

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
SHADOW OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 8th September 2020

Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members present:

Councillor Ann Addison	Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Dermot Bambridge	Councillor Ken Ritchie
Councillor Jane Birch (Chair)	Councillor Emma Roberts
Councillor Andre Gonzalez de Savage	Councillor David Smith
Councillor James Hill	Councillor Allen Walker
Councillor Jamie Lane (Deputy Chair)	Councillor Mark Wesley

Officers present:

Ed Bostock	Democratic Services Officer, Northampton Borough Council
George Candler	Interim Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Anna Earnshaw	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Adults' Services, Public Health and Wellbeing
Paul Helsby	Programme Director, Northamptonshire Unitary Integrated Programme
Martin Henry	Interim Chief Finance Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority
Alex Melia	Democratic Services Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority (Minutes)
Rebecca Peck	Assistant Director to the Chief Executive, Northamptonshire County Council
Audra Statham	Finance Enabler, Future Northants Programme
Tracy Tiff	Democratic and Member Services Manager, Northampton Borough Council
Susan Zeiss	Interim Monitoring Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority

1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Penny Flavell, Dennis Meredith, Julie Davenport, Enam Haque and Mike Warren.

2. NOTIFICATIONS OF REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

There were none.

3. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

5. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17th AUGUST 2020

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17th August 2020 subject to the inclusion of Councillor Ken Pritchard in the list of attendees.

6. PRESENTATION – TRANSFORMATION AND FINANCE PROGRAMME

Paul Helsby, Programme Director, Northamptonshire Unitary Integrated Programme, introduced the report and highlighted the salient points:

- The status of the Finance programme has progressed from amber to green, which will be presented in the September Executive report.
- The Corporate programme remains amber, as the requirements of the programme requires further input and assessment during the implementation phase.
- The Trade Unions have engaged with the Draft Blueprints, 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.
- Moving into the implementation phase of the programme, a specific report for implementation in West Northants will go to the Shadow Executive in October.
- The Critical Path for both the West and North Unitary Authorities will go live on April 1st 2021, to ensure that all services are safe and legal on Day One.
- The Change Management for July mainly focussed on bringing the Change Champions back into the fold following the Covid-19 restrictions.
- The next stage of the high-level blueprints will be sent to the Shadow Executive meeting on the 22nd September, whilst staff and detailed Member briefings were scheduled for the coming days.

The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Members raised concerns over the ability to inform residents of how the Transformation Programme will be beneficial.
- Members were asked to note that the potential differences the Programme could make to the residents of West Northamptonshire is a key component of the Programme itself.
- The impact of Covid-19 has resulted in some alterations to the Programme, but the Programme Director suggested that the ambitions had been unaffected.

Audra Statham, Finance Enabler, Future Northants Programme, introduced the finance report to the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee and highlighted the salient points:

- In June, the Future Northants Programme reported a budget of £53,000,000, which would provide £85,000,000 in savings.
- The previous report showed a negative variance of £239,000, which has now increased to just over £400,000. The Finance Enabler stated that these savings will still be delivered but at a later date than initially expected.

- An Outturn Position for all Northamptonshire Authorities was included in the report. The previous Shadow Executive meeting heard that the variance was around £1,400,000.
- It was noted that following this projection of £1,400,000, further funding had been announced to cover the loss of income from fees and charges. Each of the authorities affected are working through the data to assess the results, but the outcome is expected to be more favourable.
- Since this meeting, Northants County Council were reporting a favourable position of £172,000, which has now moved to £3,300,000.
- The next update from all eight sovereign councils will be in November.

The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- Concerns were raised over the ability of the Programme to deliver the proposed £85,000,000 savings.
- It was noted that £35,000,000 of the planned £85,000,000 has already been secured. A further £14,000,000 saving for current financial the year is projected, and therefore confidence in achieving this figure is high.
- Concerns were raised over contingency plans if the savings were not achieved.
- In response, it was stated that some of the savings due for later years are not built into the base budget, and therefore the budget is not reliant upon them.

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny committee noted the progress of the Transformation and Finance Programme.

7. DRAFT OUTLINE BLUEPRINT FOR THE WNSA

Anna Earnshaw, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Adults' Services, Public Health and Wellbeing, introduced the report and highlighted salient points:

- Members were asked to note that the Blueprints are a general view of how services will be safe and legal on Day One, in light of the challenges posed by Covid-19.
- The Deputy Chief Executive wished to stress that the ambitions for transformation remained.
- Members were also asked to note that the Blueprints are not intended to be a structure, but rather they represent a view of how services may operate and be aligned to member portfolios.
- It was suggested that the preference is to separate services where possible. However, in some cases, such as HR, payroll and transactions, it is necessary for West Northamptonshire to temporarily become the lead authority, providing services to the North. Public Health was given as an example where the inverse will be the case.
- It was noted that one of the higher transformation aims is to ensure that the people and place of West Northamptonshire benefit from the four sovereign councils coming together.

The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- It was noted that at present, there are no plans for mass redundancies. The programme does expect to realise efficiencies, but simultaneously new opportunities will be created for staff.

- It was stressed that certain contracts and services may be difficult to split between the two new authorities at present, but this will be reviewed at the appropriate times. It may also be more practical in some cases to avoid separating services, as collaboration could produce a better outcome for the residents of both West and North Northamptonshire.
- Concerns were raised that the environmental issues were not prioritised in the Blueprint.
- In response, it was noted that environmental and climate change issues were highlighted in feedback from staff, and that the slides presented were focussed more on how services would function.
- It was suggested that the vision for sustainability would become more apparent as the Blueprint is developed and becomes more detailed.
- There are 12 Adult Hubs, split according to factors such as population, geography and accessibility in order to maintain a uniformity of services across the region.
- Concerns were raised over the benefit to residents from the restructuring and how this was being publicised. Members stressed their enthusiasm to promote communication with residents, with an increased focus on West Northamptonshire.
- In response, it was stated that a key element of the vision and values underlying the Blueprint is to make a positive and noticeable impact on residents.
- Questions over the separation of Children's and Adult's services were raised, to which it was noted that some of these issues were historical rather than by design.
- It was suggested that one of the main concerns expressed by residents about the transition to a Unitary Authority centred on local issues and services remaining intact.

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny committee:

1. Noted the progress made on preparation for the new Unitary Council including how the services are likely to be configured within the new Council.
2. Noted 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,
3. Noted the next steps set out.
4. Provided comments and feedback on the draft, as detailed above, to help shape the next stages of its development.

8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2020/2021

George Candler, Interim Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, addressed the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee and referred Members to the Overview & Scrutiny Work Programme for 2020/21 and highlighted the salient points:

- Dates for an additional meeting of the Committee in October were being considered, which would reflect the outcomes of workshop sessions.
- At the meeting on the 3rd November, two specific items will be discussed: Finance Scrutiny and Vision & Culture.
- At the scheduled final meeting in this cycle of the committee on the 2nd March 2021, an Overview & Scrutiny annual report will be proposed in order to assess the work of the committee over the past year.

- The Work Programme will remain a “living document”, reflecting the remit of the committee and allowing for alterations that may be considered with regards to the preparedness of the future West Northamptonshire Overview & Scrutiny Committee after Vesting Day.

Susan Zeiss, Interim Monitoring Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, addressed the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee and noted that:

- Progress in the Governance Task & Finish Group had been made. A draft on the update to Procedure Rules was proposed for the forthcoming Shadow Executive meetings and subsequently the potential Overview and Scrutiny meeting in October.
- Further discussions on the issue of localism were tentatively suggested for discussion later in the year, with the Interim Monitoring Officer noting that this would tie in with the Community Hubs mentioned in Item 7.

Martin Henry, Interim s151 Officer, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, addressed the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee and stated that the starting position for next year’s budget would be presented at the meeting in November, to give Members information and the chance to ask related questions. The outcome of that meeting will then be used to help create a financial model for the budget which will be presented at the subsequent meeting in January 2021.

The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- The needs of Scrutiny have been factored into the budget setting process. The January meeting of the Committee will take place before the final Shadow Executive and full Shadow Authority meetings, allowing for Scrutiny to take place prior to the budget being approved.
- Concerns over public participation in meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee were raised.
- It was noted that the opportunity for the public to engage in these meetings is, and would remain, available.
- It was suggested that public participation in budget scrutiny may increase this year as the residents of West Northamptonshire will have a single budget to discuss going forward, rather than four separate budgets as in previous years. Proposals to facilitate public engagement and consultation in the budget setting process need further development.
- It was noted that the current legislation remains that whilst public meetings can be held remotely via Zoom, this should continue. Discussions over the potential of hybrid meetings continue, although there are concerns over the equality of opportunity arising from this type of meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the Work Programme for 2020/21.

9. WNSA EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

George Candler, Interim Chief Executive, West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority, addressed the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee and referred Members to the WNSA Executive Forward Plan. He noted that purpose of sharing the Forward Plan was to

ascertain whether there were any areas that Members felt should be considered as part of a future work programme.

In response to questions, it was suggested reports of the Task & Finish Groups could be circulated prior to meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in future for information purposes, but as the reports would be in the public domain they would not feature as a substantive item on the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the Forward Plan.

10. URGENT ITEMS

There were none.

11. EXEMPT ITEMS

There were none.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 19:49 hours.