FUTURE
NORTHANTS

Document Type	Recommendations Report
Programme	Future Northants
Title	Day One Accommodation - West

Audience for this document

Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group - West

Programme Implementation Board

Joint Implementation Executive

West Shadow Authority

Purpose of this document

To make recommendation to the West Shadow Authority that the principles for Day One Accommodation and associated approach are agreed. Adoption of the principles set out in this report will allow the Future Northants Programme to communicate clearly on the principles for Day One Accommodation that will affect staff and elected Members across the West Northamptonshire District and Borough authorities and the County Council.

The Members Accommodation for the Shadow Authorities Presentation was given to the Leaders Oversight Board on 19th February 2020, but due to Covid it was in need of review. This document represents the beginning of that review and will outline and act as a foundation for the Day One Accommodation project, which aims to achieve the following:

WEST AUTHORITY ACCOMMODATION

To ensure the West Unitary Authority has the required accommodation to meet its Safe and Legal responsibilities from Day 1, incorporating Base and Service Office locations.

MEMBERS' ACCOMMODATION (FULL COUNCIL MEETING)

To ensure the West Unitary Authority has the required accommodation to meet its Safe and Legal Democratic obligations for Members, incorporating Full Council Meetings (including Shadow Council meetings if required).

The Day 1 Accommodation T&F Group are in place to ensure the unitary authority has the required accommodation to meet its safe and legal responsibilities from Day One.
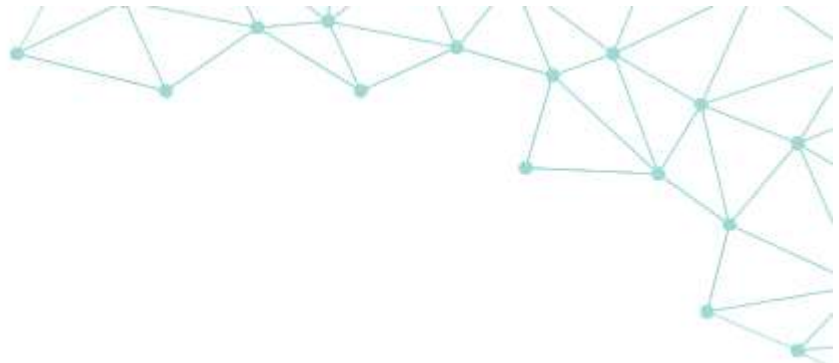
Document Control

Version History (please see version control guidance)			
Date	**Version**	**Author**	**Brief Comments on Changes**
7/7/20	1.0	Colette McDade	First Draft
9/7/20	1.1	Nick Byrom	Comments and amends
14/7/20	1.2	Colette McDade	Second draft including NB comments
17/7/20	1.3	Colette McDade	Draft 3
21/7/20	1.4	Nick Byrom	Update from Nick-watermark
24/7/20	1.5	Colette McDade	T&F comments

Distribution (For Information, Review or Approval)	
Name	**Resp[(1)]**
Nick Byrom, Programme Manager for Place West	R
Brian Degruchy, Programme Manager for Place North	I

Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group-West
  ➢ Cllr. Richard Auger
  ➢ Cllr. Anthony Bagot-Webb
  ➢ Cllr. Andrew Kilbride
  ➢ Cllr. Anna King
  ➢ Cllr. Paul Joyce
  ➢ Ian Vincent
  ➢ George Candler
  ➢ Nick Byrom
  ➢ Seb Greene
  ➢ Helen Osborne
	R

Ian Vincent, CEO DDC and Place Programme Lead	A
Cllr. Richard Auger, Leader of DDC and Task and Finish Chair (West)	A
Place Board Members	A
Programme Implementation Board	A
Joint Implementation Board	A

(1) Responsibility: I=Information, R=Review, A=Approval

Document Approval	
Date	**Who**
	Ian Vincent, CEO DDC and Place Programme Lead
	Cllr. Richard Auger, Leader of DDC and Task and Finish Chair (West)
	George Candler, Interim CEO, West Northants unitary authority
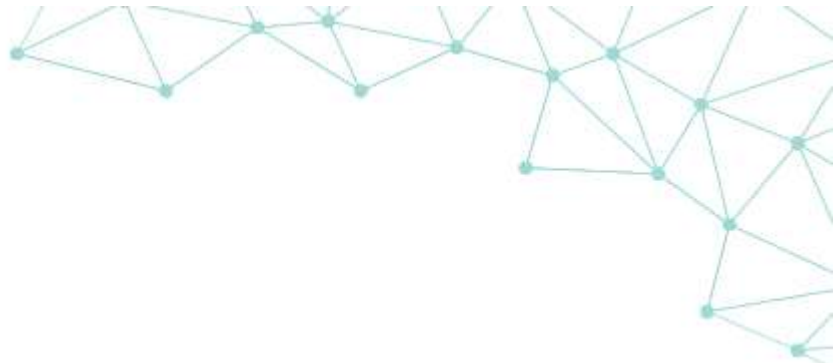
	Place Board
	Programme Implementation Board
	Joint Implementation Executive
	West Northants Shadow Authority

Background

Currently the responsibility for delivering public services in Northamptonshire is split across 8 councils in two tiers. This is less cost effective than it could be and can feel fragmented to service users. Joining these services up into a unitary system with a single governance structure will provide more consistent and efficient service, with considerable opportunities to improve value for money.

The unitary structure selected will see the 8 existing councils transitioned into two Unitary Authorities, one for West Northamptonshire and one for North Northamptonshire.

The impact of Covid-19 on the Programme has resulted in the original objectives, but not the timeline, being revised. Vesting day remains 1st April 2021 and all deliverables required to make the transition Safe and Legal are still required to be delivered by this date along with any transformational change that is feasible for this delivery date. Any further service transformation not feasible in this time period will form part of a two year transformational programme deliverable post vesting day.

Although Day One Accommodation formally sits within the Place Programme, it is likely to impact all areas across the programme and both authorities.

Recommendation

The Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group recommends the current working and location arrangements are maintained wherever possible, safe and legal for Day One. Exceptions to this may be made where they are essential to the provision of key services to residents, or to maintain alignment with any changes to legislation, with particular regard to the changeable Covid-19 situation.

1. Key Principles recommended for Day One Accommodation (West)

1.1   District and Borough staff in the West Northamptonshire unitary authority will continue working from their current location whether at home or in the office.

1.2   Any NCC staff disaggregated into the West Northamptonshire unitary authority will continue to work from their existing location, or will work from home. There may be a requirement to consider the reconfiguration of the working space at Angel Square.

1.3   All West elected Members will continue to work remotely and attend meetings virtually, using the meeting facilities already available to them for smaller meetings. A contingency plan will be explored, to prepare for situations where it might be vital that larger groups meet in person.

1.4   We will keep the approach simple and work within the Covid regulations as they are currently, with a view to ensuring we can adjust to any changes to these regulations as they evolve.

1.5   If the board are in agreement, these principles will be 'tested' with District and Borough and NCC managers to ensure all mechanisms for assuring Day One Accommodation readiness are in place.

1.6   The wellbeing and mental health of staff and Members whilst working from home will be a key consideration and we will develop appropriate support tailored for this scenario.

1.7   Evidence based assurance will be in place at each stage to ensure Day One Accommodation unitary authority readiness for West Northamptonshire.

2. Approach

The Task and Finish group for Day One Accommodation West met for the first time on Thursday 2nd July 2020. Principles and approach were discussed, taking into account the revised objectives due to the impacts of Covid-19. Impacts on staff, members and service users were a key consideration.

The approach agreed is to maintain current working arrangements wherever possible. There are a short list of deliverables necessary to provide essential capabilities required in the interim period, and to ensure the situation is clearly communicated and well monitored. Complete an audit in line with the principles above to confirm that on Day One every member of staff will know who their line manager is, where they will be working and that everything will be in place for them to transition seamlessly.

1.2   Communicate this clearly and evidence how this will be achieved. This will form the basis for the communication strategy for this project and will drive the messaging aimed at staff.

1.3   Communicate to IT the essential requirement for the delivery of webcasting and electronic voting and work with them to ensure this is delivered.

1.4   Ensure all staff who are office based on day one, have the appropriate workspace allocation and building access including a valid ID card that allows them access to the right buildings.

1.5   Evidence technical testing of IT capability to support remote working, already underway outside this project. Including a statement of existing performance to help illustrate current capability.

1.6   Evidence that all appropriate HSE and wellbeing policies are in effect and that staff are aware of the support available, particularly in relation to home working.

1.7   Evidence staff perception of how their needs are being met as lockdown measures relax, via existing survey results and new surveys if this becomes necessary.

1.8   Understand and manage any potential exceptions to maintaining the current location arrangements:

1.9   Prepare to review and react to requests to move to in office working for both technical and wellbeing reasons, should they occur.

1.10 Document and monitor maximum capacity and key information of all locations

1.11 Confirm Fire and First Aid representation is in place across all locations in accordance with existing requirements

1.12 Understand any relocation requirements that may result from the ongoing Future Northants programme, including those driven by system implementations, and plan accordingly

1.13 Continue Day 1 Accommodation Task and Finish group meetings on a monthly basis to monitor progress and safeguard strategic direction.

1.14 Work with the relevant areas to deliver a clear and timely plan for communicating with all staff, members and officers. This may include readiness activities if necessary.

1.15 Investigate and agree contingency options to meet requirements of principle 1.3 whilst meeting the Covid regulatory requirements, where larger face to face meetings are required.

1.16 Understand which staff and Members need extra care, regarding underlying conditions that may inform how we care for them in the current Covid situation and going forward.

Test and Challenge

The Task and Finish group have considered the necessary assurance framework for Day One accommodation readiness. The Chair expressed the need to be able identify main office locations for staff and the ability to monitor working status of staff, including the staff working at home in some services. This approach was agreed and the core principles of the assurance framework for Day One Accommodation should be transferred from the Task and Finish Group and clearly identified as a component of the wider Day One Accommodation work stream under the Future Northants (FN) Programme.

The Future Northants (FN) Programme will ensure that there are metrics and other forms of assurance in place to enable safe and legal accommodation for staff in a council building, off site or at home. Detailed information on governance and assurance will be built into the PID and project plan for the Day One Accommodation work stream.

The main types of assurance identified for consideration in the future framework include:

Physical processes – Are buildings and offices set up for COVID operations; Do all buildings have procedures in place for visitors; is the appropriate cleaning and sanitation provided in highly populated areas.

Staffing data – For example: Monitoring and reporting of COVID status i.e. self-isolating, off sick etc; Main office for work identified and linked to staff record; Flexible or home working status confirmed.

Facilities data – For example: Max. occupancy rates in buildings to remain COVID compliant; trained health and safety officers in place across the estate.

COVID monitoring – For example: tracking government and local COVID advice and implications on operations; local COVID inflection rates and second wave scenarios.

T&F Group members will be kept informed of the current and overall progress of the Day One Accommodation work stream via a monthly Highlight report and by exception when/if necessary.

4. Other Considerations

Risks

1. When gathering feedback, staff may not feel comfortable sharing their feelings around home working.
   MITIGATION: Offer staff a variety of ways to share their opinions, including ways to do so anonymously.

2. Potential for issues or confusion should the West and North authorities take different approaches to Day One Accommodation
MITIGATION: Single Project Manager to maintain consistency and manage exceptions

Assumptions

1. The majority of staff will continue to work in their current location or home working on Day One

2. Members and Officers will have reliable IT systems and tools in place that enable virtual meetings and remote working, until post vesting day.

Dependencies

1. IT will be fully functional from Day 1 to facilitate reliable virtual working across all departments and geographies