

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

8th September 2020

Report Title	West Northamptonshire Unitary Council Draft Blueprint
Report Author	Anna Earnshaw Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Adults, Communities & Wellbeing

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the draft blueprint for West Northamptonshire Unitary Council and how services are generally expected to be organised at vesting day, as well as an overview of some key areas, our plans to ensure a safe transfer and aspects of service improvement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 This report should be read in conjunction with the slide pack at appendix one for Overview and Scrutiny Committee to;
- 2.1.1 Note the progress made on preparation for the new Unitary Council including how the services are likely to be configured within the new Council.
- 2.1.2 Note the aspirations and opportunities set out in appendix one and described within this report as a result of bringing services together and the underpinning capabilities being progressed in relation to our digital transformation and future aspirations for the People and Place of West Northamptonshire,
- 2.1.3 Note the next steps set out.
- 2.1.4 Provide comments and feedback on the draft blueprint to help shape the next stages of its development.

3. Report Background

- 3.1 Work on the potential designs for the two new Unitary Councils was progressing well at the start of 2020 when the COVID-19 Pandemic struck. As a result of the situation, the programme and normal Council services were forced to pause and all attention and focus was rightly targeted at dealing with the risks and consequences of the pandemic.

- 3.2 With this in mind, and recognising the demands COVID placed on all our Councils, it was agreed that the Future Northants programme would continue but the focus would shift to achieving a reduced “safe and legal plus” transfer. This means our priority has been ensuring all services could safely operate and that all day 1 “must haves” were in place in order for us to meet the Structural Changes Order legal deadline of April 2021 for the new Councils to go live.
- 3.3 However, all members of the Shadow Executive agreed that we would also:
- seek wherever possible to implement transformation, wherever safe to do so, (the “plus”) prior to vesting day, and
 - that where possible, and only if it is safe and practical, we would split NCC services and staff into the two new unitary footprints on day 1 this will reduce service and staff disruption later.
- 3.4 Since then the Future Northants Programme, working with Chief Executives, has been developing a “blueprint” of how the new Council service might look on day 1 and specifically how we would split out “disaggregate” the NCC services and bring them together with the District and Borough services to create a functioning Council. The draft blueprint presented to the executive today now provides an overview of what is proposed for approval.

4. Approach to the Draft Blueprints

- 4.1 The draft Blueprint set out in the supporting papers is not designed to be a structure chart for the new Council, but represents a functional view of how services will come together. Behind this high level view sits more details about the activities to transfer services, day 1 must haves and staff in scope of each of the functions. Following approval by the Shadow Executive to progress the Blueprints presented, engagement sessions and briefings for wider members will be set up to gain their feedback on the Draft Blueprint.
- 4.2 This work provides the foundations for the next step of the plan as we prepare for implementation and the basis to commence discussions with the staff and unions about how staff will be designated to the West or North Northants Councils. This will form part of a formal consultation process on future plans and TUPE arrangements.
- 4.3 It should be noted that Adults Social Care intends to create its new Shadow West and North service structures during 2020 and ahead of the Vesting day. This is being done to align the changes resulting from service transformation, which is already underway, and to ensure that there is minimal disruption for staff and Adults customers on day 1. This is being done in a specific formal consultation process with the Unions and Staff which has now commenced.
- 4.4 Members should particularly note the new Council “Service maps” on pages 11 (West) and 13 (North) respectively which sets out how each of the new Unitary Councils will be made up from the NCC & District & Borough services.

Given the nature of NCC services, the complexity of splitting them or the limitations of existing arrangements, it was agreed that different treatment of the services was required to ensure we could remain safe and legal and in some cases existing contract arrangements may need to continue for a while or one Unitary may need to act as the 'lead' commissioning Council or temporary 'host' of services for the other.

- 4.5 There are 4 main ways that NCC services have been treated when deciding the day 1 blueprint, these are:
- Disaggregate - These are NCC services that can clearly be split on day 1 into North & West Unitary Council Services
 - Externally Provided - These are NCC services that are provided by other organisations to NCC now and will continue to be provided in that way to the new authorities.
 - Hosted - These are NCC services that will need to be hosted by one **Unitary Council** and provided to the other for a period until any prerequisites or dependencies are resolved to support a future split. Primarily, this will be 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.
 - Lead - These are NCC services that we plan to move to Lead Authority model where one Unitary Council provides services to the other under an SLA because splitting them will detrimentally effect services for Council staff or in some cases external customers of those services.
- 4.6 For District and Borough services, it is assumed that all current functions and staff for South Northants, Northampton Borough Council and Daventry District Council will move to the West and that all functions and staff for Corby Borough Council, Kettering Borough Council, East Northants Council and Borough of Wellingborough Council will move to the North Unitary.
- 4.7 At this stage it is assumed that staff will remain in their current locations for day 1 unless, as in Adults Services, it is agreed as part of consultation with staff and Unions that service will operate from new locations.

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 in key areas of our People services, Place services and in terms of our IT and Customer services functions.
- 5.2 But all areas of the programme have also 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. But the papers also set out some of the significant

future opportunities we now have to bring the component parts of all the existing Councils together and make West and North Northants great places **to grow up, get on and grow old.**

- 5.3 Members should note that while at this stage the functional Blueprint is generic by virtue of the stage we are at, the aspirations that have been articulated could now provide the foundation for developing the future designs and plans for the new Council and link into the Task and Finish Group Work on the Vision and Values that will truly shape the future organisation model for West Northamptonshire Council.
- 5.4 Mid Term Financial Plan (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.
- 5.5 Until that is complete, we will not be able to include additional transformation initiatives for delivery but we will continue to build a pipeline of opportunities for implementation and the transformation teams will continue beyond vesting day to provide the capacity and capability to maintain ongoing transformation priorities for each Council. The Transformation Member Task and Finish Group can start to review and assess priorities for transformation beyond vesting day and feed into the planning process.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1 There are no policy implications of the blueprints although they may help inform future Council plans as political priorities are set.

6.2 Resources and Risk

- 6.2.1 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 Northants 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 Throughout the recent programme development work, the greatest risk faced by the programme was the ability to progress plans robustly in the context of wider COVID pressure and in a way that would ensure that services could safely transfer and ensure that all legal duties would be maintained. Alongside the wider Blueprint development there has been considerable work

undertaken to ensure that all services and functions have identified all the critical products and day 1 must haves that will be required for the safe and legal transfer. Work has already been completed to baseline all services and subject to Shadow Council approval on the draft Blueprints, stakeholder briefings will take place on the details behind these and implementation work will commence.

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 health Equality and Health assessments at this stage as these are high level 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 this will be followed by more detailed staff engagement and Member consultation as the detailed plans are confirmed.