

## WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY

### SHADOW EXECUTIVE MEETING

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

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| <b>Report Title</b>   | <b>West Northamptonshire Unitary Council Detailed Blueprint for approval</b>                              |
| <b>Report of:</b>     | <b>Theresa Grant,<br/>Strategic Delivery Director</b>   |
| <b>Report Author:</b> | <b>Anna Earnshaw<br/>Deputy Chief Executive &amp; Director of Adults,<br/>Communities &amp; Wellbeing</b> |

#### 1. Purpose

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1.1 The purpose of this report of to set out further information on the proposed future design of West Northamptonshire Unitary Council in the form of a Detailed Blueprint which gives insight into how functions and services will work and any changes that may be made.

#### 2. Recommendations

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2.1 It is recommended that the Shadow Executive:

2.1.1 Note the content of the detailed blueprint which sets out more detail of how services will operate and the design principles that will underpin their future operation and service to stakeholders

2.1.2 Note the key elements of service functions that we plan to transform and improve in the functions and services (the “plus”)

2.1.3 Note the key activities that will be undertaken in each area during the first year of the new Council,

2.1.4 Note the high level feedback from the initial detailed blueprint briefings with staff, unions and members, and

2.1.5 Adopt the detailed Blueprint as the basis of the day 1 functional design, subject to the identification of any further agreed opportunities to transform

and improve service areas during the remaining months leading up to vesting day on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

### **3. Report Background**

- 3.1 Work has been ongoing for several months within the Future Northants programme to progress the plans and activities to achieve a “safe and legal plus” transfer to the new Authorities on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.
- 3.2 While this remains our priority, we agreed with the Shadow Executive that we would also seek wherever possible to implement transformation, where it was safe to do so, (the “plus”) prior to vesting day.
- 3.3 Working with staff, service leads and across the programme areas we developed a high level Blueprint that was previously presented to the Executive, unions, staff and wider Members. This provided the outline of how the services would fit together on day 1 and how we would split out “disaggregate” the NCC services and bring them together with the District and Borough services to create a functioning Council.
- 3.4 Attached to this report is a more detailed set of information on the proposed Blueprint design that has been created by the programme teams working with service leads, subject matter experts, programme teams and SROs.
- 3.5 These detailed design documents set out in a greater level of granularity the key aspects of each service functions going forward and the activities that we will undertake pre and post vesting day as they are currently planned.
- 3.6 Further work is intended to seek opportunities to transfer and aggregate services that will inform and update the Blueprints and contribute to the achievement of improved service outcomes and potential efficiencies. Any such opportunities will be agreed and validated through the ongoing programme governance and presented to the Shadow executives and Shadow authorities if approved.

### **4. Approach to the Detailed Blueprints**

- 4.1 The detailed Blueprint have been produced in a consistent format with each service area Blueprint providing further detail on:
  - The source of the function (whether staff will be coming from the District and Borough, the County Council or both),
  - The scope of services included in the service blueprint
  - The potential staff in scope of the service (subject to ongoing updates and final validation), and

- Any investment that has already been identify to support transformation or to support the safe disaggregation of NCC services into the two new Councils.
- 4.2 Each service area has also set out the design principles that it is proposed will underpin the day 1 services, how they are delivered, what it will feel like to stakeholders, residents and business and key areas of collaboration. These design principles vary in the level of change that they represent but provide both reassurance on the continuity of services and areas where we hope to develop and progress new ways of working within services and with key partners.
- 4.3 The detailed blueprint also provide staff, unions and stakeholders more details about the following Safe and Legal aspects of the services and their functions:
- **The service Offer** – what are the key responsibilities, deliverables and outputs that the service is responsible for,
  - **Key activities** – the key processes, procedures and tasks to be undertaken in the service area,
  - **Planned Location** – the sites and buildings that the service will operate from on day 1 and any planned changes from current locations, for example in adults where staff are moving to the community based hubs,
  - **IT Systems** – any key systems that will be used and where appropriate any planned changes that will be required due to the split in services,
  - **Customer and channels** – the stakeholder and customer groups that the service supports and will continue to provide as well as any planned changes or improvements that we hope to offer in the new Council,
  - **Key partners and providers** – details of the key 3rd party organisations and internal and external services that the service will interact with and therefore key stakeholders that we need to engage with, keep informed and communicate any changes to,
  - **Plus** – the key significant changes we have currently identified in terms of major change to the way we work, the tools we use, the strategies that we want to develop and key areas of potential transformation to develop, and
  - **Key activities Year 1** – a summary of the key changes we will need to complete in the first year, providing staff with some sense of the key changes we will need to make to operate the service legally and safely.
- 4.4 As set out in the previous report on the High Level Blueprint designs, we have in some cases agreed that an existing NCC service area will be “hosted” by one authority and provided back to the other authority on day 1. Hosting will continue for a stated period until any prerequisites or key dependencies are resolved to support a future split, for example where the terms of an existing

contract means that splitting the service would incur significant additional cost or where there is a risk to the continuity of statutory or critical service if we split them for day 1.

- 4.5 Primarily hosted services will be led by one authority for up to 12 months with a few areas being hosted for longer until key tasks or contract periods are ended, at which point they will be split. Examples of this longer period of hosting include the ICT strategy team, which will be part way through a 2-year ICT change programme at April 2021 and it would not make sense to break up the team and put their plans at risk until the work is fully implemented.
- 4.6 Where a service is hosted the detailed Blueprint also set out the steps that we will take post day 1 to work towards splitting hosted services in order to ensure that both Councils have full control of as many of their own functions and services as possible.
- 4.7 The only exception to this principle will be services and functions that will remain as “lead” authority provision for the foreseeable future or until agreed by the two Councils, because splitting them will detrimentally effect integrated support services for Council staff or in some cases external customers of those services and impact on income.

## **5. Transformation and Future Council Aspirations**

- 5.1 First and foremost, it is essential that Members can feel confident that services will operate safely and effectively on day 1 and the supporting papers set out how Members can feel assured of this.
- 5.2 All areas of the programme have considered the opportunities to transform before vesting day (the “plus”) or to prepare a roadmap for future transformation opportunities to be taken up and delivered by the new Councils. Where possible the “plus” transformation changes have been built into the Blueprint designs for day 1 and key aspects of the changes being made have been included.
- 5.3 We will shortly commence a key next stage of the programme as we look towards the opportunities to aggregate services and create new joint ways of working presented by removing the current two tier system of local government and we join up the key service areas to create new unitary functions for West Northamptonshire.
- 5.4 Working more closely with service leads across all the Councils and led by the new Transformation Director for West Northamptonshire, we will now start to identify and progress;
  - additional quick wins,
  - opportunities where working together will bring benefits for West Northamptonshire customers,

- improved processes,
- benefits from shared assets and consolidated contracts,
- reduce hand-offs and improved customer experience and
- create potential efficiencies.

5.5 We know that we will face a challenging first year with the legacy impacts of COVID 19 and it will be important that we identify these benefits as early as possible and implement any changes we can before vesting day so that we operate in the most effective way from day 1.

5.6 We also want to create a clear pipeline of bigger and more ambitious changes and transformation opportunities that could deliver our longer term ambitions and improvement across all our services.

## **6. Feedback to key stakeholders**

5.7 The high level and detailed blueprints have been shared with staff, unions and all Members, as it is important that they understand the direction of travel and that we share the key things that we know or think will change as well as what we don't know or won't change. The issue of the blueprints also follows the issue of recorded members and staff briefings which are available on YouTube:

5.7.1 [Staff](#)

5.7.2 [North Northamptonshire members](#)

5.7.3 [West Northamptonshire members](#)

5.8 A "Frequently asked Questions" (FAQ) log has also be developed where any staff or other stakeholders can raise concerns or questions and we will be updating and publishing answers regularly as the programme develops.

5.9 The Blueprint contains a significant amount of detail but we have purposely sought to provide as much information as we can to reassure and prepare staff and Members for the changes ahead. We have also sought to set out the positive change and transformation that we hope to implement for example around IT, supporting continued flexible working and transformation that is already taking place, for example in Adults.

5.10 As expected the majority of staff and the unions are understandably most concerned about what it means for their job, their terms and conditions and their locations as well as whether redundancies might follow. We have tried to be clear on these areas and reassure staff where there will be little change, for example the majority of staff will remain in their current locations on day 1 and that staff will transfer with their existing terms and conditions. But we will continue to engage in a two-way discussion to answer their detailed questions and consult on any changes.

- 5.11 We have confirmed that at this stage no significant redundancies are planned but with some duplication of services and the aggregation of the eight Councils we will have some areas where we have more staff than we will need. But there will also be areas that we will need to recruit because by splitting NCC services we have had to add additional posts to deliver services as two separate Councils. These will provide the opportunity for redeployment.
- 5.12 Some of the wider feedback on the blueprints that stakeholders gave included:
- That people were heartened by the number of very positive initiatives and areas of transformation.
  - That it was good to have further clarity and reassurance about day 1 accommodation.
  - That the blueprint helped to make the new Councils feel real and provided some sense of the opportunity.
  - That we needed to be mindful of communicating the detail of the blueprints to those staff that may not be able to access IT or YouTube or that find the colours of keys hard to read.
  - Many and consistent comments from staff and members that they would like to see more focus on climate change initiatives as an underlying priority, although the blueprint is not designed to be a policy statement.
- 5.13 There were also a number of quite detailed questions about the approach for example:
- Why we weren't keeping some services at a county level
  - Why specific functions were grouped together or were not together
  - When will more info be coming out on the blueprint/staff structure.
  - Whether we will have a balanced budget, and
  - Whether some specific locations will continue to be used.
- 5.14 The blueprints are not structure charts and the functions have been grouped initially to reflect the member portfolios that the two Councils have established and delivery areas of the programme. The final structures will be developed in the coming months and now that senior appointments have been made to each Unitary, as the final delivery structure is a matter for each Council.
- 5.15 Some of the detailed staff questions will be the subject of more detailed consultation with staff and unions but we have developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) database that will be available for all staff so they can see what others have asked and get information and answers. We have also provided videos about the high level blueprints so that any staff not at work or away can still see the same information and change champions will be

equipped with more information to share and impart to colleagues. They will also collate and share any additional questions for the FAQ database.

- 5.16 With regard to work locations, there are no current plans generally to change the locations from which staff operate, with the exception of adult's staff who will be moving into communities as part of their transformation. But the locations, assets and sites transferring to both councils will be reviewed after day 1 as part wider future corporate planning and strategies.

## **7. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **6.1 Policy**

- 6.1.1 There are no direct policy implications of the detailed Blueprints but they do include an indication of where we expect to have to amend key policies. Such changes form part of a wider Future Northants programme plan on policies across the existing Councils and what changes will be required to meet the new Councils' statutory duties, policies that will require harmonisation, policies that can rebranded and transferred with change and reviewed later and those policy areas where members will undertake reviews and agree new policies that the Council will adopt from day 1.

### **6.2 Resources and Risk**

- 6.2.1 As set out in the report for the High Level Blueprint, from a finance perspective, Members should note that the Draft Blueprint, day 1 plans and the "plus" elements of the programme have all been budgeted for within the existing programme arrangements. These will feed into the MTFP Task and Finish group which will be looking at the future budgets for West Northamptonshire Council taking into account the disaggregation of NCC services and any additional costs created as a result of splitting services, the aggregation of District and Borough services, the impacts of COVID, the progress of all existing MTFP savings initiatives and the government settlement when announced later in the year.
- 6.2.2 Any new investment identified as part of the aggregation and transformation work to follow will be subject to a business case processes and approval and will need to set out the financial and non-financial benefits that could be released. Any financial benefits will be fed into the MTFP planning process and inform the West Northamptonshire budget setting in the coming months.
- 6.2.3 The greatest risk faced by the programme remains the ongoing risk of COVID pressure on staff, finances and operational teams as we respond to any surges in cases or increase in demand on the back of pandemic and lock down. As we enter the winter period we will also naturally see additional seasonal pressures on some key demand services like Adults and Childrens services that could add additional risk in a period of change. This is one of the reasons that both services are planning to complete significant changes (the

set-up of the Trust for childrens and the transformation and disaggregation programme for Adults) ahead of the Unitary go live.

### **6.3 Legal**

- 6.3.1 There are no legal implications of the Blueprints at this stage although their formation is a critical part of the steps towards fulfilling the requirements of the Structural Change Order.

### **6.4 Equality and Health**

- 6.4.1 There are no Equality and Health assessments at this stage as these Blueprints about future form. Where there are any impacts on residents or staff through a proposed change in service or delivery, this will be consulted on in line with the duties of the Council. Wider stakeholder briefings are also planned and these will be followed by more detailed staff engagement and Member consultation as the detailed plans are confirmed.