

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 14th March, 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 Gill Mercer
Councillor Lloyd Bunday	Councillor Harriet Pentland
Councillor Scott Edwards	Councillor Mark Rowley

Also in attendance – Councillors Lyn Buckingham, Valerie Anslow and Dorothy Maxwell

596 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Director of Public Health, Jane Bethea.

597 Minutes of the Meetings Held on 8th February 2024 and 15th February 2024

RESOLVED that the Executive agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 8th February 2024 and 15th February 2024 as true and accurate records of the meetings.

598 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

599 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

The Chair, Councillor Jason Smithers reported that there were requests to address the meeting as set out below:

Agenda Item	Speakers
Item 5 - Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 10 – January 2024)	Cllr Valerie Anslow
Item 8 – Kitchen Food Waste Service Rollout-25	Cllrs Valerie Anslow, Lyn Buckingham, William Colquhoun
Item 10 – Post 16 Policy for Home to School Transport	Cllr Lyn Buckingham

Item 11 – Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) Funding 2024/25 to 2026/27	Cllrs Valerie Anslow, Lyn Buckingham, William Colquhoun
Item 12 – Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy	Cllr Valerie Anslow
Item 14 – Adult Social Care Strategy “The Lives We Live” 2024 – 2029	Cllr Lyn Buckingham
Item 16 – Budget Forecast 2023-24 at Period 10	Cllr Lyn Buckingham

Cllr William Colquhoun was not in attendance at the meeting and consequently did not speak in relation to items 8 or 11.

600 Performance Indicator Report 2023/24 (Period 10 - January 2024)

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the Executive. Cllr Anslow spoke to reference figures for rough sleepers noting an increase in figures possibly related to the triggering of the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol bringing additional people forward who had previously been “sofa surfing”. Cllr Anslow noted that this cohort was still considered homeless, with this hidden number disguising a growing problem, one potential solution being to work with the voluntary sector and revisit the homeless shelter model. Cllr Anslow also made reference to indicators relating to school exclusions, those missing a school place or being persistently absent, noting an 18% increase in children being homeschooled. Cllr Anslow queried whether this was an issue unique to the Council or a more national trend.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow for her contribution and 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 10 report contained 66 PIs, 45 that were reported monthly, 12 quarterly and one annually. Of the PIs with established targets, 23 indicators were on or exceeding their target, with four inside tolerance levels and 13 performing below target levels. It was noted that of the PIs that had a determined polarity for direction of travel, performance had improved for 17, with 20 deteriorating since the previous reporting period.

In response to Cllr Anslow’s comment regarding rough sleepers, Cllr Mark Rowley noted that figures were a snapshot for the night in which they were taken, with details as to the Council’s assistance for rough sleepers to be considered later in the meeting as part of the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) Funding 2024/25 to 2026/27 item.

Also in response to Cllr Anslow’s comments, Cllr Scott Edwards noted that in terms of educational PIs the Council was not an outlier in regard to the areas of concern highlighted, with a variety of reasons why children were not in education being provided to the meeting. It was noted that the level of early help provision was the highest on record and a further bid for government funding in relation to free schools would be submitted in due course following an unsuccessful initial bid.

RESOLVED

That the Executive noted the performance of the Council as measured by the available indicators at Period 10 (January) 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 10 (January) 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.

601 Appointment of Non-Executive Director to Northamptonshire Children’s Trust

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers introduced a report that sought approval of the nomination for the appointment to the Council’s current vacancy of a Non-Executive Director to the Board of the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Ltd.

The Chair noted that the Board of the Children’s Trust wished to appoint Joshua Coleman to fill the vacancy. The meeting heard that both the Chair and the Chief Executive had met with Mr Coleman, both considering him to be the outstanding candidate who would be able to represent the Council robustly and work well alongside the other Non-Executive Directors on the Board. Details of the background of the Trust arrangements were highlighted, with the meeting also noting that the Secretary of State for Education had been consulted regarding the appointment and had raised no objections.

Cllr Scott Edwards spoke to fully support the appointment, stating that Mr Coleman would be a great asset to the Board, holding the Children’s Trust to account and working alongside the other Non-Executive Directors to put North Northamptonshire priorities forward.

Cllr David Brackenbury also welcomed the appointment, noting Mr Coleman’s breadth of experience as being an asset to the Board.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the completed sequence of events that are contractually required to appoint a Non-Executive Director of the Northamptonshire Children’s Trust Ltd;
- b) Noted and takes into account in its decision-making, the response from the Secretary of State;
- c) Agreed the nomination for appointment of Joshua Coleman as the representative for North Northamptonshire Council as Non-Executive

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The recommendations in this report are presented to Executive following a full and thorough recruitment and selection process. The selected candidate is considered the most suitable candidate for the position based on his experience.
- The composition of the board of the Trust requires that there are four NEDs on the Board of the Trust, two of which are nominated by North Northamptonshire Council and two by West Northamptonshire Council; the recommendations support compliance with this requirement on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council.

Alternative Options Considered: The role of the Board of the Trust is critical in supporting it to achieve its objectives for the benefit of the residents of North Northamptonshire. For the Board to be most effective it is important that all of its positions are filled. It is not recommended that the Council should decide not to appoint to the vacant NED member of the Board.

602 Children's Services Education Case Management System Contract Variation

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, Cllr Scott Edwards to introduce a report that sought approval to proceed with a variation to the original agreement of the existing Education Case Management System contract for Children's Services. If approved, this two-year extension would allow sufficient time to enable a suitable migration and implementation period for the new system which was currently in the process of being procured.

Details of the costs involved in approving the extension were highlighted to the meeting, with the budget for the extension having been approved by Full Council at its meeting in February. It was noted that a further 220 additional licences would be procured as part of the contract extension.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved that the Council proceeds with a Variation to the contract with Capita Business Services Limited for the Capita One Education Software for a two-year extension and 220 additional licences.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Children, Families, Education and Skills, in consultation with the Executive Director of Children's Services (Interim DCS), to take any further decisions and/or

actions required to agree and conclude a variation to the contract of the current CMS with Capita Business Services Limited, to allow continuity of service during full and appropriate implementation of the new Education Case Management System.

Reasons for Recommendations

- a) To support the procurement and implementation of a new Education Case Management System.
- b) To maintain a consistent and stable service provision to children, young people, parents, and carers. The new Education Case Management System will not be fully implemented until September 2025. It is essential that accurate records and case work are maintained in order to continue to deliver the service effectively.
- c) Enable Children's Services to operate in a safe and legal manner. The service has a number of statutory requirements that it must deliver including safeguarding and government data returns. The extension of the current system until implementation is complete will enable the service to comply with these.

Alternative Options Considered

- a) **Do Nothing** – There is the option to allow the contract for Capita One Education to end on Sunday, 31st March 2024 with no extension.
- b) **Re-procure the current system using a Direct Award** – Using a compliant framework agreement, so far as permissible by the relevant legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015), the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, and the terms of the framework agreement.
- c) **Explore the use of alternative existing case management systems** within the Council.

603 Kitchen Food Waste Service Rollout

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the meeting. Cllr Anslow welcomed the new government requirement to collect kitchen food waste and made reference to composting, government grant funding and the potential impact of additional bins on flats and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Cllr Anslow noted the need to make a concerted effort to explain to residents what contents were acceptable in the new bins and raised concerns regarding a possible increase in pest control considerations arising from their introduction.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow for her comments before inviting Cllr Lyn Buckingham to speak. Cllr Buckingham noted that Corby already had a food waste collection service, although there remained areas such as flats that did not receive the service and questioned whether these locations would form part of the new rollout. Cllr Buckingham also noted the need to educate people in relation to the new service.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, Cllr Matt Binley to introduce a report that sought approval to confirm allocation of the funding received from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) for the capital expenditure associated

with the new statutory responsibilities for the Council under s45A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to provide weekly food waste collections to all households.

Cllr Binley acknowledged the need for education around the new service as to what could be collected and what could not. Cllr Binley also noted that food waste would be contained within a solid plastic bin thereby deterring rodents. Cllr Binley stated that the report before members had been many months in production, with all aspects of the future service considered including inconsistencies in existing service provision.

Cllr Binley stated that government's waste collection scheme, called Simpler Recycling, introduced standardised requirements for recyclable or compostable waste collections across England, which included the requirement for weekly household food waste collections.

The report before members sought approval of the allocation of £2,495,563 of funding received for capital expenditure to implement the required infrastructure to commence the project and to carry out procurements ready to start collections on the target start date of 1st April 2026. Funding for the transitional stage, ongoing resource and revenue costs would be allocated from DEFRA.

It was noted that the Council currently operated a kerbside food waste collection service in the East Northamptonshire and Corby areas; therefore, the project would require a roll out of the service to Kettering and Wellingborough.

It was further noted that there would be a large number of local authorities seeking to procure the same equipment in order to provide the service, therefore there was a need to act expeditiously.

Cllr Binley stated that the service would be promoted across the whole of the Council area including areas where the service was currently in operation, as it was anticipated that this would help to increase uptake in the existing service areas. The meeting heard that savings would be derived for every tonne of food waste that was diverted from residual waste.

Cllr Binley reported that where new vehicles were procured there was an aim for these to be electric to help reduce carbon emissions, with the service playing an important role towards the Council's target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Cllr Binley concluded by offering thanks to the government and DEFRA for bringing in the amended Environment Protection Act and for providing the Council with the allocation of capital funding outlined above.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome report, noting the success of the existing scheme in Corby and East Northamptonshire.

Cllr Harriet Pentland also welcomed the report, noting that the Climate Change Impact Assessment tool that formed part of the report indicated a significant positive environmental impact associated with the proposals. Cllr Pentland stated that the waste team would work hard to provide information and resources to residents using the service.

Cllr David Howes also acknowledged the need for education for residents and members regarding the new service as well as noting the link between the new service and green waste collections.

Concluding debate, Cllrs Edwards and Brackenbury spoke to welcome the governmental grant that would enable the service to be provided, with the latter also noting the success of the existing service in East Northamptonshire.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Recognised and accepted the grant from DEFRA for the capital infrastructure relating to introducing a food waste service of £2,495,563 in line with the grant conditions. The approval of the capital project forms part of the Capital Updates report elsewhere on the Executive agenda;
- b) In line with the approval of the capital project, approved commencement of procurement of vehicles, containers and other items associated with the mobilisation of the new food waste collection service;
- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, in consultation with Executive Director for Place & Economy, Executive Director for Finance and Performance and the Executive Member for Finance, the authority to take any further decisions and actions required to implement the new service including the procurement process and award of the contracts, without the need to return to the Executive. This will include updating the North Northamptonshire Waste and Recycling Policy to reflect the new services.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- The proposed option ensures compliance with Government requirements to collect food waste from residential properties from 1st April 2026.
- The recommended course of action will allow the Council to secure the most cost-effective solution for North Northamptonshire residents.

This approach ensures the Council has legally procured and has a compliant contract in place for the provision of services that provide a direct benefit to residents by collecting their waste.

Alternative Options Considered:

- Contract out the collection service, requiring the supplier to manage the procurement of infrastructure items. This option is not recommended as it does not reflect the operational in-house arrangements in place and is

anticipated to be more expensive given the overheads an external provider will place on the procurement of infrastructure items.

- Take no action. This option is not recommended as it will mean that the Council does not meet its statutory obligations in respect of its duties as a Waste Collection Authority.

604 North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Remedy Policy

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that sought approval for adoption of a North Northamptonshire Council Complaints Remedy Policy to support services responding to complaints under the North Northamptonshire Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy and to inform decision making in line with best practice of the Ombudsman Service guidance.

It was heard that the policy confirmed that complainants had statutory rights when raising a dispute around loss of service or maladministration. The Complaints Remedy Policy would therefore ensure consistent decision making informed by Ombudsman guidance for councils. Adoption of the policy was considered to be prudent and essential in preventing adverse risk to the Council, both financial and reputational. It was noted that financial implications associated with remedies may decrease as a result of reduced complaint escalation to the Ombudsman Service.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the Complaints Remedy Policy.

Reasons for Recommendations –

- Ensure a policy reflecting best practice to advise and inform decision making
- To support knowledge and understanding on remedy consideration
- Promote consistent decision making

Alternative Options Considered – Not having a policy reduces efficiency and risks robust consideration being applied to decision making.

605 Post 16 Policy for Home to School Transport

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham raised concerns querying withdrawn bus routes and the impact this had on children being able to get to school by bus.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her comments before inviting the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets, Cllr Matt Binley to introduce a report that sought approval to publish the revised Post 16 Home to School Transport Policy for

the school year 2024/25. It was noted that the policy had to be published by 31st May 2024, but if approved would be published as soon as possible to assist parents of children affected.

In response to Cllr Buckingham's comments Cllr Binley noted that no bus routes had been lost following the Covid pandemic, although service frequency had declined in some instances. Cllr Binley stated that work was ongoing as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan to develop improved commercial services in key areas allowing students to utilise these where appropriate mitigating the overall cost of, and demand for, transport provision for Post 16 students as well as benefitting all passengers by allowing greater choice of travel times.

It was reported that all Post 16 home to school transport was discretionary, with the policy having last been reviewed over a decade previously by the former county council. The associated Statutory School age Home to School Transport policy had been approved by Executive in 2023 with the proposed changes to the Post 16 policy bringing it into line with those changes previously approved.

The meeting heard that extensive public consultation had been undertaken as part of that Statutory School age Home to School Transport policy review process, with responses included as an appendix to the report.

It was noted that the cost to parents to purchase a seat on the Council's contracted bus service had been £600 per school year, equating to a charge of £3.15 per school day for transport. The Council also currently offered a guarantee this it would commission sufficient additional seats to accommodate all those who applied for the service before a set date each year.

Cllr Binley stated that this service was running at a significant loss to the Council, the current cost for providing this discretionary service being £172,000, with approximately only £86,000 being recovered through the £600 charge.

The meeting noted that the policy had been re-written and re-formatted due to comments that the previous iteration had been hard to understand. The Parents' Forum had agreed that the proposed policy was more accessible.

In addition, it was proposed that the guaranteed discretionary seat for early applicants be removed with the proposed fare increased to £760 per school year for new and existing students, still significantly lower than the actual cost of providing the service which amounted to £1200 per student. It was heard that there were mitigations in place for those on low incomes or who had multiple children in Post 16 education. Fares would be reviewed annually as part of the Council's fees and charge's structure.

Concluding, Cllr Binley stated that the Place and Environment Scrutiny Committee had reviewed the policy proposals, recommending that the new format be adopted, that the guaranteed seat option be removed, that applicants pay the full amount and those currently in the system pay a reduced rate of £760.

Cllr Scott Edwards spoke to welcome the recommendations that would bring the policy into line with the Statutory School age Home to School Transport policy, without resorting to full cost recovery.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approved the revised Post 16 Policy for Home to School Transport for publication.

Reasons for Recommendation: To ensure that statutory obligations are fulfilled by the publishing of a Post 16 Policy for Home to School Transport in line with legislation. The policy currently before the Executive takes into account the changes previously approved for pupils of statutory school age and the legislation and guidance specifically relating to education transport for Post 16 students.

Alternative Options Considered:

Do nothing: Failure to adopt a revised policy would result in the current policy being de facto adopted, leading to a two-tier charging system for discretionary seats as well as confusion over entitlement to and availability of services at the transition between Statutory School age and Post 16 services. In addition, failure to adopt the revised charging system would result in the Council being required to continue to subsidise Post 16 transport at its current rate, rather than recouping a higher proportion of the actual cost from service users, which will lead to budgetary pressures.

Refer the draft policy back for further revision: If the Executive prefer not to approve the policy as drafted, they may make recommendations as to any alterations they may require. Members are requested to be mindful of the statutory requirement to publish the final version of the policy before the end of May 2024 and the timelines for re-presentation of the policy at Executive for approval. Failure to approve the final version within this timeframe will result in the current policy being de facto adopted for the coming academic year with the same outcomes as Do Nothing. If this option is adopted it is therefore recommended that Members give delegated powers to the Executive Member for Highways, Travel and Assets and the Executive Director of Place and Economy to authorise and approve the final draft, without the need to return to Executive.

606 **Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) Funding 2024/25 to 2026/27**

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the meeting. Cllr Anslow welcomed the funding as it would assist in supporting adults in cyclical rough sleeping patterns with complex needs. Cllr Anslow queried whether funding was being taken from the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to fund the new Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and the impact on those currently supported but not meeting the threshold for SHAP support. Cllr Anslow concluded by thanking officers for their work in obtaining the grant funding.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow for her comments before inviting Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the meeting. Cllr Buckingham acknowledged that the programme would try to help those that had greatest need, but raised concerns that low-level homelessness

prevention work would be lost, noting that there was not a one size fits all approach to homelessness that could be adopted.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Housing, Communities and Levelling-up, Cllr Mark Rowley to introduce a report that sought to brief the Executive on the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) grant award by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities for 2024/25 to 2026/27 and sought approval to undertake procurement to deliver the supported accommodation provision as detailed in the funding bid.

In response to comments from the speakers, Cllr Rowley noted that RSI funding was not being utilised in relation to the SHAP, with existing support work continuing in addition to the new programme that comprised £802,000 of funding spread over three years to deliver supported accommodation for individuals experiencing rough sleeping with complex needs. It was heard that provision would be supplied following tendered contract award to a service provider that would manage the supported accommodation provision as part of North Northamptonshire Council's rough sleeping pathway.

The Chair spoke to welcome the report, noting the commitment of the government to end rough sleeping nationally.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved that the allocated spend of Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) funding to deliver supported accommodation for adults experiencing rough sleeping with complex support needs as outlined in **Appendix A**.
- b) 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 undertake any decisions and actions required to enable the delivery of this funding.

Reason for Recommendations:

- To ensure that the Council utilises the grant funding secured to effectively help deliver supported accommodation provision in North Northamptonshire for individuals with high levels of complex needs.
- To safeguard this vulnerable cohort of adults experiencing multiple exclusion homelessness by providing accommodation to help them move away and recover from a life on the streets.
- To enable a new contract to be established to deliver the required supported accommodation for the funding period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Alternative Options Considered:

- To not utilise the grant funding to deliver supported accommodation provision resulting in a loss of the grant funding.

607 Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy

The Chair invited Cllr Valerie Anslow to address the meeting. Cllr Anslow made reference to the recent Wellingborough Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan workshop and the benefits of such a scheme tying in with children walking and cycling to school.

The Chair thanked Cllr Anslow 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 members with an update on the progress of the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy, reported on the findings from the associated public consultation and sought approval for adoption of the strategy.

Cllr Edwards stated that schools should be supported in encouraging children to travel to school using sustainable modes of transport, with examples of walking buses operating in Kettering provided to the meeting. It was reported that consultation response levels in response to the proposed strategy had been very low despite all schools in the area being consulted.

It was heard that the strategy had developed been to reflect the needs of the community, priorities and investment plans as well as aligning with other strategic policies such as the Corporate Plan, Local Development Framework whilst being coordinated with emerging policies such as the Greenway Strategy and Local Walking and Cycling Investment Plans (LCWIPs). The strategy would be reviewed annually to ensure it continued to meet the needs of the community.

Cllr Matt Binley spoke to welcome the report, noting successes with walking buses and the work of the local Brightwayz organisation to promote safe, active, sustainable travel for everyday journeys. Cllr Binley also made reference to the LCWIPs approved for Kettering and Corby and the ongoing work in relation to consultation and funding for routes identified.

Cllr Harriet Pentland also welcomed the strategy, noting the despite the low level of consultation response, there remained useful information to be gleaned. The strategy indicated the potential for encouraging people to use more sustainable travel options where they could, with a positive school census picture noted for those walking to school. Cllr Pentland referenced the significant health and environmental benefits associated with using sustainable modes of transport to get to school along with opportunities to tie the strategy in with the LCWIPs.

Cllr Gill Mercer spoke to reference the positive sessions regarding the proposed LCWIP for Wellingborough and noted the foresight of the former East Northamptonshire Council in creating the Greenway which continued to be an asset for North Northamptonshire.

Cllr Helen Howell spoke to welcome the report and the link to the Greenway, with an aim to support sustainable transport across the whole of North Northamptonshire for a

variety of purposes. It was noted that publishing such strategies provided the Council with a strong platform to obtain funding required to implement them.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Noted the findings of the public consultation analysis for the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy which forms **Section 7.5** of this report.
- ii) Approved and adopted the Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy which forms **Appendix A** of this report as a Council policy document.

Reason for Recommendations: The Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy has been prepared in line with the governments guidance and has been developed to enable the Council to:

- Assess and audit of sustainable travel options within the local authority,
- Develop a strategy for the promotion of sustainable travel to schools and other educational or training facilities.
- Identify prioritised cycling and walking infrastructure improvements for future investment.

Alternative Options Considered:

- While it would be possible to develop a Sustainable Travel to Education Strategy based on a different methodology to that contained in Government Guidance, this is not recommended as it would mean that the Council would be unlikely to fulfil its duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Not adopt the Northamptonshire Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy.

Neither of these options are recommended.

608 Update to North Northamptonshire Council Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy

The Chair invited Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation to introduce a report that sought approval of the updated North Northamptonshire Council Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy.

Cllr Bunday reported that an initial version of the policy had previously been approved by the Shadow Executive for implementation on vesting day but now required revision to better meet both Council and public requirements. Consequently, the draft policy had been significantly consulted upon and considered by the Connected Communities Executive Advisory Panel at its meeting on 28th February 2024, with comments made

at that meeting regarding the inclusion of an appeal mechanism and elaborating on potential vulnerabilities of those engaging in unacceptable behaviours factored into the version now before the Executive.

It was noted that the revised document provided improved clarity as to customer behaviours deemed unacceptable and methods to mitigate and manage those behaviours. It was acknowledged that the on occasion the Council's customers needed to communicate with the authority when not in the best place by circumstance, however a fair and transparent policy would allow management to deal with any unacceptable behaviour demonstrated in a robust and timely manner. Details regarding the rollout of the policy and associated toolkit to frontline staff once the policy had been approved were provided.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the policy, stating that the draft document was balanced, sensible and offered protection for customer-facing staff. Cllr Brackenbury noted that all members and officers had a duty to keep Council staff safe while undertaking their roles and to discourage abusive and unacceptable behaviour. It was again acknowledged that sometimes customers could find interactions with the Council frustrating, however the policy encapsulated a sympathetic but sensible approach should these frustrations escalate.

Cllr Matt Binley spoke to echo support for the policy stating the Council staff deserved to come to work and not fear violence, threats and abuse. It was noted that the relatively few members of the public who stepped over the unacceptable behaviour mark could be dealt with robustly as a result of adopting the policy.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive approves the North Northamptonshire Council Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy.

Reasons for Recommendations –

- The current policy confirming how the Council will manage unacceptable behaviour was drafted under the Future Northants programme board and adopted by the Shadow Executive. It is recommended that policies are reviewed regularly to reflect the environment the authority operates in.
- The Council has a responsibility to mitigate risk and ensure health, safety and wellbeing of staff and contractors and a robust policy should provide clarity on what behaviours are considered unacceptable and how those behaviours will be managed. The policy will also address persistent vexatious contacts and how these will be managed; these place a strain on the Council's ability to deliver services impacting other customers by monopolising resources.

Alternative Options Considered: Option to not revise and continue to operate under policy drafted by Future Northants and adopted at vesting day. This is not recommended.

609 Adult Social Care Strategy "The Lives We Live" 2024 - 2029

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham spoke to welcome the report, noting that the driving forces behind social care and recent increases in placement numbers need to be looked at carefully. Cllr Buckingham noted that the social care market was dominated by providers that viewed Council area as potentially lucrative, but with better inter-departmental work within the Council there was the potential to get the desired outcomes for social care.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing to introduce a report that sought approval to go out to public consultation on the draft Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-29.

In response to Cllr Buckingham's comments, Cllr Mercer noted that there was a vibrant social care market in North Northamptonshire with daily monitoring regarding placements. In addition, work was ongoing between various stakeholders and Council departments to contribute towards the evolving adult social care system.

Cllr Mercer stated that the strategy had been co-produced with adult social care staff and partner organisations and set a five-year direction of travel for the people of North Northamptonshire. Attention was drawn to the underlying vision of the strategy that would enable people to live their best lives, with reference made to the aims, visions and desired outcomes arising from new ways of working. It was anticipated that the strategy would assist with increased demand and offer a streamlined service to prevent multiple hand-offs for those travelling through the system by putting the person at the centre of the system. It was heard that there would be a single route of access, with those not requiring adult social care referred to community facilities for support.

The meeting noted that the outcomes framework was based on the recent national Adult Social Care Outcome Framework, with an aim to provide quality social care services through contracting, clear accountability and regulatory compliance with value for money and continuous improvement embedded.

Cllr Mercer reported that one of the key forums for developing the strategy had been the North Northamptonshire Place Board as part of the Integrated Care System (ICS). In addition, the strategy had been presented to the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Active Communities Executive Advisory Panel, the ICS Urgent Care Board and the Northamptonshire Safeguarding Board as well as internal directorates. It was noted that the Local Area Partnerships and place development was an integral part of strategy implementation, as was the preventative offer of the voluntary sector in assisting in reducing demand.

Cllr Mercer made reference to the current complex service offer detailed in Appendix D of the report, with the new strategy designed to streamline this and prevent multiple handoffs during the journey of individuals through the system.

Cllr David Brackenbury spoke to welcome the ambitious strategy before members, with specific reference made to maintenance of social connections within the objectives, with the importance of maintaining these for individuals for as long as possible being noted.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the Adult Social Care Strategy 2024 – 2029 for public consultation as set out in Option 2 of this report
- b) Noted the co-production approaches used to develop the draft strategy.

Reasons for Recommendations:

- Activity delivered by public bodies should be underpinned by a clear strategy that gives the mandate for the way services should be provided and commissioned.
- This draft strategy is an important step following, the creation of the Council through Local Government Reform (LGR), in setting out how the Council intends to meet its statutory duties for adult social care.
- Co-production has played an important role in developing the current draft of the strategy, gathering the views of frontline staff, strategic partners and people that use services and their carers.

Alternative Options Considered

- **Option 1 (not recommended):** Continue “as-is” without renewing the legacy strategy developed by Northamptonshire County Council. This is not recommended as caselaw, expectations and provider markets evolve and change over time. Reviewing and renewing strategies is an important part of ensuring that council services and provision remain relevant and support our residents to lead the best lives possible.
- **Option 2 (recommended):** Develop the draft strategy using engagement and co-production approaches and consult on the draft strategy and present to the Executive for approval to consult on the draft strategy. This is the recommended option and is based on best practice approaches, utilising co-production as part of the development of the draft strategy.

610 Capital Programme Update 2023-24

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

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke to welcome all four scheme projects, with particular reference to the enhanced play area offer at Barnwell Country Park that would encourage young families to make use of the facilities.

Cllr Scott Edwards also spoke to welcome the investment at Barnwell Country Park noting the beneficial impact this would have on the health and wellbeing of families and children. In addition, Cllr Edwards welcomed the funding for pedestrian crossings on Deeble Road, Kettering, noting that residents would also welcome this investment.

Cllr Matt Binley echoed support for the pedestrian crossings on Deeble Road, noting that their construction would tie in with development in Kettering and increased pedestrian traffic.

RESOLVED

KEY DECISION

That the Executive:

- i) Approved the following changes into the capital programme:
 - a. Ground Maintenance Equipment – virement of £42.3k in 2023/24 from Chesham House budget, funding to remain as approved from borrowing.
 - b. Barnwell Country Park Play Area – budget approval for £88.3k in 2023/24 to be funded £78.8k grant funding and virement of £9.5k from Country Parks Minor Works Budget.
 - c. Kerbside Kitchen Food Waste – budget approval for £2.495m in 2024/25, to be funded from external grant.
 - d. Deeble Road Pedestrian Crossings – budget approval for £185k in 2023/24, to be funded from external grant.

Reasons for Recommendations: These are set out in greater detail within section 5 of the report, but can be summarised as helping to meet the Council's corporate plan objectives:

- Green sustainable environment
- Connected Communities

Alternative Options Considered:

- For those schemes which are grant funded, they are undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the grant conditions and, therefore, there is no alternative option proposed in this report.
- The budget virement in support of ground maintenances equipment and Barnwell country park could have been released, however, the replacement of play equipment and maintaining green infrastructure is an important element of ensuring that the Council has the appropriate equipment to support and deliver services and further investment is required in this area.
- Where individual schemes are over £0.5m, separate reports are included elsewhere on this agenda, and these set out the wider options that were considered before reaching the proposals put forward

611 Budget Forecast Update 2023-24 - Period 10

The Chair invited Cllr Lyn Buckingham to address the Executive. Cllr Buckingham spoke to reference overspends in relation to the Children's Trust, Housing Revenue Account and Dedicated Schools Grant.

The Chair thanked Cllr Buckingham for her contribution before inviting the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Lloyd Bunday to introduce a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the Council based on the Period 10 monitoring forecasts for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

The meeting heard that the overall outturn forecast for the General Fund for 2023/24, as at Period 10 was a forecast overspend of £11.036m against the approved budget, an additional pressure of £915,000 since the last reporting period. The Children's Trust had forecast an overspend of £30.902m, an increase of £1.232m since the previous period, with a risk that £1.070m of efficiency savings would remain undelivered. It was noted that should this pressure not be mitigated it would pose a significant financial risk to the Council.

Cllr Bunday reported that the overspend in regard to Third Party Payments in respect of independent care for Adult Services had increased, with the figure nearing £13m. Favourable budget movements for both Place and Enabling services were detailed to the meeting, alongside additional income due from the Business Rates Retention system.

The Council's overall outturn forecast for the Housing Revenue Account was reported as being an overspend of £128,000.

It was also reported that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) had a forecast pressure of £9.115m, with pressures relating to the high needs funding block that supported SEND provision. Use of reserves had reduced this figure.

Concluding, Cllr Bunday recognised that the current financial climate was challenging, however, the Council would continue to work hard to balance its finances whilst protecting vital services, particularly those to its most vulnerable residents.

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 10 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 11:34am