

North Northamptonshire Shadow Executive Committee

At 7:00 pm on Thursday 26th November 2020

Held as a virtual meeting via Zoom

Present: -

Shadow Members

Councillor R Roberts (Leader of the Shadow Authority and Chair)	Councillor J Smithers (Deputy Leader of the Shadow Authority)
Councillor J Addison	Councillor W Brackenbury
Councillor S North	Councillor M Griffiths
Councillor D Jenney	Councillor T Partridge-Underwood
Councillor I Jelley	

Officers

R Bridge – Chief Executive	G Hammons – Interim Chief Finance Officer
M Hammond – Interim Monitoring Officer	L Hyde – Director of Transformation
F McHugo – North Northamptonshire Democratic Services	P Goult – North Northamptonshire Democratic Services
G Candler – Chief Executive NBC	T Grant – Chief Executive NCC
D Watts – Director of Adult Services	R Hand – Project Manager
K Purnell – Assistant Director NCC	M Cox – Director Corporate Programme

Also in attendance – Councillor E Bowen (NCC)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor T Beattie.

2. Notifications of requests to address the meeting

No requests to address the meeting had been received on this occasion.

3. Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were declared.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2020

The draft minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 29th October 2020 had been circulated.

Councillor Roberts MOVED and Councillor North SECONDED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The minutes of the Shadow Executive Committee meeting held on 29th October 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Programme Governance Structure

The Director of Transformation (L Hyde) introduced the report. The report before Committee informed Members of the revised Future Northants Programme Governance, following entering the Delivery Phase and the appointment of senior officers. The Programme Governance had been adjusted to reflect the need to govern and report matters relating to each of North and West Northamptonshire authorities, whilst retaining joint bodies for matters of mutual interest.

The report and accompanying appendices detailed the changes that had been made. Included were details of revisions to the Delivery Structure. Whilst a Joint Implementation Executive was established for areas of joint or mutual interest, there were now Implementation Executives for the North and the West, respectively. Each area Implementation Executive would be supported by their respective Director of Transformation and other officers.

Councillor North sought assurance that Members would be fully engaged in the process, and that the Shadow Executive Committee would be able to refer matters “down” the governance structure as well as receive reports from the Implementation Executive and the North Implementation Board. Ms Grant confirmed that Members would be fully engaged in the revised governance structure, and the Shadow Executive Committee retained its role for overseeing the local governance reorganisation programme and the work towards creating a new unitary council.

Councillor Griffiths MOVED and Councillor Smithers SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The contents of the report and appendices be noted; and
- (ii) The approach being taken be endorsed.

6. Programme Status

The Director of Transformation introduced the report. The report before the Committee provided details of progress being made towards the creation of North Northamptonshire Council.

Under Programme Summary Status it was noted that three programmes were indicating AMBER status (Finance, Corporate and Children’s), whilst the remainder were GREEN. The Finance programme had moved from GREEN to AMBER due to risks identified around the closing-down of sovereign council’s accounts and the potential knock-on effect on the new unitary council.

Mr G Candler (Chief Executive Northampton BC) introduced the report section which focussed on Day One Assurance. Several Critical Products were itemised as being crucial to successfully achieving the programme. It was noted that there were no critical products where work had not commenced, and only one area of concern (Business Systems). Mitigating steps were being taken, and Mr Candler stated that good progress was being made. Four Critical Products were under increased scrutiny (Staffing Structures & transfer of staff, DBS checks, Lead Authority and Hosted Agreements, and Existing contracts).

The report before Members also provided an update on Change Management (where examples from work undertaken in Adult Services and Children's Services were provided), and an update on Communications and Engagement.

It was further noted that the roll out of MS365 was taking place across sovereign councils, in readiness for Day One. In addition, it was noted that new software [Eclipse] was scheduled to be operational in Adult Services from 7th December 2020.

The Interim Chief Finance Officer (G Hammons) presented an update on the financial position of the programme. The budget to deliver local government reorganisation and the forecast outturn for 2020/21 were detailed in the report.

Members noted that under the Investment section in the report, officers were reporting a projected underspend of £190k.

Under Budget Realisation, it was reported that the overall variance of £0.358m had decreased since the last report by £0.058m. This was an improved position. It was still expected that savings not delivered in 2020/21 of £548k would be delivered in later years.

The report included details of the projected outturns for all sovereign councils for 2020/21, together with details of any variances. The impact of Covid-19 and mitigating measures required were also detailed. Whilst additional Government grant had been received, it was likely that some councils would be required to draw-down on reserves to meet loss of income or additional expenditures.

Overall, it was noted that a total of £84.448m savings were forecast for the reorganisation programme. In 2019/20 £34.907m of savings had been achieved, and the programme was on track to achieve further savings of £13.933m in 2020/21. This would leave £35.608m of savings to be achieved after Vesting Day.

Councillor Griffiths thanked Change Champions for their ongoing work, which was an important contribution in progressing the move towards a unitary council. Councillor Griffiths also welcomed the creation of a blog by the Chief Executive, which was an important communication tool in keeping all staff informed.

Councillor Griffiths MOVED and Councillor Smithers SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The high-level Programme Delivery Status be noted;
- (ii) The update on Change Readiness be noted;
- (iii) The Communication and Engagement Update be noted; and
- (iv) The Finance Monitoring Report be noted and approved.

7. Blueprint – Change Request Process

The Director of Transformation introduced the report. The report noted that the Blueprint had been approved by the Committee at its meeting on 24th September 2020. Appendix A accompanying the report listed the required changes to be made to the North Northants Blueprint, together with the subsequent impact on the West Northants Blueprint. Other appendices detailed the Change Request cover control sheet, a list of functions and their

treatment within the Blueprint, and an appendix providing a single view of all services rolled-up under key headings.

The intention going forward was to ensure there was a clear change procedure in place and audit trail. The Blueprint was an evolving document, and it was important that appropriate officers and Members were able to monitor changes made, and that any proposed changes were subject to appropriate scrutiny prior to acceptance.

Councillor Smithers queried whether in future the financial impact of any changes to the Blueprint could be detailed. Officers agreed to include this information where there were any variances.

Councillor Griffiths reminded the Committee that this was a “living document”, and the more structured change request process was welcome.

Councillor Smithers MOVED and Councillor Jenney SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Change Request Process as outlined in Appendix A on the Change Request Form be approved; and
- (ii) The changes requested to the Blueprint as outlined at Appendix A in the Change Request Form be approved.

8. Task and Finish Group Updates

Civic Functions

The Interim Monitoring Officer (M Hammond) introduced the report. The Committee received a report which summarised the key recommendations of the Civic Functions Task and Finish Group.

The Group were proposing that the traditional Mayoral leadership should be vested in town councils and that the new unitary council would be presided over by a Chairman, supported by a deputy, and invested with a modest level of insignia and regalia to add gravitas, without detracting from the historic civic traditions of the area within major towns. The report summarised the discussions and conclusions of the Group.

Councillor Partridge-Underwood, who had chaired the task and finish group, thanked both officers and Members for their contributions.

Councillor North, whilst welcoming the report, wished it noted that the use of the chains currently used by East Northamptonshire Council (ENC), would require the agreement of both ENC and Rushden Town Council. This was noted.

Councillor North MOVED and Councillor Griffiths SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Council’s Constitution should allow for:

- (a) The annual election of a Chairman (Chair/Chairperson) to preside at Council meetings and to represent the Council at those local and national civic, royal and community events as may be appropriate;
- (b) The annual election of a Deputy Chairman (Chair/Chairperson) to substitute for the Chairman, with a view to that person assuming the office of Chairman in the following year, subject to the Council's approval;
- (c) That the offices of Chairman and Deputy Chairman be invested with a chain of office, and the office of chairman be invested with a robe of office, to be worn as appropriate at meetings and events;
- (d) That dedicated accommodation be provided in due course within the Council's corporate headquarters to act as a reception facility for the Chairman to use;
- (e) That the Chief Executive be asked to identify a member of staff to act as secretary to the Chairman and Deputy Chairman during their year of office;
- (f) That the Council does not seek to establish a coat of arms for the new Council, but uses its adopted logo on all civic material, including the chains of office;
- (g) That each Chairman be entitled to appoint a chaplain or chaplains to assist him in their year of office; and
- (h) That an allowance be provided to support the Chairman and defray their expenses during their year of office, composed of a personal allowance (to be determined by the Independent Remuneration Panel) and a hospitality and events budget.

9. Assets, Capital Schemes and Reserves Notifications

Councillor E Bowen (NCC) introduced this item. The purpose of the report before the Committee was to advise Members of a proposal that was notifiable under the approved notification process adopted by the Committee at its meeting on 23rd July 2020.

The item before Committee related to the future sustainability of Chester Farm (now retitled Chester House Estates). A copy of the report submitted to the Northamptonshire County Council Cabinet of 10th November 2020 was appended to the Shadow Executive Committee report.

The Cabinet report provided an update on the current position of the Chester House Estates programme, highlighted the key changes made to the Business Plan together with associated financial projections.

Councillor Bowen provided the Committee with a brief history of the project and provided details of the extensive work undertaken recently to progress the project. A brief presentation was provided, highlighting the aspirations for the project, and providing details of the diverse activities it was intended to be undertaken on the site.

Councillor Partridge-Underwood thanked officers and Members involved in the project. There were positive signs that the project was progressing, and valuable work had been undertaken.

Councillor Addison raised on behalf of some non-Executive Members regarding the cost of the project, and fears that further additional expenditure would be required before the project was completed. Councillor Addison suggested that a briefing/presentation on this project

may be welcomed by other Members. Ms Purnell confirmed that she would be happy to provide further information to any interested Member.

Councillor Griffiths thanked Councillor Bowen and officers for the progress of the project. Chester House would be a tremendous facility when completed and provide a valuable tourist attraction in the county.

Councillor Jenney, whilst welcoming the report overall, did raise concern that there needed to be adequate governance arrangements for the project. The aims and objectives of the project Councillor Jenney fully supported, but he did feel that there were still some risks not fully highlighted in the report, and appropriate governance and control measures needed to be put into place.

Ms Grant agreed that the project had a troubled history, predating the current NCC Member or officer leadership. It would, when completed, provide an important tourist attraction for the county. Ms Grant reminded the Committee that it would be a countywide asset, with both the North and West sharing costs and profits.

Councillor North agreed that Chester House would be a benefit to tourism within the county and complemented other initiatives in the area to attract visitors.

Councillor Smithers noted that this project had been inherited by the current leadership and had a difficult history. Councillor Smithers noted that the current project team were enthusiastic and committed to seeing the project successfully completed. The risks and rewards from the project would be shared by both North and West.

Councillor Smithers MOVED and Councillor North SECONDED the recommendations.

(Councillor Addison abstained in the vote)

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Shadow Executive Committee endorse the sovereign council (NCC) decision to:
 - (a) Endorse the updated Business Plan for Chester House Estate (formally Chester Farm) and acknowledge the progress made over the last 6-months;
 - (b) Support the proposed media launch (date to be determined) post lifting of national restrictions;
 - (c) 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;
 - (d) Approve the uplift of the capital budget by £722k in respect of Heritage Lottery Grant Funding previously assigned to revenue for project management and other fees which will now be capitalised; and
 - (e) Approve the further uplift of the capital budget by £700k in anticipation of a further Heritage Lottery Grant.

10. Appointment of Auditors

The Interim Chief Finance Officer introduced this item. It was noted by the Committee that there was a statutory requirement for external auditors to be appointed for North Northamptonshire Council by no later than 31st December in the preceding financial year before Vesting Day.

The organisation responsible for appointing external auditors for local government, the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), had written to the Shadow Authority, requesting direction on the approach North Northamptonshire wished to undertake to appoint its external auditors from 1st April 2021.

The report before Members set out the options available to the Shadow Authority and proposed a recommendation to ensure the “safe and legal” transition of external audit arrangements from the existing sovereign councils to the new unitary council.

Councillor Smithers MOVED and Councillor Griffiths SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The Shadow Executive Committee agree to “opt in” to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) process.

11. Development of proposals for the Senior Leadership Structure

The Chief Executive (R Bridge) introduced this item. The report summarised proposals for the development of the senior officer leadership structure for North Northamptonshire Council. The report outlined details of the proposed structure, together with the rationale and key principles which underpinned it. There were also details of the proposed selection and recruitment process required to implement it.

The report also provided details of the proposed next steps, in terms of consultation with employees who were in scope of the proposals, and the proposals for consultation with recognised trade unions.

Councillor Jelley noted the importance of ensuring that the most effective senior manager structure was put in place and welcomed the report.

Councillor Griffiths thanked Members, officers and other stakeholders involved in the senior officer appointment process to date.

Councillor Jelley MOVED, and Councillor Smithers SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The work undertaken to develop the proposed structure and the subsequent consultation process as specified in Section 4 be noted and ratified;
- (ii) the proposed leadership structure as per Appendix 1 be agreed, noting that this was subject to consultation with 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
(iii) the selection and recruitment principles as specified in Section 5 & 6, subject to any outcomes of the consultation, be noted and ratified.

12. Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

The Director Corporate Programme (M Cox) introduced this item. The Committee noted that the Health and Safety at Work Act required employers of more than five people to have a written health and safety policy in place. The draft policy before Members, included a short statement of the Council's intentions with regards to ensuring health and safety was managed for employees, service users, visitors, and anyone else who may be affected by its operations. This was supported by an arrangement section which identified key roles and activities required to ensure the aims of the policy statement could be met.

Introduction of this policy would ensure that the Council were able to react in time of crisis. This was a key part in assuring employees and trade unions that the Council recognised and accepted its statutory responsibilities to provide a safe and healthy working environment.

It was proposed that the policy would be made available online and would be reviewed and amended to reflect any future changes to legislation.

Councillor Addison MOVED and Councillor Jelley SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy be approved.

13a. Logos and Branding Audit

Councillor Addison introduced the report. The purpose of the report was to present for approval, the final visual identity/logo proposed for North Northamptonshire Council.

The report included details of the process followed by the Task and Finish Group in its deliberations and provided details of the outcome of the public consultation exercise conducted on the favoured options. Appendices accompanying the report detailed the options considered, the favoured option, and examples of its potential use on materials and in locations.

Councillor Addison thanked the other Members on the Task and Finish Group and those officers involved.

Councillor Jelley MOVED, and Councillor North SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the final logo design be approved;
- (ii) it be noted that the design was shaped around the feedback from the online logo survey, which went out to staff, trade unions, councillors, partners, and the public;
and

- (iii) it be noted that talented in-house staff were used in the development and iteration of the logo throughout and avoidance of any extra cost to the FN Programme and the taxpayer.

13b. Visual Identity Branding

Ms Hand introduced this report. The Committee's approval was being sought for the steps to be taken in introducing the new Visual Identity Branding of the new unitary authority. Included within the report were the key factors and principles it was suggested the Committee consider, particularly the approach to be taken regarding prioritisation of roll-out of the new branding.

Councillor Smithers queried whether West Northants had approved similar recommendations in relation to this matter. Ms Grant confirmed that they had.

Councillor Smithers MOVED and Councillor Griffiths SECONDED the recommendations.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Committee notes the contents of the paper which outlined proposals for how the new branding would be implemented, along with timescales;
- (ii) delegated authority be granted to the Transformation Director and the Corporate Board, in consultation with the North Northants Communication & Engagement Task and Finish Group, for approval of spend for re-branding critical items for Day One from the Future Northants Communications & Engagement Project re-branding budget;
- (iii) approval be given for the proposed criteria for implementation of the new branding (including costs, timescales, and responsibilities) broken down as:

Category 1 – Safe and Legal – Day One
Category 2 – Proactive Rebrand – Day Two onwards
Category 3 – As and when

- (iv) agreement be given that Category 1 items were to be rebranded to be Safe and Legal for Day One;
- (v) if there were 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 were also supported with funding from the respective Future Northants workstreams and Programmes;
- (vi) approval be given that the principle that items which required proactive rebranding post-Day One would become Business As Usual and would be funded by the services themselves.

14. Exempt Items

There were no exempt items.

15. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

16. Close of Meeting

Meeting closed at 8:32 pm.