

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW EXECUTIVE**  
**Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

**Shadow Executive Members Present:**

Councillor Richard Auger	Councillor Elizabeth Bowen
Councillor Rebecca Breese	Councillor Phil Larratt
Councillor Ian McCord (Chair)	Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Deputy Chair)

**Officers Present:**

George Candler	Interim Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Leslie Currie	Change Manager (Corporate), Future Northants
Anna Earnshaw	Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing, NCC
Richard Ellis	Chief Executive Officer, SNC
Belinda Green	Operations Director, CSN Resources
Seb Greene	Change Manager, NCC
Paul Hanson	Democratic Services Manager, NCC
Paul Helsby	Programme Director, Northamptonshire Unitary Integrated Programme
Martin Henry	Interim Chief Finance Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Paul Hymers	Strategic Finance Adviser, SNC
Sara Kennedy	Communications Officer, NBC
Alex Melia	Democratic Services Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority (Minutes)
Rebecca Peck	Rebecca Peck – Assistant Director to Chief Executive, NCC
Gerda Round	Service Improvement Manager, LGSS
Audra Statham	Finance Enabler, Future Northants Programme
Maria Taylor	Executive Director (Community), DDC
Ian Vincent	Chief Executive, DDC
Susan Zeiss	Interim 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 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

**RESOLVED:** That the Shadow Executive approved the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2020 as a true and accurate record.

## 5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

After visiting the new medical centre currently under construction in Brackley, the Chair wished to express the belief that upon completion the facility would be a considerable asset to the people and place of West Northamptonshire going forward.

## 6. PROGRAMME DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

The Programme Director, Northamptonshire Unitary Integrated Programme, introduced the report to the Shadow Executive and highlighted the salient points:

- The status of the IT programme has progressed from amber to green;
- Adults has moved from green to amber during the last period, due to beta-testing of processes regarding HR, which has caused slight delays. It is expected that this area of the programme will revert back to green status, as the majority of issues have been resolved.
- The Trade Unions have been engaged with the Draft Blueprint, and it was felt by the Programme Director that the sessions were received positively.
- The Programme had been independently assessed in July, led by a team with previous experience of setting up a Unitary Authority. The report covered seven key areas and made 30 recommendations which will be developed into an action which will be brought to the Joint Implementation Executive next month.
- One of the recommendations made concerned the clarity of reporting, with the Programme Director stating that after the approval of the Draft Blueprint, the reports could split into North and West.
- These reports will then have a greater detail for West Northamptonshire and will come to the Shadow Executive on a monthly basis.
- The Change Management for July mainly focussed on bringing the Change Champions back into the fold following the Covid-19 restrictions.

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

- Since the previous report, there has been a negative variance of £239,000. The Finance Enabler stated that these savings are now planned for future years instead.
- An Outturn Position for all Northamptonshire Authorities was newly included in the report. The overall adverse variance was projected at £8,500,000. After mitigation, this figure has been revised to £1,400,000.
- The final guidance for an income grant is anticipated for Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020. This should help to further close this variance going forward.
- The next update from all eight sovereign councils will be in November.

The Chair commented that the reported £239,000 variance was reasonable in light of the challenges faced in recent months.

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 and change champion recruitment;**
- c) Noted the communication and engagement update;**

**d) Noted the contents of the independent recommendations included in the report and;**

**e) Noted and approved the finance monitoring report.**

## **7. PENSIONS ADMINISTERING AUTHORITY INFORMATION PAPER**

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

- Paragraph 3.2.2 sets out four different options for which administering body should be selected as the Pensions Authority moving forward.
- The first option is for no change, which is untenable as the County Council will cease to exist after Vesting Day.
- The second option is to have two separate Pensions Administering Authorities in the North and West respectively, which the report deemed inefficient.
- Options 3 & 4 are to base the future Pensions Administering Authority in either West Northamptonshire or North Northamptonshire respectively.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

**Selected West Northamptonshire as the Administration Authority (option 3), as detailed in the Options Appraisal attached in Appendix A.**

## **8a. COUNCIL TAX HARMONISATION TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT**

The Chair of the Council Tax Harmonisation Task & Finish Group introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The three existing sovereign councils across West Northamptonshire have different levels of council tax.
- It is a statutory requirement to have harmonised Council Tax across the area by the start of the eighth year of the new organisation. The maximum period to achieve this is therefore seven years from vesting day. Two approaches have been discussed to achieve this.
- The Group has discussed and suggested 3-4 years to balance variances across the three authorities.
- Throughout the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, benefit will be given to vulnerable clients across the West, whilst also being mindful of the potential impact on all residents.
- The schemes as outlined will give very different results, with the Task & Finish Group minded to use a cost-neutral scheme.
- The final decision is to be made following clearer financial planning.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

**Noted the progress made by the Council Tax Harmonisation Task & Finish Group.**

## **8b. DISAGGREGATION TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT**

The Chair of the Disaggregation Task & Finish Group introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The Task & Finish Group began in early June and concluded in August, ensuring that members from a range of the sovereign councils were represented.
- Disaggregation is a backwards-looking process, which is essential to the medium-term financial plan, which is itself within the remit of a separate Task & Finish Group.
- The objectives of the group were to disaggregate the current NCC budget, to amalgamate and distribute borough and district budgets, and to provide a starting point to develop a budget for the West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

**Noted the progress made by the Disaggregation Task & Finish Group.**

## **8c. DAY ONE ACCOMMODATION – WEST REPORT**

The Chair of the Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The basic principle of the report is that staff members should continue to utilise the current blend of remote, home and office-based working. Senior leaders and directors have been made aware of this principle.
- Where disaggregation occurs, the configuration of workplaces such as One Angel Square may need to be revised.
- The Task & Finish Group want all staff members to be kept aware of their location and the viability of resources leading up to Day One of the new authorities.
- The Chair of the Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group stated that as the Covid-19 situation develops, it may be necessary to explore new, innovative ways of ensuring that the democratic requirements of the Authority are fulfilled.

The Chair commented that the emergency legislation for remote meetings ends on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021, which incorporates Day One of the new authority.

In response, the Chair of the Day One Accommodation Task & Finish Group stated that, if necessary, a system will be in place to operate the Chamber in a safe manner after the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

**Deliberated and agreed that the current working and location agreements are maintained where feasible, safe and legal for Day One as shown in the attached report, under the sections “Recommendation” and “Approach”.**

## **8d. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT**

The Chair of the Communication and Engagements Task & Finish Group introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- Utilising in-house designers to create a flexible, modern and accessible design suitable for a wide range of uses, the Task & Finish Group have narrowed the selections down to three potential designs.
- The group stated that the objective was to avoid any icon that represented a specific locality rather than West Northamptonshire as a whole.
- At the time of writing, 1272 responses had been received to give feedback on the three alternatives, which may influence further changes before a final design is agreed.
- A target date of November has been set for a finalised logo to be sent to the Shadow Executive.

In response to questions, the Chair of the Communications and Engagement Task & Finish Group noted that the Civic Task & Finish Group has expressed an interest in designing a heraldic crest that will sit alongside the finalised commercial logo.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

- a) Noted the three designs as set out at Appendix A to the report;**
- b) Noted that the designs have gone out to staff, trade unions, councillors, partners and the public to seek opinion via an online survey;**
- c) Noted that this feedback will be used to shape and inform any additional work required and will present the final logo to the Shadow Executive for approval in November, and;**
- d) Noted that the Centre for Public Scrutiny has been approached for an additional peer opinion on the designs.**

## **9. WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE UNITARY COUNCIL DRAFT BLUEPRINT**

The Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing, NCC, introduced the report to the Shadow Executive and highlighted the salient points:

- Members were asked to note the progress made in splitting services within NCC against the initial projections of decreased progress due to the effect of Covid-19.
- The blueprints are not intended to be a structure, but rather they represent a view of how the services will be aligned to member portfolios.
- On Page 107 of the report, there is significant detail on which services will be under the direct control of West Northamptonshire, and which will require an agreement to be provided to the West by the North Northamptonshire Authority.
- Trade Unions have been given access to the blueprints. The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that the feedback on this transparency was positive.
- Attention was drawn to the outlines for potential opportunities arising from the removal of the two-tier government structure.

- The IT capabilities being rolled out may enable flexibility and improvements for staff, and as a result for the people of West Northamptonshire when dealing with the Authority.
- If members approve the Draft Blueprint, the next stage of the process will be the implementation phase, along with detailed work on what will happen on Day One.

In response to questions from members, the Deputy Chief Executive clarified that Chester Farm, although located in North Northamptonshire, is an example of a hosted service as it provides an archaeological and visitor's site for the county as a whole. At the next stage, to aid comprehension, these functions will be moved into a service-level view.

The Deputy Chief Executive also noted that with some services there may be issues with the affordability of a small number of services, which may result in minor alterations once more evidence becomes available. The Programme Director noted that these decision-making processes would be necessary regardless of the move to create Unitary authorities.

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

**RESOLVED: That the Shadow Executive:**

**a) Notes the progress made on preparation for the new Unitary Council and approve the Draft Blueprint including how the services are likely to be configured within the new Council, taking into account the arrangements agreed with the Executive with regard Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) Services and aggregation of District and Borough Services;**

**b) Notes the aspirations and opportunities set out in the papers as a result of bringing services together and the underpinning capabilities being progressed in relation to our digital transformation as well as consider future aspirations for the People and Place of West Northamptonshire;**

**c) Endorses the wider engagement programme as set out in section report with all Members and stakeholders on the content of the blueprint and more detailed work that sits below the summary presented today, in order to understand the service plans for day 1;**

**d) Agrees to receive feedback on the draft Blueprint from employees, all Members and trade unions at a future meeting (to help shape the final agreed approach) following the recent commencement of the Union and Staff engagement, and;**

**e) Recommends to the West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority that they adopt the Draft Blueprint.**

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19:21pm.