

Discussion Paper for: Northamptonshire County Council

Date: 1st August 2018

By: Councillor Matthew Golby

Title of Report: A Decision-Making Hierarchy for Prioritising the Use of Resources

1. Purpose of Report

To ask Members to identify an indicative hierarchy of priorities against which Northamptonshire County Council will decide which services will be provided by the County Council for the remainder of the 2018/2019 Financial year and which need to be taken into account in the priority and budget-setting process for 2019/20 and beyond until any Unitary Councils may be constituted, and to recommend these to Cabinet.

2. This Discussion paper asks Council to:

i) note the following Background Papers which Members have previously seen:

- Joint Strategic Needs Analysis

<https://www.northamptonshireanalysis.co.uk/bytheme?themeld=35&themeName=JSNA>

- Council Plan

https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/council-and-democracy/performance-and-plans/Documents/Council%20Plan/CouncilPlan_2018-22.pdf

- Appendices to the current Medium Term Financial Position (MTFP) Report which was brought to Council on 22nd February 2018.

ii) note the contents of the current MTFP Report contained in the reports to Cabinet on 22nd and 28th February 2018 (**Appendices 1 and 2**) and the Period 2 Reports (**Appendix 3**);

iii) consider the Core Offer described in paragraph 4;

iiii) review the indicative list of outcomes and recommend a hierarchy of priorities which will form the basis of the Council's business decision-making and financial planning for the remainder of the 2018/2019 Financial Year and for 2019/2020 as set out in paragraph 9;

v) recommend to Cabinet the development of a 3 year business and financial plan based on the priority outcomes, financial scenarios and the draft Core Offer, which will place Northamptonshire County Council on a sustainable financial footing in preparation for any future local government reform;

vi) agree to continue to develop activity and financial plans to deliver the service reductions needed in each of the next 2 years to operate within the resources available.

3. Background

Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to this report, as well as the appendices to the MTFP, (please see the Background Papers referred to in paragraph 2(i) above), set out the current financial position of the Council.

The s151 Officer's assessment of the total quantum of in-year savings required for 2018/2019 is in excess of **£60 million**. As the audit of 2017/18 is not yet complete, this position may need to be adjusted to take into account any further accounting treatment elements imposed by the external auditors. The figure takes into account the current in-year

position, on the best evidence currently available, as well as a best estimate of the likely range of the 2017/18 outturn.

The Council's net budget for 2018/2019,(excluding schools),is £441m and, in light of the predicted shortfall of at least £60m, it is vital that the remaining resources are deployed strictly in line with an agreed hierarchy of priorities set by the Executive.

This report also sets out a Core Offer, which reflects only those services which we are obliged to deliver in line with our statutory duties and which will be funded according to the agreed hierarchy of priorities. This is the best service offer we are likely to be able to afford. It aims to fulfil our duties and offers support to those most in need only. The core offer will be measured against the resources available to the authority.

The Core Offer should be viewed against the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis and the current Council Plan, which form part of the Background Papers referred to.

4. The Core Offer

With so much already taken out of our budget and more still to save, the County Council now needs to articulate, in the form of a Core Offer, the realistic level of service we are likely to provide, not merely to meet our statutory duties but to meet real local need. We will also contribute towards early intervention where this will prevent, delay or reduce need and where not to do so would lead to a direct increase in cost. It is suggested that a Core Offer is developed on the basis set out below.

4.1 Children First Northamptonshire

Our core offer:

- 4.1.1** Co-ordinate a school admission and appeals process;
- 4.1.2** Safeguard all children and young people;
- 4.1.3** Manage referrals and undertake statutory assessments of children with SEND and commission suitable placements and other services relevant to Education, Health and Care Plan provision;
- 4.1.4** Monitor performance of all schools and early education providers and identify support for maintained schools and early education providers at risk of being judged to have serious weaknesses or being placed in special measures by OFSTED;
- 4.1.5** Provide care and support for children and young people where there is evidence that they have suffered significant harm or are at immediate risk of significant harm and provide an alternative home for children who are unable to live with their parents or in their extended family.

4.2 Older people and working age adults

Our core offer:

- 4.2.1** Assess and meet critical and substantial need and commission and deliver services that meet that need directly or through the independent and voluntary sectors;
- 4.2.2** Engage with the market to ensure that they are aware of and can meet current and future need; and
- 4.2.3** Ensure a robust safeguarding system to protect vulnerable adults.

4.3 Place

Our core offer:

- 4.3.1** Provide sufficient maintenance to keep our highways, footpaths, verges, street lighting and traffic signals safe to use.
- 4.3.2** Provide minimum statutory obligations for archives and records services;
- 4.3.3** Provide a statutory trading standards service (e.g. inspections and sampling for high risk food, animal disease control and prosecutions and enforcement actions);
- 4.3.4** Provide a statutory Road Safety and street lighting service;
- 4.3.5** Manage the National Concessionary Fares Scheme
- 4.3.6** Operate Civil Parking Enforcement where it has been implemented
- 4.3.7** Dispose of household waste collected by the borough and district councils (Integrated Waste Management Services Contract);
- 4.3.8** Provide a limited number of household waste disposal centres.
- 4.3.9** Statutory Planning Service and Development Control service;
- 4.3.10** Statutory Flood Risk Management;
- 4.3.11** Statutory Strategic Transport Planning (including delivery of the Local Transport;
- 4.3.12** Commission and purchase Home to School Transport where there is a statutory duty to do so;
- 4.3.13** Plan for the right number of school places in the right locations in the county.

4.4 Public Health and Wellbeing

Our core offer:

- 4.4.1** Provide a modern and sustainable Library and Information Service;
- 4.4.2** Provide a core Emergency Planning and statutory Health Protection Function
- 4.4.3** Provide a Coroner's service;
- 4.4.4** Administer the Public Health Grant; and
- 4.4.5** Provide Registration Services.
- 4.4.6** Core offer to CCGs
- 4.4.7** Provide statutory functions: Sexual Health Service, Drugs and Alcohol, NHS health checks, and National Child Weight Management Programme.

4.5 Ways of Working

Our core offer

- 4.5.1** Members will be supported to fulfil their role as the democratic voice of local people;
- 4.5.2** We will be open and transparent about what we do and the decisions we have made and provide information about how we run things;
- 4.5.3** We will consult with local people and stakeholders, where required to by legislation, and respond to their feedback; and
- 4.5.4** We will give a reasonable level of customer service, within our means.
- 4.5.5** We will continue to strive to deliver this Core Offer, within the resources available; but that we also need to encourage and support behaviour change in our communities which will help to deliver positive outcomes for the county and create resilience in places where the Council can no longer step in.

5. Indicative Hierarchy of Priorities

Against the background of the current financial position, the likely future demand and the bare minimum Core Offer set out in paragraph 4 of this report, Officers have compiled the following suggested priority outcomes decision hierarchy for Council to add to, arrange in order of priority and recommended to Cabinet for agreement.

- 5.1** Keeping vulnerable people safe;
- 5.2** Keeping people who are not classified as vulnerable, safe;
- 5.3** Complying with statutory duties where there is no a risk of harm;
- 5.4** Providing services that have a clear cost avoidance impact;
- 5.5** Supporting the democratic process and engaging with local communities beyond statutory requirements.

The priority outcome that the Council makes the “best use of resources” is a test that is applied to all activities.

Those services, across all departments, which make the most significant contribution to achieving the outcomes under each of the priority areas, will be prioritised for funding and, where possible, given relative protection from the requirement to make reductions. The scale of the savings the Council has delivered and the extended period over which savings have been required means, however, that the scope for making savings in non-priority areas is very constrained and therefore savings in areas which support our priorities continue to be inevitable.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment (EQiA)

Work on an EQiA is being undertaken and Councillors are referred to the document attached at Appendix 5. The impact of the EQiA will be reported to Cabinet when they consider the recommendations made by Council as a result of this Paper. A link to the EqiA is set out below:

[https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/council-and-democracy/equalities/equality-impact-assessments-eqias/Pages/business-intelligence-and-performance-improvement-equality-impact-assessments-\(eqias\).aspx](https://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/council-and-democracy/equalities/equality-impact-assessments-eqias/Pages/business-intelligence-and-performance-improvement-equality-impact-assessments-(eqias).aspx)

7. Next Steps

The Core Offer will be developed and costed. Each activity will be prioritised against the hierarchy agreed by the Executive. This will form the basis of our ongoing work with the Commissioners and discussions with residents, businesses and partners about what we can realistically provide and how we can help to create resilience in places where the Council can no longer step in.

Further reports will be provided to both Cabinet and Full Council.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Final Budget 2018-19 and Medium Term Plan to 2021-22 (Report to Council, 22 February 2018)

Appendix 2 – Updated Final Budget 2018-19 and Medium Term Plan to 2021-22 (Report to Council, 28 February 2018)

Appendix 3 – Monthly revenue monitoring report for the financial year ending 31st March 2019, as at period 2 (Report to Cabinet, 10 July 2018)