitment was performing well, with 53% of PIs exceeding their targets. Positive reference was also made to Modern Public Services and Active Lives commitments.

Cllr Bunday reported that the PIs relating to collection rates for both Council Tax and Business Rates were performing well.

Cllr Mark Rowley responded to Cllr Anslow's comments noting that the figures requested above would be provided outside of the meeting. Cllr Rowley noted his encouragement that the majority of performance indicators for Housing were travelling in a positive direction and confirmed that there was currently no-one from North Northamptonshire resident in temporary accommodation outside of the area. Rent collection rates were also noted as being positive.

RESOLVED

That the Executive noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 8 (November) 2023/24, set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

Reason for Recommendations – to better understand the Council's performance as measured by Key Performance Indicators as at Period 8 (November) 2023/24.

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

567 Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan 2024-2025

The Chair invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the meeting Cllr Hakewill queried whether it was considered acceptable to invest £855,000 in Culture, Tourism and Heritage in the current financial climate. Cllr Hakewill questioned when the Cornerstone development would open, and whether it would be during 2024/25 impacting finances during that period. Cllr Hakewill also queried risks associated with potential failure to implement new governance model proposals contained within the report and the scale of savings detailed within the business plan. Finally, Cllr Hakewill queried costings for a greenhouse project at Chester House.

The Chair thanked Cllr Hakewill for his comments and invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the Executive. Cllr Anslow welcomed the report and the vision it contained in bringing services together, noting that North Northamptonshire had plenty to promote, although additional attractions in urban areas could bring visitors to the area's town centres. Cllr Anslow stated that the Council needed to work with town and parish councils to improve economic activities in the local towns. Cllr Anslow also welcomed governance proposals that acknowledged the wealth of knowledge offered by local residents.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow for her contribution before inviting Cllr Helen Howell, Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism to present a report that introduced the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan for the 2024/2025 financial year and further sought its adoption by the Executive.

It was heard that the Council established its Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service in September 2022, with a recent staffing restructure streamlining various departments

and resulting in the development of the Business Plan before members. The plan aligned with the Council's commitment to strategic development and commitments that formed part of the Council's Corporate Plan, maximising commercial opportunities, showing financial prudence and preservation of the area's unique cultural identity and its approval would facilitate the plan's integration into the service.

Cllr Howell reported that the plan outlined a clear and strategic vision for the Culture, Tourism and Heritage departments, providing a roadmap for their development and growth and ensuring that the Council had a well-defined direction to safeguard, promote and celebrate the assets of North Northamptonshire. The plan consolidated various departments under a unified approach, fostering operational efficiency through streamlined processes and resource sharing, enhancing collaboration leading to cost savings and optimised service delivery. It was considered that under such a cohesive plan, the service would be better positioned to achieve its goals, make best use of resources to optimise income and to provide a seamless and integrated experience for both residents and visitors.

The meeting noted that the plan outlined future projects to support the future sustainability of the service, including restoration of Kettering Museum, potential relocation and expansion plans for Corby Heritage Centre and continued business development of Chester House Estate, with a focus on grants and funding opportunities.

Details were provided for the Chester House Estate project, with the meeting noting visitor figures, income targets and a number of awards the project had won since opening in October 2021. The meeting also received an overview of the Cornerstone project, Corby Heritage Centre, the Discover Northamptonshire Hub at Rushden Lakes and the Greenway Programme.

Cllr Howell reported on two further destination sites inherited from the former East Northamptonshire Council operated through long-term leases by independent operators; Stanwick Lakes by Rockingham Forest Trust and Twywell Hills and Dales by the Land Trust, noting that costs associated with these contracts did not form part of the business plan.

It was heard that the current service plan and financial projection did not encompass the mobilisation and launch of the Cornerstone project which would entail significant expenses related to the core operations and commercial elements. Once a definitive opening timeframe was established, a comprehensive business plan would be developed for the department and lead to a revision of the overall Business Plan finances to incorporate the additional income and expenditure associated with Cornerstone operations.

It was heard that that the restructure and streamlining of departments had resulted in a reduction in the baseline budget of £172,000 for 2022/23, while income generation targets had been set to counterbalance reduced Council funding contributions in future years. The meeting noted that the Council aimed to establish new governance models including Charitable Trusts and community-led organisations for key landmarks as set out in the body of the report.

Cllr Howell thanked all officers, staff and volunteers who worked within the service area for their efforts that had allowed the Business Plan to be presented to the Executive for approval.

Cllr David Brackenbury welcomed the report and congratulated the team for producing it in a clear and comprehensive manner that allowed the breadth of the service to be clearly understood. Cllr Brackenbury noted that although the headline budget figure of £855,000 was a significant sum of money, it formed a small part of the Council's overall budget and was important to allow for the promotion of North Northamptonshire's culture, tourism and heritage offer that encourage visitors, new business and residents to the area.

Cllr Scott Edwards also welcomed the report noting that it was vital to protect the area's culture, tourism and heritage offer. Cllr Edwards thanked Cllr Anslow for her support on the matter and noted the importance of encouraging people to the area as well as referring to the benefits of the Creating Tomorrow college work at Chester House.

Cllr Matt Binley spoke to welcome the report, noting that the Council had a duty to duty to protect the area's heritage, noting the clear passion within the directorate to do so and suggesting that it would be shortsighted to get dispense of such assets. The Council's culture, tourism and heritage offer provided significant benefits and to remove support was deemed to be potentially irresponsible.

The Chair spoke to note the ambition and vision detailed within the report and commended both it and the fantastic work of officers and the Executive Member that had gone into the formation of the Business Plan before members.

Cllr Howell closed debate by thanking members of the Executive for their support in the plan to offer best value for the fantastic facilities in the area by bringing services together and providing a streamlined offer.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved and adopted the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Business Plan for the 2024/2025 financial year.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing to take the actions necessary to ensure successful delivery of the Business Plan.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- Approval of the Business Plan will facilitate the integration of the new Plan into the service, marking a significant milestone as we enter the 24/25 financial year, a period poised for continued achievement, growth, and sustained success.
- The Business Plan outlines a clear and strategic vision for the Culture, Tourism, and Heritage departments, providing a roadmap for their

development and growth. It ensures that the council has a well-defined direction to safeguard, promote, and celebrate the cultural heritage and tourism assets of North Northamptonshire.

- The Plan consolidates various departments under a unified approach, fostering operational efficiency through streamlined processes and resource sharing. Adopting this plan enhances collaboration, leading to cost savings and optimised service delivery.
- The Plan focuses on creating a seamless and immersive experience for both residents and visitors. By integrating educational programs, cultural events, and tourism promotion, the plan enhances the overall visitor experience, contributing to the attractiveness of North Northamptonshire as a destination.

Alternatives Options Considered: The primary alternative considered was to forego the development of a new single Business Plan for Culture, Tourism, and Heritage, opting to run the departments individually. However, this approach is not recommended due to significant cost and performance implications. Operating the departments independently would likely result in increased expenses, reduced operational efficiency, and a lack of cohesive strategic direction. By consolidating efforts, resources, and strategies under a cohesive plan, North Northamptonshire Council and the Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service is better positioned to achieve its goals. It will make best use of resources to optimise income and provide a seamless and integrated experience for both residents and visitors.

568 Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy and Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Northamptonshire

The Chair invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the Executive. Cllr Hakewill queried when the future report referenced in recommendation 3.1b would be submitted to the Executive. Cllr Hakewill asked when delivery arrangements and costings would be in place for the Local Visitor Economy Partnership Strategy. Cllr Hakewill stated that it was essential that individual venues within the strategy be provided with individual profit and loss accounts, with all direct costs and overheads allocated to each in proportion thereby offering a clear financial direction.

The Chair thanked Cllr Hakewill for his comments and invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to speak on this item. Cllr Buckingham welcomed the report, noting that the local area had much to offer in terms of history, open space and other amenities and the report before members was the strategic element to assist in bringing these together. Cllr Buckingham also referenced the need for connectivity between the various assets in the Council area.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her contribution and invited Cllr Helen Howell, Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism to introduce a report that sought to introduce the Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Strategy (NVES) for the whole county and further sought its adoption. It was reported that the strategy had been co-produced between North and West Northamptonshire Council's with involvement of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

The meeting heard that the report also set out the intention to develop a new private sector-led Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) Strategy to oversee and drive delivery of the NVES.

Cllr Howell stated that the overall vision for the proposals was to build a greater sense of pride across the county and drive economic growth by attracting visitors to the area, providing them with compelling reasons to do so through collaborative and creative work across the entire visitor economy. The strategy would not only focus on supporting a diverse and attractive offer, but considered how this offer was presented and the way the industry worked collaboratively towards greater success by developing strong links between people, places and sectors. It was noted that the report set out long-term goals as well as short and mid-term actions to invigorate the visitor economy and establish a new ambition for the industry in the county.

It was heard that in March 2021 the government had announced an independent review to assess how Destination Management Organisations across England were funded, structured and performed to establish whether there was a more efficient model for supporting tourism at a local level. The review published its report and analysis in September 2021, with one of the key recommendations being the establishment of accredited Local Visitor Economy Partnerships.

Cllr Howell reported that Visit England was creating a portfolio of nationally supported, strategic and high performing LVEPs providing strong local leadership and governance in tourism destinations across the country.

As a result, both North and West Northamptonshire Councils had agreed that a new strategy should be developed following unitarisation, with development work commencing in February 2022. The strategy would form a tool to work with Visit England to secure support and future government funding for tourism, whilst seeking to stem the recent and relative decline of the county's visitor economy.

The meeting was advised that the justification for co-production of the strategy was to develop a countywide strategy aligning with the requirements of the new LVEPs, which neither authority would be large enough to apply for individually. In addition, it was considered that the offer to visitors would be stronger and clearer for Northamptonshire as a whole. It was noted that this would not limit either authority from delivering local initiatives specific to their own area.

It was heard that both authorities would consider the strategy at their respective Executive meetings, with the intention to launch publicly and engage with partners, local businesses and other stakeholders. Approval of the strategy would allow for collaborative work to commence with the private sector with support from Visit England and the development of a Northamptonshire LVEP. Once developed, both authorities would provide detailed plans and financial implications to be mutually agreed prior to submission to Visit England for LVEP accreditation.

Cllr Howell concluded by thanking all those who had been involved in the processes outlined above.

Cllrs Brackenbury, Edwards and Rowley spoke strongly in support of the recommendations as a means to put Northamptonshire on the map and to highlight its significant tourist offer.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Strategy for adoption;
- b) Supported the proposal to continue to work closely with colleagues in West Northamptonshire and put in place the Local Visitor Economy Partnership by implementing a new Community Interest Company to ensure good governance. A future report will be brought to the Executive which will set out detailed implementation plans and financial implications related to the development of the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing to undertake any activity to develop the plans for LVEP development, ahead of these being brought back to the Executive for approval.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The Strategy seeks to improve the county's visitor economy. If Northamptonshire's visitor economy had grown at the same pace as our neighbours in Cambridgeshire over the past decade, it would have resulted in £36m more spending by overnight visitors and some 660 jobs either safeguarded or created.
- To maximise the potential for the county's visitor economy in the future by implementing an agreed and focussed plan where North and West unitary authorities can work together and in close partnership with industry, education and other stakeholders.
- To take advantage of the new national framework that has been developed by Visit England that sees circa 40 Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) across England delivering national tourism policy as set out by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in its response to the de Bois Review. There is an initial leadership role for both councils to support the development of an impactful and industry driven destination management organisation focussed on Northamptonshire.

Alternative Options Considered:

- The alternative option would be to not have a Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Strategy. However, this would not be a recommended approach as both councils wouldn't have a clear direction or plan to address the challenges associated with the visitor economy in Northamptonshire. Without a dedicated strategy, the county might miss out on valuable

opportunities to attract more visitors, generate increased spending, and create jobs.

- Additionally, without a coordinated effort through a joint strategy, the potential for collaboration with industry, education, and other stakeholders may remain untapped. The alternative of not having a strategy could result in a fragmented approach, where each authority operates independently, possibly leading to duplicated efforts, inefficiencies, and a lack of a unified vision for the development of the visitor economy.
- By not adopting a Visitor Economy Strategy, Northamptonshire might also miss the chance to align itself with the national framework set by Visit England and the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport. The absence of a strategic plan may hinder the county's ability to establish a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) and a destination management organisation, both of which are crucial for implementing effective policies and initiatives at the local level.
- In summary, not having a Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Strategy could result in missed economic and developmental opportunities, lack of coordinated efforts, and an inability to leverage the national framework designed to support and enhance the tourism sector. The proposed strategy aims to address these concerns and position Northamptonshire for a more prosperous and sustainable future in the visitor economy.

569 Specialist Drug and Alcohol Treatment for Rough Sleepers, or at risk of Rough Sleeping

The Chair invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to address the meeting. Cllr Hakewill queried how the Council would recruit specialists required to deliver the Specialist Drug and Alcohol Treatment for rough sleepers and questioned the expected point at which the service would be fully staffed and operational. Cllr Hakewill also referenced diverse figures provided for the number of rough sleepers identified, querying how best value would be achieved with the complement of staff required when baseline figures for rough sleepers were so wide-ranging. Cllr Hakewill concluded by questioning the input of the Health Scrutiny Committee into the report given its consideration at a meeting on 9th January 2024.

The Chair then invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the Executive. Cllr Anslow spoke to welcome the proposal that would support some of the most vulnerable people in the community. Cllr Anslow noted the tested record of the delivery organisation and welcomed partnership working in this area, noting that time to build relationships with rough sleepers was required and questioning the long-term strategy to sustain the work detailed within the report.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow for her comments before inviting Jane Bethea, Director of Public Health to introduce a report that sought approval for the use of North Northamptonshire Council Public Health Reserves to fund activities up to £600,000 for specialist drug and alcohol treatment services for people rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping until 31st March 2026.

The Director of Public Health responded to issues raised by both speakers. It was noted that the Council had a good existing relationship with service providers. It was heard that service implementation could be undertaken rapidly once approved and comments received from Health Scrutiny Committee had been taken onboard regarding the speed of delivery and building on existing service assets in North Northamptonshire. It was hoped that the process would commence from 1st April 2024, with the service operational within six weeks of that date. Figures regarding rough sleepers provided in the report covered different cohorts with differing needs, noting that it was extremely difficult to identify all rough sleepers and to determine who was at risk of becoming a rough sleeper.

In regard to sustaining the service at the end of the two years, the work undertaken during that period would be evaluated, and should real benefit be identified, the provision would be factored into the recommissioning of the Council's Drug and Alcohol Services from 2026.

The Director of Public Health reported that the use of reserves would provide a service for a very vulnerable group of people who were at the risk of a whole series of very poor life outcomes. The funding would be utilised to achieve the best outcomes for everyone in the population, as this group put significant pressure on the health system. It was noted that tackling rough sleeping was not just about accommodation, but providing support required to ensure an individual could sustain their tenancy and thrive going forwards. If outreach work was undertaken correctly, individuals could be encouraged to take the next step, bringing benefits to the individual, local area and the system.

It was reported that a robust evaluation process of the proposed investment would take place throughout the two years, whilst working alongside providers to provide the best possible offer for this vulnerable group of individuals.

Cllr Mark Rowley spoke to offer his full support for the proposal, noting that trust issues and complex needs could be overcome by utilising the external service provider.

Cllr Scott Edwards spoke to welcome the report noting that the right support for individuals was paramount to enable them to take the next step forwards in their lives.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the use of the Council's Public Health Reserves in the absence of a Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment Grant (RSDATG), to fund activities and new roles up to £600,000 to underpin Rough Sleeping Drug and Alcohol Treatment services.

Reasons for Recommendations: Approval will allow the Public Health Team and Housing Team to develop an evidence-based support service for individuals rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping with drug and alcohol dependency in North Northamptonshire. The funding will prevent significant harm and risk of death amongst people sleeping rough and the findings will be used to establish the new service model for 2026 when the drug and alcohol service will be recommissioned.

Alternative Option Considered: Decline the use of Public Health Reserves to provide evidence-based drug and alcohol treatment and specialist wrap around support for people sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough, including those with co-occurring mental health needs.

570 Making of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Rushden Town Centre

The Chair invited Cllr Mark Rowley, Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-up to introduce a report that sought approval for the making of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) covering an area of Rushden town centre.

Cllr Rowley spoke to note that Rushden town centre had experienced significant levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB), predominantly in the area covering the High Street and War Memorial Gardens, but also extending to Rectory Road, Eaton Walk and up to the Asda Superstore. It was reported that following a site visit and meeting involving representatives from the Council, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Office (OPFCC), police and Rushden Town Council, it had been agreed to look at whether a PSPO would support the police and Council in taking action against those whose behaviours were causing harassment and distress to others using those town centre areas.

Following comprehensive consultation with the public, local businesses, the OPFCC, police and town council, the following behaviours were now proposed as being prohibited in the area to be covered by the PSPO for a period of three years:

- Alcohol consumption
- Rowdy or inconsiderate behaviour
- Using the public space as a toilet
- Begging
- Misuse of motorised and powered vehicles

Cllr Brackenbury and Pentland spoke to welcome the proposal that would benefit local residents and businesses by providing police and the Council with the relevant tools to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour in Rushden town centre.

The Chair spoke to thank Stephen Mold, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Northamptonshire and the Council's Strategic Lead for Community Safety, Mike Greenway for their pivotal roles in helping the Council take the necessary action to identify and tackle a dire ASB situation in Rushden.

Cllr Dorothy Maxwell spoke to welcome the report and raised issues with a perceived lack of security and police response to violence and shoplifting in Rushden town centre along with other undesirable behaviours.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:-

- a) Approved the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Rushden town centre, with the draft order as set out at **Appendix A** of this report.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling Up in consultation with the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, to make any further minor amendments required to implement the Public Spaces Protection Order for Rushden town centre.

Reasons for Recommendations –

- To give authorised officers the ability to use enforcement powers under the PSPO to respond to anti-social behaviour within Rushden town centre.
- Recommendation (b) will allow the Executive Member and Director to make minor amendments to wording of the order to ensure it accurately reflects approved prohibitions.

Alternative Options Considered – Not to make the PSPO – This could have a negative impact on our reputation and our ability to deliver on our Corporate Plan commitments to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and the root causes of ASB.

571 Adoption of the Corby Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham raised the issue of dropped kerbs and a lack of provision within the Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan that took account of mobility scooters, especially in light of an ageing population.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Matt Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to introduce a report that sought to provide information on the Corby Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), reported on the findings from the recent public consultation on the subject and sought approval for its adoption.

In response to Cllr Buckingham's comments, it was noted that by its very nature the LCWIP did not cover provisions for mobility scooters and that only specific elements as mandated by the Department for Transport for active travel could be considered.

The meeting noted that the LCWIP had been developed to identify prioritised cycling and walking infrastructure improvements, to ensure that consideration was given to cycling and walking within local planning and transport policies and strategies and to make the case for future funding for walking and cycling infrastructure. It was reported that LCWIPs were recommended by the Department for Transport for short and long-term provision for cycling and walking within the local area

Cllr Binley reported that should funding become available, work would commence on the development of preliminary designs for the routes and improvements identified, allowing future funding bids to be submitted. Details of the walking and cycling improvement routes identified were highlighted to the meeting.

The Executive heard that a comprehensive consultation process had been undertaken during August and September 2023, with 59% of responses received to plans being positive, 27% neutral and 14% negative. Comments received in regard to the initial draft of the LCWIP had been reviewed and were taken into consideration as part of the technical report.

The report contained a significant amount of supporting information including analysis of current provisions as well as the potential for identified walking and cycling routes that included Weldon and other developments around Corby as a way of linking these areas. Cllr Binley noted that the LCWIP also linked in with the Council's developing Greenway Strategy.

The proposals before members had been considered and supported by the Sustainable Communities EAP at its meetings on 26th April and 9th November 2023.

Cllr Harriet Pentland welcomed the report and noted the hard work and careful consideration that had gone into identifying routes as set out in the plan. The role of the Sustainable Communities EAP in shaping the document was referenced, as was the importance of access to active travel modes that benefitted both the environment and people's health. Cllr Pentland concluded by stating that the plan fitted well with the Council's corporate values and looked forward to the development of the associated infrastructure.

Cllr Helen Howell described the draft LCWIP as a great example of what could be achieved, subject to funding opportunities, when a project was viewed holistically, noting the link with the Greenway Strategy and the potential benefits for the whole of North Northamptonshire.

Cllr Edwards spoke to welcome the report, noting that planned improvements would have a beneficial impact on the number of children using active travel to get to and from school, as well as reducing parking pressures associated with schools.

Cllr David Brackenbury also welcomed the report and joined-up thinking and reasons behind it, promoting, as it did, active lives, mental health considerations and connectivity into the Greenway.

Cllr Binley concluded debate by thanking his fellow members for their comments and noting the far-reaching nature of the plan that crossed into a number of different portfolio areas.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the findings of the public consultation analysis for the Corby Local

Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which forms **Appendix B** of this report;

- b) Approved and adopted the Corby LCWIP which forms **Appendix A** of this report as a Council policy document;
- c) Agreed the prioritisation of routes within the Corby LCWIP, subject to funding being available, forms the basis of work to develop preliminary designs for the routes to inform future funding bids.

Reason for Recommendations – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are the recommended Department for Transport approach for planning and co-ordinating provision for active travel modes. They provide a strategic and planned approach for short- and long-term provision for cycling and walking within the local area.

The Corby LCWIP has been developed to enable the Council to:

- Identify prioritised cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment;
- Ensure that consideration is given to cycling and walking within both local planning and transport policies and strategies; and
- Make the case for future funding for walking and cycling infrastructure.

Alternative Options Considered – While it would be possible to develop an LCWIP based on a different methodology to that contained in Government guidance on LCWIPs, this is not recommended as it would mean that the Council was less likely to secure Government funding. However, should alternative funding (such as S106) become available for particular corridors, it would be possible to progress lower priority schemes on that basis.

572 Cleaning Service Contract Procurement

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham spoke to note the disparity between the available budget and the best valued bid received as part of the tender process for the Council's cleaning service contract.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting Cllr Matt Binley, Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets to present a report that sought to build on the Executive report from November 2022 where approval had been granted to utilise a framework to secure a contractor to clean the 56 buildings comprising the Council's estate, thereby bringing a consistent approach to replace the various external contractors and limited in-house provision that currently provided the service.

The meeting heard that the Building Cleaning Steering Procurement Group established to progress the procurement had not been satisfied with the affordability or best value offer of responses received through the framework and felt it would be inappropriate to proceed on that basis. It was noted that the best value bid received using the framework was £155,000 over the annual budget.

The report before members sought to revise the original approach approved in November 2022 and to procure instead via an Open Market Tender. Whilst a fully in-house provision had previously been discounted in favour of the framework, this would be revisited, and feasibility of provision reviewed in conjunction with the open market tender process to ensure value for money and quality of service were achieved.

It was noted that utilising an open market tender process opened the procurement to a wider range of companies and would also open the market to more locally based companies. It was also recommended that the current contracts be extended by six months to allow for the required time to carry out a full open market tender exercise.

Reference was made to TUPE implications for in-house and external service provision and it was noted that this was addressed within the main body of the report.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Confirmed the preferred procurement route for a Building Cleaning service contract via an Open Market Tender, noting that the feasibility of inhouse provision will be considered to ensure value for money and quality service is achieved from the chosen delivery model.
- b) Confirmed approval for a contract extension of six months to a current provider for Building Cleaning Services to accommodate the time required to conclude the procurement exercise.
- c) Delegate authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with the Assistant Director of Assets & Environment, to enter into the necessary contractual arrangements to secure best value for delivering the Building Cleaning service.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The proposed procurement route seeks to widen the tender process to additional bidders, with a more tightly defined service scope helping to remove the affordability challenges associated with the framework-based proposals.
- The proposed procurement process will enable smaller local cleaning employers the opportunity to tender for the work, these firms are not currently part of the framework.
- The recommendation continues to aim to provide the most cost-effective solution, which can be deployed to suit the changes in service need and delivery throughout the contract period.
- The proposed option aims to access a reliable cleaning service, provision to monitor contractor performance, providing quality services for North Northamptonshire residents.

- The proposed contract documentation will allow flexibility to add and remove the buildings covered by the contract as the Council's estate is reviewed and evolves over the coming several years.

Alternative Options Considered: A number of alternative options were considered by both operational managers and procurement colleagues in shaping the November 2022 report, including building an in-house team or undertaking the bespoke procurement of a new Cleaning Services contract. The preferred option was deemed to offer the best value for money to the Council using information known at that time in terms of time to deploy the new arrangements, access to established providers, procurement costs, risk and overall value for money. The revised approach continues to offer the majority of these benefits, with the additional benefit of providing access to the tender opportunity to other suppliers (including North Northamptonshire based SMEs). The main downside of the Open Market Tender option was the time to procure. The unforeseen delay can be addressed through the proposed extension to the existing contract.

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The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham spoke briefly to note the increase in overspend related to the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Chair then invited Cllr Jim Hakewill to speak on the item. Cllr Hakewill queried what financial impact the recently announced Spending Management Panels would have and whether these would be public meetings. Cllr Hakewill questioned whether there was a process for reclamation of costs associated with replacing street furniture damaged as a result of car accidents. Referencing the Council's reserve figure, Cllr Hakewill queried what percentage of that figure could be used that was not ringfenced and whether utilising contingency funds was the same as accessing reserves. Cllr Hakewill asked for tangible outcomes regarding meetings with government regarding additional funding or helping to achieve greater financial stability for the Council and concluded by asking what useful learning had been acquired by the Leader following his appointment to the Local Government Association Board (LGA).

The Chair responded to Cllr Hakewill's reference to the LGA by stating that the Council had a team of very experienced officers with whom constant communication took place on complex matters. The Chair further stated he was absolutely confident of their ability to provide advice locally without the need to seek advice from elsewhere.

The Chair invited the Executive Director of Finance and Performance, Janice Gotts to provide some additional details in relation to the Spending Management and Staffing Approval panels. It was heard that the former focussed on expenditure in excess of £500, while the latter focussed on recruitment and agency spend. Whilst it was difficult to assess what impact the panels would have given work had only just commenced, the work of the panels would ensure that expenditure supported the Council's financial position. It was heard that convening such panels was not an unusual step to take within Local Government and the purely officer-led panels added an additional layer of expenditure scrutiny.

In regard to the Council's reserves, Executive Director of Finance and Performance reported that these had been detailed in the draft budget report submitted to Executive in December and contained an element of smoothing reserves to assist the Council with pressures faced year on year. The Government had recently encouraged Local Authorities to examine the way they utilised reserves. It was heard that contingency was a recurring pot of funds that rolled over each financial year if not utilised, with the Finance team looking at recurring elements to ensure the Council was able to have the necessary funding when setting a balanced budget.

The Chair thanked the Executive Director of Finance and Performance for her comments before inviting 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 8 monitoring forecasts for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Cllr Bunday stated that the backdrop to the budget was one beyond the realm of control the Council, with elevated interest rates, international conflicts impacting utility and food prices, with many residents still living with the effects of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The continued volatility of the Council's demand-led services presented a very real risk, with certain providers using this risk to justify fee increases

The meeting heard that the overall outturn forecast for the General Fund for 2023/24, as at Period 8 was a forecast overspend of £8.552m against the approved budget, an additional pressure of £2.354m since the last reporting period, the main pressures being those related to the demand-led Children's and Adult Services. The Children's Trust had forecast an overspend of £24.577m, an increase of £1.068m since the previous period, with a risk that £3.017m of efficiency savings would remain undelivered, increasing the overall overspend from £24.577m to £27.594m.

Cllr Bunday reported that Education, Health and Care Services were continuing to rely heavily on interim workers to fulfil statutory obligations, with high vacancy rates, historic assessments outstanding and increased service demand. This resulted in a net staffing pressure of £1.548m. The annual budget for the provision of six residential care homes across the Council's area was £9.8m, with a forecast pressure of £970,000 relating to that contract and a net pressure of £11.546m for third-party payments for independent care, partially offset by net savings of £1.953m within Commissioning and Performance. It was noted that should these pressures not be mitigated it would pose a significant financial risk to the Council.

The meeting heard that income from leisure facilities was forecast to be £400,000 greater than budgeted for, with a net saving of £1.461m reported across the Place and Economy directorate.

Further pressures related to increased bank charges, unrealised internal interest income and recovery of debt management expenses. The main income to offset these pressures related to additional investment income of £5.81m. Further savings relating to pay increments, employer pension contributions, pay and grading changes and Business Rates income were reported.

Details of the Council's contingency budget were reported. It was heard that whilst there was a contingency budget and reserves available to call on to help fund in year pressures, the Council would look to alternative mitigations before these were applied.

The Council's overall outturn forecast for the Housing Revenue Account was reported as being an overspend of £121,000.

It was also reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had a forecast pressure of £9.019m, with pressures relating to the high needs funding block that supported SEND provision. Discussions were ongoing to mitigate these pressures.

Cllr Scott Edwards spoke to provide additional background explanation for the Dedicated Schools Grant overspend.

RESOLVED

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the Council's forecast outturn position for 2023/24 as summarised in Section 4, alongside the further analysis, risks and other considerations as set out in Section 5 to Section 7 of the report.
- b) Noted the assessment of the current deliverability of the 2023/24 savings proposals in **Appendix A**.

Reason for Recommendations – to note the forecast financial position for 2023/24 as at Period 8 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 2023/24 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 12.19 pm