

## WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY

### OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING

20 October 2020

Report Title	Governance Preparations for the West Northamptonshire Authority
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#### 1. Purpose

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the process in place for preparing Governance arrangements for the West Northamptonshire Authority.

#### 2. Recommendations

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It is recommended that the shadow overview and scrutiny committee:

- 2.1 Note and comment on the contents of this report.

#### 3. Issues and Choices

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##### 3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 A Council Governance Task and Finish Group is in place to undertake the following with regard to preparations for the West Northamptonshire Authority:
- 3.1.2 **Ensure that all elements of the Council's governance framework are in place. This will include: Constitution, code of conduct, members' allowances etc.**
- 3.1.3 Oversee the development of a Member training and development programme for the Unitary Authority.
- 3.1.4 Ensure that support and committee management system arrangements are in place.
- 3.1.5 Ensure Statutory Boards are set up with terms of reference.
- 3.1.6 The Members on the Task and Finish Group are:

Chair:	Cllr. Adam Brown
Deputy Chair:	Cllr. Phil Larratt
Member:	Cllr. Charles Manners
Member:	Cllr. Michael Clarke
Member:	Cllr. Sally Beardsworth

### **3.2 Issues and Choices**

3.2.1 The Task and Finish group is preparing a Constitution which sets out how the Council will operate, how decisions will be made and the procedures which will be followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

3.2.2 The purpose of the Constitution is to:

- Provide a clear statement of the operating rules and procedures of the Council;
- Enable the Council to provide clear leadership to the community in partnership with individuals, businesses and other organisations;
- Support the active involvement of the public in the process of Council decision-making;
- Help Councillors represent their constituents more effectively;
- Enable decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively;
- Create a powerful and effective means of holding decision-makers to public account;
- Ensure that no one shall review or scrutinise a decision in which they were directly involved;
- Ensure that those responsible for decision-making are clearly identifiable to local people and that they explain the reasons for decisions;
- Provide a means of improving the quality and efficiency of delivery of services to the community; and
- Help realise the Council's strategic aim to strengthen local government within West Northamptonshire and to achieve strong sustainable communities.

3.2.3 The starting point for this work has been the Shadow Authority's Constitution that was adopted at the first meeting of the Shadow Authority. However it has to be borne in mind that this Constitution reflected the arrangements set out in the Structural Changes Order (make up of Shadow Executive etc) and was for an authority that provided no services or functions.

- 3.2.4 The Task and Finish Group has therefore referred to the recently adopted Constitutions for Dorset and Buckingham Councils; and also to Cornwall's Constitution, which was recommended by the LGA as an exemplar for a unitary authority.
- 3.2.5 The timetable for preparation of the West Northamptonshire Constitution is shown at Appendix 1.
- 3.2.6 The Code of Conduct agreed by the Shadow Authority was based on an exemplar Code adopted by the Task and Finish Group established by the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee. So this could be seen as an already substantially complete piece of work. However, the LGA has reviewed the current model member code of conduct, as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report into Local Government Ethical Standards. The consultation period on the draft member code of conduct has now ended and the responses are now being considered.
- 3.2.7 The final timetable for the publication of the revised model code of conduct is uncertain, but, if it was published before the Constitution was finalised, it would be given due consideration.
- 3.2.8 An Independent Remuneration Panel will be set up to draft a proposed Members' Allowance Scheme. This needs to take place once general and specific Member roles and responsibilities have been determined for the Constitution.

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

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##### **4.1 Policy**

- 4.1.1 No direct implications.

##### **4.2 Resources and Risk**

- 4.2.1 A clear timetable is in place and officer resources are in place to support the Task and Finish Group.

##### **4.3 Legal**

- 4.3.1 The Task and Finish Group's output will be a Constitution that will set out how West Northamptonshire Council will operate in line with legislation, statute and best practice.

##### **4.4 Equality and Health**

- 4.4.1 No direct implications

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