

West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive

24 November 2020

Shadow Executive Members Present:

Richard Auger	Matt Golby
Lizzy Bowen	Phil Larratt
Rebecca Breese	Ian McCord (Chair)
Adam Brown	Jonathan Nunn

Other Shadow Authority Members Present:

Fiona Baker	Danielle Stone
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Officers Present:

George Candler	Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council
Jane Carr	Transformation Director, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Martin Cox	Programme Lead, Corporate Programme, Future Northants
Anna Earnshaw	Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
James Edmunds	Democratic Services Assistant Manager, NCC
Theresa Grant	Chief Executive, NCC
Rachel Hand	Project Manager (Corporate), Future Northants
Paul Hanson	Democratic Services Manager, NCC
Martin Henry	Chief Finance Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Alex Melia	Democratic Services Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority (Minutes)
Kerry Purnell	Assistant Director, Corporate & Community Services, NCC
Audra Statham	Finance Enabler, Future Northants Programme
Ian Vincent	Chief Executive, DDC
Catherine Whitehead	Monitoring Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE:

None received.

2. NOTIFICATION OF REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING:

None received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

None received.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2020

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2020 as a true and accurate record.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair noted that there are only 127 total days - and only 90 working days - until vesting day. Despite the time restrictions, consistent progress is being made, and a recent session with the LGA provided additional confidence to the Chair on the readiness for day one.

6. TRANSFORMATION DIRECTORS UPDATE

The Transformation Director, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- Finance has moved from green to amber status, mainly because of a reliance on SME's that have other significant commitments. The sovereign authorities are being consulted to help address concerns in this area.
- Corporate remains amber whilst the work with HR and discussions with Trade Unions is ongoing.
- The Children's Trust has gone live since the previous update.
- The outgoing Programme Director has provided an in-depth induction and handover to ensure a smooth transition and coverage across all areas.

The Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council, provided an update on Day 1 Assurance:

- Work is ongoing to address issues in the ICT and business systems, which had previously been highlighted as an area of concern. This has led to a data sharing agreement between both Unitary Authorities for day one onwards.
- Timelines are in place for the remaining areas reported as amber, to ensure their readiness for day one.
- A weekly day one readiness update has been scheduled with each of the key programmes.

The Transformation Director gave an update on the Change Management element of the Programme:

- The Children's Trust went live on 1 November 2020, with no major issues reported thus far.
- The roll out of MS365 is ongoing, with an error rate of 0.005% during the migration of >1.7tb of data.
- The launch of the new Adult's Social Care system, Eclipse, is scheduled for 7 December 2020. All-staff training for this began on 23 November 2020.
- There are currently 374 change champions across the County, an increase of 24 from October, which has addressed some gaps across the programme.
- The Transformation Director provided an overview of the recent activity and next steps for the communications and overview element of the programme.

Councillor Danielle Stone made the following points:

- The volume and quality of the work involved to bring the programme to its current point was commended.

- Concerns were raised over a potential lack of capacity in finance and how this is being addressed, as well as how audit issues within the sovereign authorities may impact on the budget setting process for the West Northamptonshire Council.
- It was noted that staff had given positive feedback on the impact of the work in Adult's services. However, Councillor Stone queried the ability to monitor this area.
- An update on the progress of Newton Europe was requested.
- It was also noted that an Ofsted inspection has taken place on the Children's Trust, but the report has not yet been made publically available.

Members of the Shadow Executive commented as follows:

- Councillor Fiona Baker asked for clarity on the issues that are keeping Children's at amber status, and clarified that the Ofsted report on the Children's Trust has not yet been published into the public domain.
- The Transformation Director advised that the update provided the previous month's reporting, prior to the launch of the Children's Trust, with the figures for the current month not yet available.
- The Chief Executive, NCC, advised that the Children's Trust has entered the stabilisation phase, which may result in areas being reported as amber until this work is complete. The transition period will run until 1 April 2021, which requires further work for this area of the programme.
- The Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, confirmed that there had been no drop-off in residential quality monitoring for Adult's services. It was also noted that Newton Europe is continuing its work and as a result, the forecasted £15million saving is likely to be completed.
- Councillor Adam Brown noted that oversight reports on the Children's Trust will continue to be taken to NCC's Cabinet, but expressed a desire for more detailed reports going forward given the importance of the transition into a Unitary authority. Councillor Brown also asked for clarity on the key milestones during this period.
- Councillor Ian McCord confirmed that regular meetings were scheduled, along with the Leader of the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, to actively monitor the progress in this area.
- The Chief Executive, NCC, confirmed that key milestones are set out between now and April 2021, with Councillor Baker acting as Chair for a strategic board designed to oversee and provide political input to issues regarding the Children's Trust.
- The Chief Finance Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, noted that the finance capacity of the programme is amber, but this is being actively monitored and issues considered. In relation to audit, the sovereign councils have audits open from the 2018/19 period which will not be closed until 2021/22, but this will not have an impact on the budget setting process.

Councillor Stone expressed concern that if all budgets are not fully closed then this would continue to have an impact on the opening balances of the West Northamptonshire Council.

In response, the Chief Finance Officer advised that there are two separate issues. Firstly, there is the technical closing down of the accounts, which will continue into the new authority – meaning that a closing position will not be available to provide an opening balance. Furthermore, budget setting is a separate process to the closing of the accounts, allowing for estimates on the potential costs of services to be made.

The Finance Enabler, Future Northants Programme, introduced the finance monitoring report and highlighted the salient points:

- The finance monitoring report shows a slightly improved position, an increase of £58,000 compared with the previous report.
- This is made up of two areas, with the senior appointments that were previously budgeted for now made. Due to the varying start dates of the appointees, there is now a favourable variance of £190,000.
- There has been a downturn in home to school income due to the impact of Covid-19.
- The outturn position of the eight sovereign authorities has shown an improvement on the previously reported £1.4million budget deficit. All overspends have common themes, which are currently being mitigated.
- These mitigations include extra funding drawn from reserves, which will leave less for the two new Unitary authorities to call on in future. As a result, requests to central government to provide support for the additional costs from Covid-19 have been made.

Councillor Danielle Stone expressed concern over the use of reserves, noting the risk of a potential recession, and the need for contingency plans for pressing issues.

Councillor Matt Golby stressed the desire of the sovereign councils to limit the use of reserves where possible, noting that Northamptonshire County Council is predicting a surplus, which could also increase. Councillor Golby also reemphasised the commitment made by the County Council in recent years to stabilise finances for the benefit of both West and North Northamptonshire.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) **Noted the high level programme delivery status;**
- b) **Noted the update on change readiness;**
- c) **Noted the communication and engagement update; and**
- d) **Noted and approved the finance monitoring report.**

7. PROGRAMME CHANGE REQUESTS

The Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- Previously, a West Northamptonshire blueprint had been presented to Members and signed-off in May 2020, followed by a more detailed blueprint in recent months.
- It was noted that some anomalies existed between the two reports, which has prompted a move towards more formal documentation.
- This documentation contains a table designed to more clearly outline the path of each service, indicating whether it will be disaggregated, hosted, or externally provided.
- A change control log has also been created, in order to formally record any agreed changes to the blueprint and ensure that due process is followed with a clear audit trail of decisions.
- The appendices to the report detail some of these proposed changes to the blueprint, which affects Public Health and Emergency Planning.

- It was noted that the original intention was to split these teams. However, given the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the disaggregation of these services has been delayed until 2021.
- There has also been a change to Adult's services, with brokerage, commissioning and safeguarding now in a position to be disaggregated rather than hosted.
- If the Shadow Executive were to agree to these suggested amendments, only 50 out of 1600 staff working within Adult's services would not be disaggregated going forward.
- The final change relates to the Children's Intelligent Client Function – the monitoring function which sits over the Children's Trust. Originally, this was proposed as a disaggregated function, but this has been revised to a lead authority model, to mitigate duplication of service between the two authorities.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) Approved the Change request process as outlined at Appendix A in the Change Request Form; and**
- b) Approved the changes requested to the Blueprint as outlined at Appendix A in the Change request form.**

8. FUTURE NORTHANTS PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE

The Transformation Director, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- It was noted that, in order to move the Future Northants Programme forward, there is a need to differentiate further between the West and North elements. This will allow items specific to either the West or North to be given proper consideration by the relevant authority.
- The scope of activity for Programme Governance is split into three separate areas:
 1. Implementation Tasks for Go Live - tasks and deliverables that end on 31st March 2021;
 2. Implementation of Day One - tasks and deliverables that are implemented as part of ongoing services and design; and
 3. Post Day One Delivery & Transformation Plans – the plans, projects and ongoing transformation that will happen in the Unitary Authorities.
- The revised programme governance contains some elements that are already in existence, such as the West Northamptonshire Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and the West Shadow Executive.
- The main point of difference relates to the Joint Implementation Executive, which will be buttressed by a specific West Implementation Executive and North Implementation Executive.
- This will ensure that decisions specific to West Northamptonshire are brought through the correct pathway, with more reports expected to take this route in the months leading up to vesting day.
- The Joint Implementation Executive will remain in order to deal with any decisions that may require collaboration between the West and North Shadow Authorities.

- Beneath this will now be a separate West and North Implementation Board, with reports coming through these boards prior to being seen by Members of the Shadow Executive.
- There have been changes to the Programme Board Structure, with Jane Carr acting as Interim Chair of the new West Place Programme Board until a Director of Place is appointed.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) Noted the contents of this report and the appendix; and**
- b) Endorsed the approach being taken.**

9. TIER 1-3 LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The report details the Senior Leadership structure for West Northamptonshire, an essential component of delivering safe and legal services on day one.
- This structure provides accountability for senior officers and roles, ensuring that statutory duties are delivered effectively.
- The report details the structure of roles at Tier 1-3, utilising feedback from the relevant appointment panels.
- It was noted that all staff affected by changes to the structure have been contacted, along with Trade Unions, which has activated a formal consultation process.
- In addition to the statutory and senior roles already appointed to in section 4.1, two further Tier 2 roles will need to be appointed to - the Executive Director of Place, Economy and Environment and the Executive Director of Corporate Services.
- These roles are subject to Member appointment, with the proposed Member Appointment Panel set out at Appendix 3.

In response to a question, the Chief Executive advised that the estimated cost of the proposed new structure has been costed at c£3.34 million, representing a saving of approximately £1.8 million on current leadership costs.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) Noted and ratified the work undertaken to develop the proposed structure and the subsequent consultation process as specified in Section 4;**
- b) Agreed the proposed leadership structure as per Appendix 1, noting that this is subject to consultation with our recognised Trade Unions and impacted employees, and therefore may result in some revisions being made as a result of the feedback received. Minor changes would be delegated to and actioned by the Head of Paid Service with any significant changes that are made as part of the formal consultation being shared with the Shadow Executive at a future meeting; and**
- c) Noted and ratified the selection and recruitment principles as specified in section 5 & 6, subject to the outcomes of the consultation.**

10. EXTERNAL AUDIT APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Chief Finance Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- There is a statutory requirement for external auditors to be appointed for West Northamptonshire Council by no later than 31 December in the preceding financial year before vesting day.
- The report sets out three options for these appointments:
 1. To make a stand-alone appointment;
 2. To set up a Joint Auditor Panel/local joint procurement arrangements; or
 3. To opt-in to PSAA auditor appointment process.
- The recommendation is for the Shadow Executive to endorse option 3. It was emphasised that this choice can be altered at a later date if necessary.

Members of the Shadow Executive commented as follows:

- Councillor Adam Brown considered the recommendation correct and noted the opportunity to make representations about the proposed auditors at paragraph 4.7.
- In response to a question, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that all of the sovereign councils have opted in to the PSAA, who have subsequently appointed the auditors for each authority.
- Councillor Lizzy Bowen questioned whether the choice of potential auditors is limited to the top 4 in the country by the PSAA framework. It was suggested that the current audit situation requires change and the need to keep fees low was stressed.
- The Chief Finance Officer advised of the opportunity to negotiate costs, with the auditors required to consult the PSAA in order to charge additional fees. This approach will have to be followed regardless of the auditor selected.
- Councillor Rebecca Breese inquired about the reputation of the PSAA in defending the interests of its clients, should negotiations be required.
- In response, the Chief Executive, NCC, advised that the PSAA is a new organisation, formed in the previous five years. As such, it is too soon to comment on the organisation's reputation on these matters.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive agreed to “opt in” to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) process.

11. HEALTH, SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY

The Programme Lead, Corporate Programme, Future Northants, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The report presented to the Shadow Executive represents the “safe” element of safe and legal plus.
- The policy has been designed in consultation with staff across all four sovereign councils, as well as Trade Unions.
- The Programme lead noted that the report sets out the framework for how the following will operate within West Northamptonshire Council. This framework should:
 1. Meet the Council's legal responsibilities;
 2. Outline how the Council will work with Trade Unions and employees to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing; and

3. Highlight issues will be dealt with, and how risks will be managed.
- Councillor Danielle Stone noted that Trade Union colleagues had given positive feedback on the steps taken to form the policy. In addition, Councillor Stone queried how existing policies within the sovereign councils will be managed.
 - In response, the Programme Lead advised that colleagues from each of the sovereign councils are working to develop policies suitable for a new, large organisation. However, it was also noted that the Corporate Programme is seeking to follow best practice, which may lead to existing policies being utilised where appropriate.
 - The Programme Lead also noted that the Dying to Work policy currently in operation at Northampton Borough Council is an example of a policy that will be developed for West Northamptonshire Council.

Members of the Shadow Executive commented as follows:

- Councillor Phil Larratt advised that the Dying to Work policy is under consideration by the Equalities Task & Finish Group, who will be making recommendations going forward.
- Councillor Larratt also suggested that the Health, Safety & Wellbeing policy was sound, but may extend beyond the scope of what is legally required.
- The Programme Lead advised that he considered no part of the policy to be excessive in nature, with the debate and discussion arising from collaborative work between the sovereign councils able to prevent this from occurring.
- Councillor Richard Auger expressed a desire for lessons to be learnt from the approach to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The Programme Lead noted that the nature of the pandemic has required a fluid response, and agreed that a review will be necessary in order to direct emergency planning policy in the future.
- Councillor Ian McCord noted that certain policies are subject to an annual review, in order to ensure best practice. It was suggested that the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy should follow this example, to which the Programme Lead voiced his agreement.
- As a result, Councillor McCord, as Chair of the West Northamptonshire Shadow Executive, proposed an additional recommendation - to review and update the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy if necessary in approximately 12 months.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) Approved the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy; and**
- b) Agreed to review and update the policy if necessary in approximately 12 months.**

12a. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOGO/VISUAL IDENTITY APPROVAL

Councillor Jonathan Nunn introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The principles underlying the design of the new logo were reiterated.
- Following a public survey, the preferred design gathered 576 votes from a total of 1,740.

- Comments from the public survey indicated that the initial logo should contain three rings rather than four, and may have lacked relevance and historic links to the County.
- As a result, the interlocking rings design has been incorporated within the traditional rose emblem of Northamptonshire.
- The colours of the rings have been precisely chosen to reflect the existing colours of the three district councils.
- It was reiterated that in-house designers were utilised for the production of the logo to keep costs low.

Members of the Shadow Executive commented as follows:

- The design of the logo was praised, with due tribute paid to the past through the colours of the existing councils, combined with the interlocking design that suggests unity and progress.
- The Shadow Executive wished to share their thanks to the team involved in creating the logo.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- Approved the final logo design;**
- Noted that this design was shaped around the feedback from the online logo survey which went out to staff, Trade Unions, Cllrs, partners and the public; and**
- Noted the use of talented in-house staff in the development and iteration of the logo throughout and avoidance of any extra cost to the FN Programme and the taxpayer.**

12b. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE VISUAL IDENTITY/BRANDING

Councillor Jonathan Nunn introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The roll out of West Northamptonshire branding will be split into three distinct categories.
 Category 1 – Safe and Legal – Day One;
 Category 2 – Proactive Rebrand – Day Two Onwards; and
 Category 3 – As and when.
- Category 1 items are those which have an official, statutory or legal status. These items, such as ID badges, are high priority. The report sets out the priorities for this branding process.
- Items which require urgent attention will be financed through the Future Northants Programme budget, whilst those that are less urgent will become BAU, or business as usual, and rebranding will be funded by the services themselves.

Members of the Shadow Executive commented as follows:

- Councillor Phil Larratt noted the importance of establishing West Northamptonshire as an identity and queried whether road signs and major entrances to the area will bear the new logo as a priority.
- In response, Councillor Nunn suggested that establishing West Northamptonshire is important and will likely fall under Category 2.

- Councillor Adam Brown agreed with the importance of establishing an identity for West Northamptonshire, but noted that Northamptonshire will continue to exist as a ceremonial County.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:

- a) **Duly noted the contents of the paper which outlined proposals for how the new branding should be implemented, along with the timescales;**
- b) **Granted Delegated Authority to the Transformation Directors and the Corporate Board in consultation with the West Communications and Engagement Task & Finish Group for approval of spend for re-branding critical items for Day One from the FN Communications & Engagement Project re-branding budget;**
- c) **Approved the proposed criteria for implementation of the new branding (including costs, timescales and responsibilities), broken down as follows:**
 - **Category 1 – Safe and Legal – Day One**
 - **Category 2 – Proactive Rebrand – Day Two Onwards**
 - **Category 3 – As and when**
- d) **Clearly agreed that Category 1 items are to be rebranded to be Safe and Legal for Day One;**
- e) **Agreed that if there are non-essential items suggested for Day One rebranding in addition to Category 1 items, e.g. to assist with Cultural Change and Customer Need, that – given budget limitations and prioritisation – these items are also supported with funding from the respective FN workstreams and Programmes; and**
- f) **Approved the principle that items which require proactive rebranding post Day One will become BAU and will be funded by the services themselves.**

13. ASSETS, CAPITAL SCHEMES & RESERVES NOTIFICATION PROCESS

Councillor Lizzy Bowen introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The report contains three papers, two of which were presented to NCC Cabinet, as a result of the fast-moving nature of the project.
- Chester Farm will now be known as Chester House Estate, due to changes to the business plan, which is based on the Chatsworth House model.
- Northamptonshire County Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain the site.
- In response to a question, Councillor Bowen confirmed her belief that the taxpayer would be getting value for money from the updated business plan.
- Councillor Matt Golby offered support to Councillor Bowen and the project and noted the positive work that has been put towards it.

The Chief Executive, NCC, advised that significant progress has been made since the adoption of the project. The Chief Executive advised that a major part of the investment into the site has already been made. It was also noted that despite being located within the North Northamptonshire Authority, investment into the site has been county-wide, and the profits, which are expected to be derived soon, will be shared on this basis.

The recommendation was proposed and seconded. Upon the vote being taken it was:

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive, in accordance with the adopted Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notification Process:

a) **Endorsed the decision of the sovereign Authority, NCC, to:**

- **Endorse the updated Business plan for Chester House Estate (formally Chester Farm) and acknowledge the progress made over the last 6 months;**
- **Support the proposed media launch (date to be determined) post lifting of national restrictions;**
- **Approve the proposal to uplift the budget by £850k for the bond funding which is required in order to complete the capital works as indicated in the December 2019 cabinet report;**
- **Approve the uplift of the capital budget by £722k in respect of the Heritage Lottery Grant Funding previously assigned to revenue for project management and other fees which will now be capitalised; and**
- **Approve the further uplift of the capital budget by £700k in anticipation of a further Heritage Lottery Grant.**

URGENT ITEMS:

There were none.

EXEMPT ITEMS:

There were none.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 20:01.