



**NOTES OF THE BUDGET TASK AND FINISH GROUP FOR
ADULTS, COMMUNITIES AND WELLBEING (INCLUDING HRA)
SESSION 1 - 6 JANUARY 2022 held at 2pm using the Zoom platform**

Attendees:

Cllrs Mark Pengelly, Richard Levell, Valerie Anslow, Scott Brown, Jim Hakewill, Ken Harrington, Ian Jelley, King Lawal, Steven North, Malcolm Ward

Executive Members/Officers: Cllrs Helen Harrison, Helen Howell, David Howes and Andy Mercer - David Watts, Director, Kerry Purnell, Assistant Director Susan Hamilton (Health)

Finance Officers Janice Gotts, Mark Dickenson, Claire Edwards and James O'Connor

An apology was received from Cllr Henson.

1. Presentation

David Watts, Kerry Purnell, Mark Dickenson and Susan Hamilton gave an overview of the service areas of his directorate to include Adult Services, Commissioning and Performance, Safeguarding and Wellbeing, Housing and Communities and Public Health. This information had previously been circulated to the task and finish group.

Officers took members through each area of the budget and explained what each service did and the financial commitments and proposed budget for the forthcoming year.

2. Summary of questions and comments

- Adult Social Care - A question was raised over the previous debts due to NCC for the repayment of care costs and how would such debts be pursued, rather than these being written off – as this would be income for the new unitary authority.

It was explained that such debt was on the NCC's balance sheet (with the West leading on this.

- Adult Social Care - How did NCC know that there would be sufficient money to pay for care.

The amount was an estimate of what would be required, taking into account lots of information including service demand and statistics, along with the impact of social care reform due to be implemented from October 2023. Further guidance was awaited on the implications of reform.

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- Disabled Facilities Grant – A comment was made that there was often an underspend on the grants. How was spend monitored.

It was noted that due to Covid access to some properties had been delayed this had resulted in a lower spend than normal. The work programme was monitored quarterly through the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- Housing and Homelessness Prevention - was the budget of £4m entirely for North Northamptonshire?

It was confirmed that the budget was in place for North Northamptonshire and would enable more properties to be acquired.

- Parkwood Contract – an update on the contract was requested

Officers confirmed that there had been a slight delay following the approval in the Autumn. The current contract had been extended whilst the negotiations were taking place.

- Right to Buy - was the funding being used in the appropriate timescale for new housing? A request was made for a forecast of right to buy receipts for the next session.

It was confirmed that the right to buy receipts for Kettering and Corby were programmed for the next two years.

- Acquisition of property - Could right to buy receipts be used to buy existing properties?

It was confirmed that properties could be bought on the open market but there were restrictions from April 22 which limits the number of acquisitions this was to help drive new supply the cap limits acquisitions to 50% of delivery from 1st April 2022 then reducing to 40% from 1st April 2023 and to 30% from 1st April 2024 onwards. The first 20 units of delivery in each year will be excluded.

- Community Fund - What sort of projects could put in a bid for funding?

Officers clarified that the community fund was for capital projects, day to day projects could submit a request under the small grants scheme.

- Commissioning and Performance - Reference was made to the Shaw PPP beds and Shaw PFI previously arranged by the NCC with a request for details of how the funding was split across the North and West.

Officers explained that the two contracts were completely different. The Shaw PPP related to six care homes in the North Northamptonshire area and these were overseen by NNC and were for residents in the NN area. The Shaw PFI was countywide with homes in Daventry, Kingsthorpe, Corby and Rushden for short term used and hosted by the West, though services could be used by the North.

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- Parkwood – Castle Theatre - A question was raised about the contract for the theatre in Wellingborough.

Officers clarified that the reference to Parkwood was not in relation to the Castle Theatre but related to the leisure contract.

- Pressure on care homes - what were the risks of care homes not being able to survive?

Officers clarified that there were risks and they were looking to improve the utilisation rate on the Shaw PPP contract. There would be more integrated working in relation to the Integrated Care Across Northamptonshire programme (iCAN).

- What are the expected challenges following the pandemic?

Officers clarified that there were clear indications that people were living longer, resulting in more complex care needs, whilst many lives had been lost during the pandemic, there were also those living with the effects of the pandemic that would need care. The impact of austerity on local government and the care sector was significant and more funding was required to provide an adequate service.

CLRs clarified that they would raise this with their own political associations

- Safeguarding and Wellbeing - Members were pleased that recruitment of staff had progressed. With regard to Supplies and Services (Item D) members asked if a breakdown could be provided.

Officers clarified that this could be provided.

- Level of voids – A comment was made that the level of ‘voids’ in the Kettering area was double of that in the Corby area. Further information was required on why was there such diversity and how was this monitored?
- Chester House Farm - what impact had there been on the withdrawal of the West in giving support to the project? Also why had the West withdrawn and had this been to a committee?

The Executive Member clarified that since its opening all targets had been achieved and it was expected that the requirement to fund would not continue. The West had made the decision to withdraw due to geography and Chester House being located in North Northamptonshire – this had been a decision made by the West and was not a committee decision required to be made by NNC.

- Community Events - Would events continue in each area of North Northamptonshire?

The Executive Member clarified that the intention was for the whole of North Northamptonshire to come together as one to support and promote

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events. For example, one or two large events to promote the county could be held. This did not mean that 'town events' would cease.

Members specifically asked about events such as Remembrance Sunday or the Fireworks at the Boating Lake in Corby.

It was clarified that such events bring communities together and that officer support could be provided but that precepting would be encouraged.

- Public Health - Members noted the work that had been undertaken and continued to take place due to the pandemic along with the proposals to improve public health generally.
- Housing Revenue Account

Right to buy sales - Members noted that there were more right to buy sales in the Corby area and asked what the current position was with the retention of funding and asked if a spreadsheet of receipts could be provided for the next meeting.

Officers advised that the RTB receipts retained under the 1 4 1 agreements are retained by the council and that the 1 4 1 receipts to fund eligible expenditure for the provision of new homes has increased from 30% to 40%. Officers would also find out whether, as there were currently two Neighbourhood Accounts that form a single HRA whether this would mean that the cap on acquisitions would be on 20 or 40 properties.

- Rent Increases - Would the proposed rent increases be put to the Tenants Forum?

Officers clarified that there would be consultation through various methods and that in future there would be one tenants forum for the whole area.

- Repairs and Maintenance - Concern was raised over the considerable increase in building materials and the impact this was having and would continue to have.

Officers clarified that the increase in supplies would be challenging as there were considerable increases in the costs being noted already. The intention was for the council to have a central depot to save both time and money.

Members asked to be provided with more details on this.

3. Close

The Chair thanked all for attending and confirmed that the next session would be held on Wednesday 19 January at 1.30pm.