



CABINET

13 NOVEMBER 2018

REPORT BY THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Subject:	Scrutiny of Stabilisation Plan Measures
Recommendations:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) That the Cabinet notes that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee is supportive of the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Learning Disability services and the aims of improving commissioning and supporting people towards independent living where appropriate, on the understanding that the Council must continue to meet people's assessed needs.2) That the Cabinet ensures that there is no slippage in the provision of the additional capacity required by Northamptonshire Adult Social Services to support the delivery of the savings associated with the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Learning Disability services.3) That the Cabinet gives consideration to increasing the number of officers carrying out welfare benefits reviews as part of the Northamptonshire Adult Social Services financial assessment process with a view to supporting delivery of the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Learning Disability services.4) That the Cabinet notes that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee agrees that the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Council Tax and Business Rates collection should be pursued in preference to seeking equivalent savings in frontline services.5) That the Cabinet ensures that appropriate action is taken as a matter of urgency to work with district and borough councils to try to resolve remaining questions that could affect the ability to deliver the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Council Tax and Business Rates collection.6) That the Cabinet recognises that there remains a risk that alternatives to the Stabilisation Plan measures relating to Council Tax and Business Rates collection will be required and ensures that this is taken into account in continuing work on the Plan.7) That the Cabinet agrees that written responses to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's recommendations above be provided in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 5.2 of this report.

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The report is intended to present recommendations by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee concerning measures from the Northamptonshire County Council Stabilisation Plan, which were scrutinised by the Committee at its meeting on 24th October 2018. These recommendations are presented in line with the Committee's role to provide 'critical friend' challenge that contributes to the Council's response to its current priorities and pressures.

2. How this decision contributes to the Council plan

2.1 The Council's vision is to make Northamptonshire a great place to live and work. This is achieved through increasing the wellbeing of your county's communities and/or safeguarding the county's communities.

This initiative helps the Council to deliver this vision through the following strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping communities and individuals safe and supported to be healthy and stay independent.• Effective commissioning to ensure good care at the right time for the best price, which supports people in achieving their outcomes.• Improving infrastructure and place-shaping to enable communities and businesses to thrive and grow sustainably, and generating prosperity.• Maximising the use and value of our assets to support safe and efficient service delivery. |
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3. Background

3.1 Northamptonshire County Council has adopted a new model for Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) based on a single O&S Committee. At the direction of the commissioners appointed to improve the finance, governance and O&S functions of the Council, the work of the O&S Committee shall focus on:

- Major savings proposals and their implications, including equalities implications;
- Major risks to the Council, the community and to the wider area, as identified by the Council and its partners;
- Making substantive recommendations to feed into the in-year and 2019/20 budget proposals;
- Engagement, alignment and support for the Council's improvement plans;
- Other statutory functions associated with the O&S Committee's function.

4. Scrutiny of Stabilisation Plan measures

4.1 The Stabilisation Plan considered by the Cabinet on 9th October 2018 sets out a series of savings opportunities and financial measures intended to address the Council's in-year forecast overspend position and improve its forecast budget shortfall in 2019/20. The O&S Committee on 24th October scrutinised selected measures from the Stabilisation Plan. The remainder of this report sets out a short summary of this scrutiny, which is intended to provide context for the recommendations being presented to the Cabinet.

Measures relating to Learning Disability services (NCC 17–18)

- 4.2 The O&S Committee received briefing information on the aims of the measures and on actions intended to deliver the proposed return. The Committee had further discussion on these matters with the Executive Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care.
- 4.3 The O&S Committee acknowledged the need for the Council to improve the provision of services to adults with learning disabilities, to deal with current and future demand and care costs. The Committee considered risks that might affect the ability to deliver the Stabilisation Plan measures and how the measures might affect service-users. It recognised that the Council has a duty to assess a person's adult social care needs when requested and to provide for needs that are identified. It received assurances that the proposed new approach was about providing good outcomes for service-users: in particular, it aimed to enable people to live independently where appropriate. Proposed changes to services would be made in conjunction with service-users not imposed on them.
- 4.4 The O&S Committee saw that some additional capacity would be needed to deliver the new approach reflected in the Stabilisation Plan measures. The Stabilisation Plan provides for this, but the Committee emphasised that any subsequent change in this provision would put at risk the ability to achieve the savings associated with these measures. Similarly, the Committee highlighted that increasing the capacity to carry out welfare benefits reviews as part of the adult social care financial assessment process could further support the aims of these measures as well as helping service-users.
- 4.5 The O&S Committee ultimately agreed recommendations (1)-(3) listed at the front of this report.

Measures to ensure that the Council Tax and Business Rates due are collected (NCC 07–09)

- 4.6 The O&S Committee received briefing information on the aims of the measures and on actions intended to deliver the proposed return. The Committee had further discussion on these matters with the Deputy Chief Finance Officer and the commissioners. It was also addressed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance & Governance from South Northamptonshire Council.
- 4.7 The O&S Committee noted that these were technical measures involving partnership working with district and borough councils. They sought to build on those authorities' current effectiveness at collection where possible. The additional income the measures aimed to produce would reduce the need for the Council to make service reductions to achieve the same value. Growth required to support some Stabilisation Plan measures also increased the onus on the Council to maximise return in other areas.
- 4.8 The O&S Committee sought reassurance that concerns about the Stabilisation Plan expressed by district and borough councils' could be addressed, given that their involvement would be fundamental to delivering the savings associated with these particular measures. The Committee was advised that the Council had received information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local

Government and from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy indicating that the measures were feasible. There was extensive, continuing dialogue with district and borough councils concerning the Stabilisation Plan. The need to innovate should not be a barrier to delivering it. The Committee emphasised that the Council should work to resolve remaining areas of difference with its partners as soon as possible. At the same time, the Council would also need to recognise the risk that alternative options would be required if this could not be achieved.

- 4.9 The Committee discussed the scope to improve existing collection rates even further and the risk of measures having unintended consequences that might affect local authorities in the county, businesses, or the wellbeing of individual residents. Conversely, members also emphasised that the measure relating to the in-year release of the Council Tax Collection Fund surplus concerned money due to the Council and should not represent a risk to other authorities. The proposed approach would produce an in-year benefit for other precepting authorities. It was also suggested that it was important for Northamptonshire authorities to demonstrate to Government that they could work effectively together, especially at a time when making applications for pilot programmes.
- 4.10 The O&S Committee ultimately agreed recommendations (4)-(6) listed at the front of this report.

5. Cabinet's response to Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations

- 5.1 This report is intended to enhance the transparency of the Council's governance process by providing a means for recommendations from the O&S Committee to be clearly and formally communicated to the Cabinet. It is proposed that recommendations to the Cabinet resulting from the O&S Committee's monthly meetings are reported in this way as standard in future.
- 5.2 The report is also intended to assist the Cabinet to give a clear response to O&S Committee recommendations in the interests of good governance. The Cabinet should consider and reach conclusions on the recommendations set out in this report at the current meeting. It is proposed that the relevant Cabinet Member(s) then provides a short written response to individual recommendations, setting out the Cabinet's conclusions plus any supporting information that may be useful to explain or contextualise them. These written responses should be produced in time to be reported to the next following O&S Committee meeting. This will give the O&S Committee clear information about the Cabinet's response to its recommendations and any resulting action.

6. Equality Screening

- 6.1 Equality Impact assessments will be completed as necessary as part of work on the development of plans to deliver Stabilisation Plan measures. The recommendations from the O&S Committee are intended to feed into and help to inform this process.

7. Alternative Options and Risks Considered

7.1 The work of the O&S Committee is intended to assist the Council by suggesting and testing possible alternative options relating to the subjects scrutinised and by considering risks connected with proposed actions.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The financial implications of agreeing recommendations by the O&S Committee will need to be considered as part of continuing work on the development of plans to deliver Stabilisation Plan measures.

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Background Papers:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee agenda and reports (24 th October 2018) https://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cmis5live/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/3339/Committee/452/Default.aspx .
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	NO
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	NA
Will further decisions be required? If so please outline the timetable here	NA
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	NA
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	NO
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)? Have any capital spend implications been cleared by the Capital Investment Board (CIB)	NA NA
Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	NA – Although relevant senior officers were involved in the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.
Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES – Relevant Cabinet Members participated in the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting and/or were advised of the resulting recommendations ahead of the presentation of this report.
Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	YES – Report by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	NO
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	NO
Have any property Issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	NA
Have Procurement Implications been referenced in the Paper	NA
Are there any community safety implications?	None directly relating to this report
Are there any environmental implications:	None directly relating to this report
Are there any Health and Safety Implications:	None directly relating to this report
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	None directly relating to this report
Are there any human rights implications:	None directly relating to this report
Constituency Interest:	Countywide