

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive

At 10.00 am on Thursday 13th January, 2022 in the Council Chamber, Swanspool House, Doddington Road, Wellingborough, NN8 1BP

Present:-

Members

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

Also in attendance – Councillors Anne Lee, Gill Mercer, Wendy Brackenbury, David Jenney, Mike Tebbutt, John McGhee and Elliot Prentice

137 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Janice Gotts, David Watts and Lucy Wightman.

138 Minutes of the meetings held on 16th December 2021 and 23rd December 2021

RESOLVED that: The Executive agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 16th December 2021 and 23rd December 2021 as true and accurate records of the meetings.

139 Notifications of requests to address the meeting

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

- Cllr Dorothy Maxwell – Items 5, 6, 7 and 8
- Cllr Anne Lee – Items 5, 9 and 14
- Cllr Valerie Anslow – Items 6, 7 and 10
- Cllr John McGhee – Items 5 and 7

Councillor Anslow was not in attendance at the meeting and therefore did not speak in relation to the items listed above. Cllr McGhee chose not to speak on Item 5.

140 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

141 Performance Indicator Report 2021/22 (Period 7 / October)

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell welcomed the appointment of a new Director of Children's Services and referenced performance criteria relating to individual needs assessments and the need to ensure that a backlog of assessments did not accrue.

Cllr Anne Lee was then invited to address the meeting, referencing the variation from target figures for MMR vaccinations, food and environmental samples relating to Environmental Health and a decline in the outcomes for services relating to addiction. Cllr Lee requested the addition of performance indicators relating to the referral periods for victims of Domestic Abuse and the number of staff on day rates and the associated cost to the authority.

The Chair thanked Cllrs Maxwell and Lee for their contributions before introducing a report that sought to provide an update on the performance of the Council across a range of services as measured by performance indicators, as well as setting out the progress that was being made in the development of the Council's performance monitoring arrangements.

The Chair noted the improved format of the report, although there was further work to be undertaken to simplify future iterations while clearly indicating how performance indicators linked to delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Cllrs Harrison and Brackenbury welcomed the report and noted its value as a tool for service improvement across all directorates. Cllr Harrison noted the need to focus on certain Public Health performance indicators and to accelerate improvements in relation to these measures.

RESOLVED:-

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the performance of the Council measured by the available indicators at Period 7 for 2021/22 as set out in the appendices to this report.
- b) Noted the approach that was being taken to develop the Council's approach to benchmarking and comparative data.

Reason for Decision: To better understand the Council's performance as measured by performance indicators as at Period 7, 2021/22

142 Afghan Refugee Resettlement

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell welcomed the arrival of ten Afghan refugee families and queried education funding in relation to the wraparound support the families would receive to aid integration. Cllr Maxwell also stated the importance of English language teaching provision and accommodation support.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her contribution before Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report that sought approval from the Executive for the proposed use of the Local Authority Tariff component of the Integration Package for Afghan citizens resettled in North Northamptonshire.

The meeting heard that North Northamptonshire Council had pledged to support a minimum of ten Afghan families to resettle in North Northamptonshire, including a need to identify suitable housing and to ensure provision of appropriate wraparound support services. To that end, an integration funding package including a core Local Authority Tariff of £20,520 per person over three years had been provided by the Home Office to Councils to support Afghan families in this regard.

It was heard that the first family would arrive in the county on 20th January with the remainder expected shortly after this date. It was noted that further funding was available through ARAP and ACRS Additional Housing Support Costs to enable families to:

- Meet the shortfall between rent and Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates on privately rented properties of 3 bedrooms or more
- Support families on Universal Credit that are limited by the benefit cap
- Meet other exceptional costs that are not otherwise met by these criteria (e.g. special educational needs, adaptations, additional social care costs)

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers noted that the planned wraparound packages would provide support to families comprised of highly trained, educated individuals who would fit in well with local communities.

Cllr Harriet Pentland spoke in support of the report and recommendations, approval of which would provide the families with the opportunity to settle into the local community as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the proposed approach regarding the use of the Local Authority Tariff set out in the report at paragraphs 5.4 - 5.15 to ensure that suitable accommodation, tenancy and community support can be provided to enable the successful resettlement of Afghan refugees under The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) in North Northamptonshire.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in liaison with the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions and/or actions required to appropriately resettle Afghan refugees in North Northamptonshire.

Reason for Decision: To set a clear approach for how the Local Authority Tariff will be effectively used to support and help the integration of Afghan refugees into their local communities.

143 Community Programme to Support Growing, Cooking and Eating Healthy Foods

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell welcomed the report noting issues with obesity in school age children and the need for further education in regard to food sources, the benefits of a healthy diet and cookery skills.

Cllr John McGhee was welcomed to the meeting and invited to speak. Cllr McGhee requested the involvement of existing local organisations in managing grant funding through Health and Wellbeing Forums.

The Chair thanked Cllrs Maxwell and McGhee for their comments before Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report that sought approval to use a Public Health grant of £125,000 a year for four years to fund a community programme of growing, cooking and healthy eating projects to improve health and wellbeing of local communities across North and West Northamptonshire.

Cllr Harrison noted that addressing the issue of obesity was a key priority for the authority, with preventative programmes such as the one before members being vital to making progress in reducing current figures where 68% of adults in the county were classed as overweight or obese.

The programme, if approved, would form part of an overarching strategy to tackle obesity, focussing on communities most at risk of poor health outcomes. The significant investment proposed in the report underlined the Council's commitment to making progress on this key priority.

It was heard that the Health and Wellbeing & Vulnerable People Executive Advisory Panel had considered a "Whole Systems Approach to Healthy Weight" report at its meeting on 1st October making a recommendation that the overarching strategy should be flexible to allow it to reach all residents in need. The programme before members formed a progressive and ambitious strand of this strategy.

Cllrs Howes, Pentland, Edwards and Howell all spoke in favour of the report noting that the project needed to be sustainable and involve community groups and leaders to achieve the best possible outcomes.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the investment of £125,000 per annum of the public health grant for four years to develop a community programme to support growing, cooking and eating healthy foods.
- b) Noted that £125,000 per annum of public health grant will also be invested by West Northamptonshire Council in a similar programme.

- c) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Director of Public Health to issue community grants to enable the delivery of the programme.

144 North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Dorothy Maxwell to address the meeting. Cllr Maxwell made reference to the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocation Policy and the need to provide sufficient pitches for this community while noting the need for public engagement and robust enforcement on illegal encampments.

The Chair thanked Cllr Maxwell for her comments before Cllr David Brackenbury, Executive Member for Growth and Regeneration presented a report that sought approval for the North Northamptonshire Local Development Scheme (LDS), a statutory project plan that provided a timetable for the preparation of documents that made up the area's Development Plan including the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan, the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Policy, and the remaining stages of the Part 2 Local Plan for East Northamptonshire.

Cllr Brackenbury made reference to the North Northamptonshire Strategic Plan that would emerge as a result of the revision of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy, as well as Neighbourhood Plans and the Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations Policy.

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers welcomed the involvement of the Executive Advisory Panel in forming a vital part of a robust decision-making and scrutiny process.

Cllr David Howes spoke to make reference to the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and ongoing work to create a transit site in future.

RESOLVED:-

That the Executive: Considered the Draft Local Development Scheme (LDS) and agreed that the Draft LDS be recommended to Full Council for adoption.

Reasons for Decision:

- a) To agree a timetable for the programme of plan-making to be identified in the Local Development Scheme.
- b) To ensure the Council meets its obligation to publish an up-to-date LDS to meet its requirement as a local planning authority.

145 Domestic Abuse Strategy

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Anne Lee to address the meeting. Cllr Lee welcomed the report and noted the importance of early intervention in regard to Domestic Abuse. Cllr Lee requested a performance indicator to show the progress made in reducing the current three-month referral period for victims of Domestic Abuse against a benchmark of two weeks, as well as communication to members as to how to assist residents in being referred.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lee for her contribution before Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report that sought approval for the Domestic Abuse Strategy for 2022 to 2025. The strategy itself sought to improve support to vulnerable people ensuring that all parties involved worked together to prevent, tackle and reduce abusive behaviour and the consequent impact on the children, adults and families in the county.

It was heard that the current county-wide strategy covering both Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence 2019-2022, was not due to expire until the end of March 2022, however, legislative changes had introduced a requirement to review and revise the strategy in light of societal and national events, especially the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Domestic Abuse and the associated rise in service demand.

Cllr Harrison noted that the establishment of a multi-agency Partnership Board for the Council had been instrumental in the development of the strategy, and that a separate Sexual Violence Strategy would follow for Executive approval.

The strategy before members had five priorities as set out below:

- i) Driving Change Together
- ii) Early Intervention and Prevention
- iii) Provision of Services
- iv) Minimising Harm
- v) Justice, Recovery and ongoing protection.

Government funding was allocated annually to deliver a response to Domestic Abuse and this would fund the actions set out in the strategy and subsequent action plans. For 2021-22 the Council had received an allocation of £664,295, with £260,324 of this funding committed to ensure continuity of current services, remaining funds would be allocated to support the delivery of the strategy.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive: Approved the Domestic Abuse Strategy 2022-2025 for adoption and implementation by the Community Safety Partnership.

Reasons for Decision: The Council will be able to:

- a) Comply with the new statutory duty as the report and draft strategy will be in the public domain.
- b) Support a co-ordinated response to Domestic Abuse improving services and outcomes for all those affected.

146 Procurement of Short-Term Home Care Service

Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report that sought Executive agreement to re-procure a Short-Term Hospital to Home Care Service.

It was noted that existing six-month pilot service was due to expire in July and aimed to offer personal care and support to individuals discharged from hospital for up to six weeks. A multi-disciplinary project group had been established by the Council to review the effectiveness of the pilot and current delivery and to identify North Northamptonshire's future needs. Analysis of demand by the project group demonstrated that the 400 hours per week currently commissioned was insufficient to meet current demand from the hospital.

Based on the service review, benchmarking and learning from the pilot, it was proposed that the new service be commissioned to deliver a flexible Short Term Homecare service based on a minimum of 800 hrs per week, increasing over the life of the contract to meet ongoing demand. Further benchmarking work and engagement with the market had identified an hourly rate for similar services elsewhere as £24. Using this and forecast demand over the 5-year period, a fixed price of £6,115,200 would be advertised to the market for a total contract term of 5 years. This would consist of a 4-year contract with the option to extend for a further year. Due to the fixed price nature of the contract, bids would be evaluated based on 100% quality, however value for money would be ascertained through providers competing on the number of hours to be delivered, quality of provision, service development and sustainability. Appropriate break clauses would be included in the contract to mitigate the risk of the high value and length of the contract.

Cllrs Brackenbury and Lawman welcomed the report, noting that approval of this service would offer a more efficient use of funds and deliver better care for residents.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive:

- a) Approved an open tender procurement of a Short-Term Home Care Service to expedite hospital discharge and provide rapid response home care for those in crisis and at risk of admission to either hospital or residential care.
- b) Delegated to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Executive Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing (DASS), the authority to take any further decisions and/or actions required to conclude this procurement and award of the contract.

Reasons for Decisions:

- a) The recommended course of action is the most cost-effective way of supporting hospital discharge for those with care and support needs and enables the Council to make informed decisions about its medium-term financial plan.
- b) The recommended model encompasses a Discharge to Assess function which ensures the Council is compliant with the statutory "Hospital Discharge Service Policy and Operating Model 2020" and the "Local Government Association's High Impact Model 2015".

- c) The recommended approach delivers maximum benefit to individuals, the Council and other key stakeholders.

147 Procurement of a Countywide Carers Support Service

Cllr Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing introduced a report that sought approval to commence re-procurement of a countywide Carers Support Service.

It was noted that the Council currently hosted the Carers Support Service contract on behalf of West Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire Children's Trust, with the contract due to expire on 30th September 2022. The current contract was in the second year of a two-year extension with a value of £768,900 per annum, with the cost to the Council being £324,450 per annum.

It was noted that following completion of an options appraisal exercise, the Council had agreed to a continuation of hosting arrangements and to lead the procurement for a countywide Carers Support Service. It was recognised that a countywide service would be the most advantageous option for all commissioning partners and individuals using the service. A two-year block contract was the preferred option for all partners.

The tender would be published on 4th April to ensure service continuity, with the total contract value for the two-year contract of £1,537,800, of which the Council's commitment was £648,900, funded via the existing Better Care Fund pooled budget.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive:

- a) Agreed to commence an open tender procurement process for a countywide Carers Support Service.
- b) Delegated authority to the Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing in consultation with the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing, to take any further decisions and action required to conclude this procurement and award the contract.

Reasons for Decisions:

- a) The recommended approach ensures compliance with the Care Act 2014 and the council's statutory duty to provide assessments for carers and meet their assessed needs.
- b) That a jointly commissioned service supports the provision of an equitable service across the county.
- c) That delegated authority to award will ensure the service start date of 1st October 2022 can be achieved.

148 **Future Ways of Working Strategy**

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers introduced a report that sought approval for the proposed Future Ways of Working Strategy for North Northamptonshire Council.

Cllr Smithers noted that the document offered an ambitious vision for North Northamptonshire, taking into account the evolving working practices stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and informing future developments for ways of working.

It was heard that the Council should be an employer of choice, recruiting and retaining talented staff, with the strategy designed to put the organisation on the map as a forward thinking and progressive organisation while being outcome focussed to consider the end result for service users.

Cllr Smithers stated that the strategy also set out the Council's commitment to investing in the right tools, systems and support for its staff to maximise performance and productivity while ensuring staff health and wellbeing. Building and workspaces would be designed around people rather than services, with better access for public and staff.

An extensive work force survey had been undertaken to inform the strategy, with work groups convened to help further development and implementation. Cllr Smithers noted that it was vital that the Council valued and listened to its staff in order to attract and retain people with the skills and experience to deliver the Council's ambitions.

Several members of the Executive spoke in support of the strategy, welcoming the flexibility offered within the document as well as the importance of focussing on outcomes for residents.

RESOLVED:-

That the Executive: Approved the Future Ways of Working Strategy attached at **Appendix A** to the report.

Reason for Decision: The introduction of the Strategy will support the Council's ambition to deliver excellent services, have a positive impact on climate change, support financial resilience and promote staff health and wellbeing. The Strategy consolidates the Council's commitments to how it will work in the future

149 **North Northamptonshire People Plan**

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers introduced a report that sought approval for the proposed People Plan for North Northamptonshire Council.

It was heard that the plan underpinned the Council's other corporate plans and strategies by ensuring the recruitment, retention and performance of its workforce was maximised in furtherance of its corporate priorities and desired outcomes.

Cllr Smithers noted that staff has gone through significant change during the transformation period and had responded to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan before members focused on key workforce priorities and identified how these would be addressed through detailed action plans in order to

ensure the right structures, people and skills were in place to deliver high quality services to residents and communities.

The plan comprised five key themes as set out below

- Creating inspirational leadership;
- Investing in our people;
- Attracting and growing talent
- Engaging and motivating
- Transforming together

Cllrs Howell, Edwards and Brackenbury spoke in support of the proposal, with Cllr Edwards noting that job applications from local people and care leavers should be encouraged with application processes simplified.

Cllr Harrison made reference to staff recruitment and retention within Care Services and the positive impact on the service witnessed since the introduction of the real living wage and incremental pay upgrades.

RESOLVED:-

That the Executive:

- a) Approved the People Plan attached at Appendix A to the report.
- b) Noted that the People Plan will be underpinned by detailed action plans to ensure that the impact and efficacy of the Plan can be measured and adapted as required.

Reason for Decision: The People Plan is essential for providing clarity to the organisation and setting out key workforce priorities for the next 12-18 months. It ensures that the Council organises its workforce in an effective way for the short to medium term by having the right structures, people, and skills in place to deliver high quality services to its residents and communities.

150 Budget Forecast 2021/22 as at Period 7

The Chair, Cllr Jason Smithers invited Cllr Anne Lee to address the meeting. Cllr Lee spoke in reference to libraries, with particular focus on the library book fund reduction that reflected a move to online resources. Cllr Lee stated that it was imperative that children and young people be invited to utilise library services and noted the importance of libraries as community hubs.

The Chair thanked Cllr Lee for her contribution before Councillor Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation introduced a report that set out the forecast outturn position for the Council based on the Period 7 monitoring forecasts for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

It was noted that there was current a forecast overspend against the budget of £12,000, a positive movement of £14,000 and budget variances were outlined to the meeting. Cllr Bunday noted that while this was quite a stable position for a new

authority, a number of areas of risk remained noting that Adult Social Care and Children's Services were volatile service areas.

Cllr Bunday referenced the request to approve the use of £40,000 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot project reserve to fund the feasibility works for the telephony infrastructure scheme for the whole of North Northamptonshire to replace the current legacy systems.

It was heard that due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, organisations were still operating inside a period of financial uncertainty. Consequently, the Council had been allocated £7.654m of grant funding for the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) and delegated authority was sought to develop a discretionary scheme for the allocation of this funding.

Cllr Bunday concluded by noting a forecast pressure of £183k against the approved budget of £35.150m for the Housing Revenue Account, this position being unchanged to that reported in Period 6.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive:

- a) Noted the Council's forecast outturn position for 2021/22 and the associated risks and other considerations.
- b) Noted the assessment of the current deliverability of the 2021/22 saving proposals in **Appendix A** to the report.
- c) Approved the use of the Business Rates Retention Pilot project reserve to fund the feasibility works for the telephony infrastructure scheme as set out in paragraphs 5.76 to 5.80.
- d) Noted that the Council has been allocated £7.654m of grant funding for the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) as set out in paragraphs 5.84 to 5.86 and delegate authority to the Executive Member for Finance and Transformation in consultation with the Executive of Director of Finance to develop a discretionary scheme for the allocation of this funding.
- e) Noted the additional one-off grant funding to businesses with premises in the hospitality and leisure sectors in response to the Omicron variant as indicated in paragraph 5.87. This will be funded in full from Government S31 grant.
- f) Noted the third top-up of Government funding for the COVID-19 Additional Restrictions Grant to support business severely impacted by the pandemic as highlighted in paragraph 5.88.

Reason for Decisions: To note the forecast financial position for 2021/22 as at Period 7 and consider the impact on this year and future years' budgets.

151 Capital Programme Update 2021/22

Cllr Lloyd Bunday, Executive Member for Finance and Transformation introduced the 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.

One scheme was highlighted as per the report and recommendation below.

RESOLVED:-

(KEY DECISION)

That the Executive approved:

- a) A change of £0.306m to the capital programme budget to fund a new scheme to enable the relocation of critical staff from One Angel Square (OAS) to North Northamptonshire based accommodation
- b) A virement of £0.306m from the Tithe Barn Road property project which is currently on hold pending wider asset review in order to fund the proposal.

Reasons for Decision: To relocate a number of staff from One Angel Square (OAS), Northampton into premises within North Northamptonshire. The aim is to do this around March/April 2022, subject to consultation. For a number of months staff now employed by North Northamptonshire Council have continued to operate from OAS and the proposals outlined in this paper will enable those staff to be relocated into premises within North Northamptonshire.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 11:45am