

Public Document Pack



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Service Delivery, Performance and Customers

At 9.30 am on Monday 21st March, 2022 in the Lahnstein Room, Kettering Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, NN15 7QX

Present:-

Members

Councillor Lloyd Bunday (Chair)
Councillor Ian Jelley
Councillor King Lawal

Officers

Lisa Hyde – Director of Transformation
Kerry Purnell - Assistant Director Housing and Communities
Rochelle Mathieson – Head of Transformation – Partnerships & Design
Katie Jones - Head of Transformation – Delivery
Anne Lovely – West Northamptonshire Council
Carl Dorney – Library Services Manager
Jack Pishorn – Business Development Manager
David Pope – Senior Committee Administrator

Also in attendance – Councillors Helen Howell and Elliot Prentice

54 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jean Addison, Bert Jackson and Richard Levell.

55 **Members' Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were received.

56 **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 6th December 2021**

RESOLVED that: The Service Delivery, Performance and Customers Executive Advisory Panel agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 6th December 2021 as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

57 **Transfer of Raunds Library to Become Fully Community Managed**

Members of the panel received a report that sought consideration of the intention to seek approval from the Executive to progress with the transfer of Raunds Library to become Community Managed under the same financial conditions that were offered to

the other community managed libraries, specifically a 40% reduction in the market rent for the lease of library buildings.

The meeting heard that potential transfer of Raunds Library was part of a longstanding and complex transformation process begun by the former County Council in 2018 as those libraries not required as part of the authority's statutory library provision were transferred to be community managed by local groups. To date, seven libraries in North Northamptonshire had been successfully transferred to this model.

The Raunds Community Library Trust (RCLT) had been running the Raunds Library since October 2020 on the understanding that a viable business plan would need to be forthcoming to allow for the library to be transferred to be community managed. It was noted that while negotiations between the trust and Raunds Town Council had been ongoing, no viable business case had been received, progress having stalled as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The meeting noted a very recent development with the partnering of the trust with an Academy Trust experienced in financing and operating Rothwell Library as a Community Managed Library. Together a business plan had been created and submitted to the Council, which upon review has been deemed viable.

Members welcomed the submission of a viable business plan for Raunds Library, noting the value of the facility to the community and the success of the Academy Trust in its operation at Rothwell Library. It was also noted that completing the Library Transformation programme was an important way of supporting communities in which these multi-purpose facilities were located.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Executive Advisory Panel:

- a) Noted the business plan and the request to be made to Executive at its meeting on 14th April 2022 to approve the transfer of Raunds Library to be community managed by the Academy Trust and Raunds Community Library Trust (RCLT)
- b) Noted the request to Executive at its meeting on 14th April 2022 to approve the 40% reduction in rent payable by the Academy Trust and Raunds Community Library Trust (RCLT) for the lease of the existing library building to preserve the integrity of the Library Transformation Programme and ensure parity between this community managed library and all other community managed libraries in Northamptonshire.

58 Chester House Estate - Revised Business Plan

The Panel received a presentation which sought to provide details of a refreshed Business Plan for Chester House Estate covering the period 2022/23 that would be submitted to the Executive at its meeting on 14th April . The meeting heard that the business plan was a fluid document that received weekly updates and had last been presented to Executive at its meeting in August 2021. Consequently, it was considered to be the appropriate point to resubmit it to Executive for consideration.

The vision for the Chester House project was provided to members who noted that the site had opened to the public on 23rd October 2021 following an intense capital development programme, the final phase of which had taken place between January and October 2021.

Members heard that the initial operating period had exceeded expectations, with the revised business plan taking into account new data and visitor feedback, with operation costs also now fully known. Due to the financial success of certain commercial generation departments, projected income for future financial years had been increased, including that relating to the catering offer, accommodation occupancy and events and programming.

An updated financial forecast was presented, the meeting noting that in the previous version of the plan an opening year loss of £114,000 had been projected. However, due to successes outlined above, a £25,000 budgetary surplus was now forecast. The numbers presented as part of the forecast would continue to evolve and develop as the business continued to grow.

Details of the Council's marketing approach for the project were detailed, with members noting positive viewer figures for an online documentary regarding the project and positive engagement on the estate's social media platforms.

The meeting received details in relation to progress, achievements and maintenance of the site and noted the extensive list of events scheduled for the remainder of 2022 covering the main holiday periods and being a key part of income generation. The meeting also noted the extensive partnership work undertaken with a variety of organisations to promote local culture and tourism.

The meeting heard that any financial surpluses in the budget would be reinvested into the site and a number of future plans relating to the estate were outlined to the meeting including:

- Development of proposals for the empty building known as B17
- Restoration project for the 19th Century greenhouse
- Directional Signage
- Claudius Way entrance sign
- Landscape interpretation
- Facilities accommodation (long term option)
- History Garden Interpretation
- Greenway Link Footpath.

Members received details of learning points, challenges and additional costs identified during the initial stages of operation, noting the small core team employed at the project who had worked tirelessly alongside volunteers, students and interns. It was proposed to close the estate on Mondays during school term-time as soon as was practicable to relieve the burden on the staffing team. Details of proposed staffing requirements identified following the successful, yet busy opening were outlined as follows:

- Introduction of Business Operations Manager
- Current Operations Manager to move to commercial activities only
- Introduction of Events Assistant to support Commercial Operations Manager

- Business Development Intern to move to Business, Retail and Finance Assistant role following completion of Nenescape funded Internship
- Introduction of Volunteer Officer (Funded via Nenescape) 3-5 days per week

Members thanked officers for the comprehensive presentation and asked questions in relation to:

- Sufficient staffing capacities
- Footfall and car parking and site facility capacities
- Enhanced connectivity to the site on foot, by bicycle and by river with bridge connectivity to Wellingborough
- Engagement with schools, colleges and universities
- Volunteer roles and numbers
- Local produce being available from the onsite shop

59 Draft Transformation Prioritised Plan 2022-25 - Inspiring Improvement

The Panel received for comment a draft copy of the Transformation Plan 2022-25 Inspiring Improvement that was set to be presented to the Executive for approval at its meeting on 14th April 2022. It was noted that the plan provided an update to members on transformation progress made to date following the endorsement of the draft Transformation Project Proposal Plan 2022 – 25 at Executive on 23rd December 2021.

It was heard that the document before members was the cumulation of a significant piece of work cocreated with the service areas, to contribute to the ongoing transformation and financial sustainability of North Northamptonshire Council.

Since December, the Transformation Team had worked closely with service areas to review, define, and prioritise the projects in consideration with the Council-wide resources, disaggregation requirements and critical business need.

Following the prioritisation exercise, member workshops had been held on 9th and 10th March 2022 to review the draft Plan focussing on the benefits the projects and activity would deliver. In addition, the plan took into account the output of the Scrutiny Conference which took place on 9th October 2021 and subsequent Work Programme which was approved by the Scrutiny Commission on 23rd November 2021. Where projects noted on the Transformation Plan were referenced within the Scrutiny Work Programme, relevant service areas would proactively utilise the progress, learning and development of the specific projects to update and inform the Scrutiny Commission.

The plan had also taken into account the Medium Term Financial Plan position, which was approved by Council in February.

It was heard that in Year 1 of the plan, a total of 45 projects were set for delivery, a significant proportion of these being related to disaggregation. These projects would be staggered across 2022/23, and once approved by Executive resources could be aligned across this period to allow for effective delivery. It was noted that the plan needed to remain flexible and that robust governance processes were in place to ensure resources were working effectively. Members were advised that service areas could only take on so much of the plan at any one time given the resources available to them

Members noted the purpose and contents of the plan and asked questions in relation to:

- Efficiencies and profitability
- Support function of the Transformation Team in assisting service areas in realising efficiencies
- Seeing change as a positive
- Key Performance Indicators for directorates and project milestones
- Housing services restructure
- Beneficial involvement of members in the process

60 Executive Forward Plan and Panel Work Programme

Members received the Executive Forward Plan and the work programme for the panel and noted upcoming items for both.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 10.55 am

This page is intentionally left blank