**Democratic Services** 

c/o One Angel Square Angel Street Northampton NN1 1ED

Meeting: West Northamptonshire Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Date: 2 March 2021
- **Time**: 6:00 pm
- **Venue:** Virtual meeting via Zoom

The meeting will be available for the public to view here: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCujrRO-y6RzkN6zPQ-xNAtA

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#### Agenda

		-			
	Urgent Business				
Urgent Business Such other business which, by reasons of the special circumstances to be specified, the Chair is of the opinion is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration. (Members who wish to raise urgent business are requested to inform the Chair beforehand.)					
8	None notified				
	Exemp	t Items			
In respect of the following items the Chairman may move the resolution set out below, on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information (information regarded as private for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1972) would be disclosed to them: The Committee is requested to resolve: "That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that if the public were present it would be likely that exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act of the descriptions against each item would be disclosed to them"					
		Exempt Category			
-	None Notified				

### Catherine Whitehead, Proper Officer

Date Issued: 22 February 2021

#### WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

#### SHADOW OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

#### Monday, 25 January 2021

#### Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members present:

Councillor Ann Addison	Councillor Dennis Meredith
Councillor Dermot Bambridge	Councillor Ken Pritchard
Councillor Jane Birch (Chair)	Councillor Ken Ritchie
Councillor Julie Davenport	Councillor David Smith
Councillor Andre Gonzalez de Savage	Councillor Allen Walker
Councillor James Hill	Councillor Mike Warren
Councillor Jamie Lane (Deputy Chair)	

#### Officers present:

George Candler	Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council
Andrew Hunkin	Legal and Democratic Lead, Future Northants
Catherine Whitehead	Director of Legal and Democratic Services, WNC
Tracy Tiff	Democratic and Member Services Manager,
	Northampton Borough Council
Ed Bostock	Democratic Services Officer, Northampton Borough
	Council (Minutes)

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Roberts.

#### 2. NOTIFICATIONS OF REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

None.

#### 3. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

#### 4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

#### 5. MINUTES

Members queried reference to the national living wage in the minutes and questioned why it was not being considered across the entire authority. Councillor Ritchie stated that the authority should be seeking accreditation as a Living Wage Employer. Councillor Meredith noted that a Scrutiny report (Food Poverty) by Northampton Borough Council recommended that the national living wage be implemented. The Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council, advised that the report had been considered by the Cabinet and recommendations approved, that could be implemented before vesting day. After Vesting Day it would be for WNC to determine the approach.

Councillor Bambridge noted that the response to his questions around funding were not included in the minutes, although they were included in the report of the Committee in relation to the budget consultation.

#### **RESOLVED**:

That the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2021 as a true and accurate record, whilst noting the above observations.

#### 6. GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY

Catherine Whitehead, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, West Northamptonshire Council, presented the report and highlighted the salient points. She explained that a report was presented to the Constitution Task and Finish Group with a range of options in terms of how the Constitution could be taken forward. Six principles were adopted by the Task and Finish Group, set out at 3.3.1 of the report, and it was the aim that the Constitution would be written in plain English, as far as possible.

A new structure was chosen based on key decision-making bodies. The West Implementation Executive would be consulted on the draft Constitution before a final draft was referred to the Shadow Executive and ratified by the Shadow Authority on 23 February 2021.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services explained that a section in the Constitution dealt with the interim period between vesting day and elections, which would fall away following an election.

In response to questions, it was explained that:

- Who should Chair the Council was a political matter and did not form part of a Constitution.
- There had been debate around localism but due to the issues around Covid-19, proper engagement with local communities was impossible. The Director of Legal and Democratic Services explained that NBC Members of the Task and Finish Group were keen on "theme based" community boards and noted that this would be a piece of work that she would like to see done within the new authority's first year, providing there was the opportunity to engage with local communities.
- Regarding petitions, there was scope for a scheme of petitions to be added to the Public Participation section if Members felt it necessary; other councils found a scheme restrictive, rather than just allowing petitions to be presented to a committee.
- Regarding climate change, this was not included in the constitutions of any of the Sovereign authorities, and the approach to climate change would need to be considered by the West Northamptonshire Council.

- Regarding young people, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services agreed to add a sub-section within the Public Participation section acknowledging the importance of engaging with young people as part of the democratic process.
- There was an aim to write the Constitution in plain English, however due to the nature of the document this was not always possible. This would also be an ongoing task post-vesting day.
- It was anticipated that a boundary review would take place and changes implemented before the elections in 2025; members of the public and councillors would have a chance to make submissions.
- Officer arrangements were not included in the Constitution since they were not part of its governance arrangements.
- Regarding Planning committees, the proposal comprised 3 Local Area Committees and 1 Strategic Planning Committee which would deal with major development, waste disposal, etc. This was due in part to the Local Plan of each authority continuing to be separate until a single Local Plan for the area could be developed. Whilst there was no need for area committees to be politically balanced, local Member representation would be required.
- A Summary and Explanation was contained at the beginning of the Constitution.
- The Executive had powers to make changes to the Executive arrangements within the Constitution.
- A Member could sit on both Area and Strategic Planning Committees.
- The Strategic Planning Committee was created since it would have implications for the entire authority, beyond the boundaries of local areas; representatives of all areas would sit on the Strategic Planning Committee.
- The guillotine on meetings was proposed to be amended to 10:30pm and the limit of speakers further amended. Also proposed was an extension of a meeting by 15 minutes, at the Chair's discretion.
- Arrangements for S106 funding did not form part of the Constitution. This would be dealt with through any management arrangements West Northamptonshire Council put in place.
- A meeting room had been identified for council meetings but there was no space for the public, which is a legal requirement. Webcasting was being considered.

#### **RESOLVED**:

The Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report on the proposed Constitution and made comment as detailed above.

#### 7. BUDGET CONSULTATION - DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND HRA BUDGET

The Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council, advised that the Committee could delegate powers to give the Chair discretion to add items to be agreed, following discussion under item 5.

In response to questions, the Committee heard that the "plus" in "safe and legal plus" referred to transformation relating to social care and the Children's Trust; other parts of the wider transformation plan had to be scaled back due to the pandemic.

The Chair confirmed that any updates to the draft report, proposed at this meeting would be included within the report.

The Chief Executive, Northampton Borough Council, advised that the Transformation team was employed on fixed-term contracts, with the anticipation that transformation would be scaled back. However no date had been set. The Transformation budget included overhead expenses. In response to comments relating to the Children's Trust and Member involvement, it was suggested that a Member briefing note be arranged to assure Members of the level of governance surrounding the Trust.

#### **RESOLVED**:

- 1. That the Committee delegates to the Chair to make any required updates to the report.
- 2. Subject to updates made at the meeting, the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the report of the Chair of the West Northamptonshire Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee that detailed the Committee's comments on the draft Budget 2021-2022 and Medium Term Financial Plan General Fund Revenue and Capital for submission to the Section 151 Officer to append to the report on the budget that will be considered by WNSA at its meeting on 23 February 2021.

#### 8. WNSA – EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Legal and Democratic Lead, Future Northants, presented the WNSA Executive Forward Plan and highlighted the salient points.

It was suggested that a briefing in respect of Transformation is provided to the next meeting of this Committee for consideration.

#### **RESOLVED**:

That the Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the Forward Plan.

#### 9. URGENT BUSINES

None.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 19:55 hours



### WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE SHADOW AUTHORITY

### **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING**

### 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

•	Future Northants Transformation Update
	Transformation Task and Finish Group Chair: Councillor Matt Golby

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the West Northamptonshire Overview & Scrutiny Committee of progress made and next steps for the Transformation programme.
- 1.2 Details about the progress and future steps of Transformation for West Northamptonshire Council is attached at Appendix 1.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- 2.1.1 Note the content of the report
- 2.1.2 Support brining regular updates on the work to future Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings.

#### 3. Implications (including financial implications)

- 3.1 Policy
- 3.1.1 None
- 3.2 Financial and other resources and Risk
- 3.2.1 None
- 3.3 Legal
- 3.3.1 None
- 3.4 Equality and Health



3.4.1 None

Report Author: Jane Carr, Director of Transformation



#### Appendix 1 – Briefing Note for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

#### **Background & Context**

The current Future Northants LGR programme was extended by 1 year in 2019 which moved the vesting date from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

At the time the extension took place there was an agreement by all 8 sovereign Chief Executives that the additional 12 months would be used to focus on early transformation for some of the services.

The approach was endorsed by members of the Shadow Executive with the intention that by vesting day there would be a number of services that were already aggregated or re-modelled.

In Feb/March 2020 Covid-19 Pandemic started to escalate in the UK. This led to a major incident being declared both Nationally and locally. This declaration meant that in March 2021 council resources from both County and District & Boroughs had to be re-deployed to work on the pandemic response. This included a high number of staff from the Future Northants programme.

Due to the reductions of capacity both in the programme and of the SMEs needed to deliver Theresa Grant Chief Executive of Northants County Council, in her role as the Strategic Delivery Director, realigned the programme to Safe & Legal with Safe & Legal plus where it was possible.

The length of the pandemic and the drain on staff resources has meant that this changed again in December 2020 to only look at critical deliverables for day 1.

#### **Progress to Date**

In June 2020, a member task and finish group was set up with the aim being: To develop strategic transformation priorities for post 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Setting out strategic principles and aims to drive transformation that's embedded in officers' and members' day jobs in the new organisation.

#### Attendees

Cllr Matt Golby (Chair) Cllr Stephen Hibbert Cllr Fiona Baker Cllr Stephen Dabbs Cllr Colin Morgan Lead Officers – Paul Helsby, Programme Director (until his retirement in October 2020) Jane Carr, Director of Transformation.

#### Key discussion points

The task and finish group held its first meeting in June 2020. At this point the group was focussing on long term transformation and some of the key ambitions that members felt were important and wanted focus on.



Following the arrival of the Director of Transformation at the beginning of October, there was a review done of the work of this group and an assessment of how the members in this group could best support the work of the Director of Transformation and future team.

The impact of Covid on the Transformation that should have taken place in 20/21 is that the resources were diverted to Covid response work and Transformation priorities were delayed.

Due to the delay the groups focus was reviewed to take a more detailed look at the first 2-3 years following vesting day. The review focussed on prioritising within the two key areas that would provide the majority of the Transformation work in this time period. The areas were the remaining Hosted Services that will need Disaggregation and Aggregation of services where separate teams will need aligning and services remodelling.

In order to have a clear understanding of what would be prioritised and why the group set and agreed key transformation principles which are:

- 1. Customer/Resident centred
- 2. Provides best value/Value for money
- 3. Focus on sustainability (environmental, social and economic)
- 4. Prevention and Early Intervention focussed
- 5. Partnership and Collaboration centred
- 6. Improves quality of services and support
- 7. Accessible and Inclusive
- 8. Utilising the right technology at the right time

These were also prioritised in order of importance.

The priority order of transformation for Hosted and Aggregation was then agreed against this and additional considerations of:

- Customer Impact
- Staff Impact
- Financial Impact
- Impact on Organisational Ability to Operate
- Political Impact

This has given the Director of Transformation a robust member steer on the ordering and to continue with the next steps.

#### Agreed next steps & actions

- Director of Transformation to create timeline for review by the task and finish group in early March 2021.
- Meeting with North Northants Council to be arranged for Mid March 2021 to discuss and agree final Hosted ordering.



Item No: 07

# West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

# Annual Report 2020/2021

# A Message from Councillor Jane Birch, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee - West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority

This Annual Report is a summary of just some of the work that the shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) has undertaken over the course of a period of just ten months.

The shadow O&S Committee approved its work programme for the year and details of the scrutiny activity undertaken are provided at page 4 of this Annual Report. The O&S Committees of the Sovereign Councils continued to complete their Reviews.

The work of this Committee commenced in June 2020 and we had to quickly bring in a new way of working and remote meetings became the new normal way of hosting a Committee meeting. My thanks to Councillor Jamie Lane, Deputy Chair of this Committee, who hosted training on the workings and protocols of using the online audio and web conferencing platform.

It was ensured that the public could watch a meeting of the shadow Overview and Scrutiny on : <u>West Northants</u> <u>Democratic Services - YouTube</u>. The public was also able to address a meeting by registering their intention to speak.

I highlight specifically that Overview and Scrutiny is member-led and evidence-based. It is fundamental that the work of scrutiny adds value and I feel that this annual report demonstrates just that. An important element of this work has been the attendance of a Committee member at the Governance and Finance Task and Finish groups' meetings, acting as a silent observer.

Instead of a complete commentary of all that the Shadow O&S Committee has achieved over the year this Annual Report provides a short summary of the key highlights of the work that O&S has been engaged in during 2020/2021. I hope it reflects what I feel has been a very important year for the shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

I would like to thank all those who have been involved in and have supported Scrutiny over the past year. In particular, I would like to thank my colleagues who sat with me on the shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

I do hope that you find this report informative and interesting.



**Councillor Jane Birch Chair** 

Shadow Overview and Scrutiny Committee West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority

#### Membership of the shadow O&S Committee 2020/2021

The membership of the shadow O&S Committee was made up of 18 non-Executives of the four Sovereign Councils of West Northamptonshire:

Councillor Jane Birch (Chair) Northampton Borough Council and Northamptonshire County Council; Councillor Jamie Lane, (Deputy Chair) Northampton Borough Council;

Councillors Ann Addison (South Northants Council), Dermot Bambridge (South Northants Council), Julie Davenport (Northamptonshire County Council/Northampton Borough Council), Penny Flavell (Northampton Borough Council), Andre Gonzalez de Savage (Northamptonshire County Council), Enam Haque (Northampton Borough Council), James Hill (Northampton Borough Council), Dennis Meredith (Northamptonshire County Council/Northampton Borough Council), Ian Morris (Northamptonshire County Council), Ken Pritchard (South Northants Council), David Smith (Daventry District Council), Ken Ritchie (Daventry District Council), Emma Roberts (Northampton Borough Council), Allen Walker (South Northants/Northamptonshire County Council), Mark Warren (Daventry District Council) and Mark Wesley (Daventry District Council).

#### How does Overview and Scrutiny make a difference?

Overview and Scrutiny ensures that decision-making processes are clear and accessible to the public and that the people taking decisions are held accountable for those decisions.

#### Effective Scrutiny

As stated by the Centre of Governance and Scrutiny, effective scrutiny:

- provides "critical friend" challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers
- enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities
- is carried out by "independent minded governors" who lead and own the scrutiny process
- drives improvement in public services.

#### Terms of Reference for the Shadow O&S Committee

The terms of reference of the Shadow O&S Committee include:

scrutinise decisions of the Shadow Executive Committee, and offer advice or make recommendations on the matter under scrutiny once the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered the issues;

refer to the Shadow Council, the Shadow Executive Committee or appropriate Committee/Sub-Committee any matter which, following scrutiny, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee determines should be brought to the attention of the Shadow Council, Shadow Executive Committee or the Committee or Sub-Committee;

if requested, offer any views or advice to the Shadow Executive Committee in relation to any matter referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration

#### Achievements

#### How was this impact made during 2020-2021?

#### Public interest

Public interest in the work of the shadow O&S Committee was monitored by the number of views of the recordings of the meetings posted on the Council's YouTube account. Views at each meeting ranged from 22 to 47.

#### Training

Early in the municipal year 2020/2021, the Committee received comprehensive training delivered by an expert of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. The training was particularly valued as it focussed on the role of the shadow O&S Committee and its remit from June 2020 to 31 March 2021.

#### Scrutiny Impact

#### What have we achieved and influenced?

It was a very busy, interesting and productive year for the Shadow O&S Committee. The Committee held nine meetings over the course of ten months.

To give a flavour of the types of issues and the work that the Committee dealt with this year, the following provides examples of focussed and targeted assurance and scrutiny work which has been undertaken by the shadow O&S Committee:

Council Tax Harmonisation and Council Tax Reduction Scheme (over two meetings) Transformation and Finance Programme West Northamptonshire Unitary Council Draft Blueprint Governance preparation arrangements for the West Northamptonshire Authority. Communications and Engagement –review and update on the future timetable of activity Vison and Culture

ICT Preparedness Unitary Website Development Communications and Engagement: Day One Residents' Integrated Marketing Plan Overview Budget Scrutiny A new constitution for West Northamptonshire Council.

#### **Key Outcomes**

The Committee focussed on its pre-decision Scrutiny role and key outcomes for the shadow O&S Committee that demonstrate how its work this year has made a difference include:

#### Council Tax Harmonisation and Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Committee received two very comprehensive updates and briefings on the Council Tax Harmonisation and Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Committee offered challenge where necessary. The Committee was mindful of the impact that potential increases would have on vulnerable residents. Detailed case studies were considered, and the Committee sought reassurance that support was available for all residents.

#### West Northamptonshire Unitary Council Draft Blueprint

The Committee provided scrutiny input into the draft blueprint for West Northamptonshire Unitary Council that detailed how it would be organised at vesting day, as well as an overview of some key areas, and the plans to ensure a safe transfer and aspects of service improvement.

#### **Transformation and Finance Programme**

The Committee provided scrutiny input and challenge on the progress of the Transformation and Finance Programme. The Committee questioned the proposal to devise a 'Future Use of Capital Receipts' Policy to allow the Authority to potentially transfer the funding of these costs into capital. The Committee expressed concerns that there should have been further input into this Policy, particularly from Councillors.

#### Vision and Culture

The Committee provided challenge to the process for vision and culture and was supportive of the comprehensive consultation process. The need for a fresh start was noted and that recruitment and retention of staff was important.

#### ICT Preparedness

The Committee was made aware of the proposals and work being undertaken in respect of the delivery of the Future Northants ICT Programme. The direction for the following two to three years was provided.

#### **Unitary Website Development**

The Committee contributed to the development of the Unitary Website, highlighting the value of specific features currently used by a number of the Sovereign Councils in the West and recommending their continuation into the website for the Unitary Council. The Committee stressed the need for easily accessible information at both a Unitary and local level.

#### **Budget Scrutiny**

The Committee scrutinised the Council's draft 2020/21 budget in detail and provided scrutiny input. Its <u>report</u> was appended to the report on the budget that was considered by the shadow Executive at its meeting on 12 February 2021. Comprehensive responses were received by the Committee to further queries that were raised at the meeting.

#### **Governance Scrutiny**

The Committee contributed to the draft constitution for West Northamptonshire Council, particularly in relation to O&S. It particularly highlighted that best practice processes for O&S of the various Sovereign Councils should be mirrored in the procedures for the O&S function for the new Authority. Comments put forward by the Committee have informed the latest draft of the Constitution.

#### Communications and Engagement Scrutiny

In undertaking the scrutiny of communications and engagement, the Committee was pleased to note that the campaign would seek to utilise the vast range of communication channels available and to ensure that residents whose first language is not English have access to all information.

#### **Critical Friend to Cabinet**

Senior Officers and Executive Members attended various meetings of the shadow O&S Committee and provided the detailed reasoning behind the various key issues. These are summarised at

pages 4 and 5 of this Annual Report. By doing this, it provided comprehension and clarity for the Committee on the issues detailed in its work programme.

These are excellent examples of the Committee's critical friend role and the healthy relationship that exists between the shadow O&S Committee and the Executive. They emphasise also the robust challenge offered by scrutiny.

#### Call-In

During 2020/2021 there were no Call-In Hearings.

#### Looking ahead

The Committee is keen to ensure that the recommendations of this year's Policy Review work of the O&S Committees of the Sovereign Councils of the West are taken forward into West Northamptonshire Authority.

#### **Glossary of Terms**

#### Call-In

The process by which the O&S Committee considers whether a decision is properly taken or is the right decision.

#### Executive

The Executive body responsible for the day-to-day running of the Council and the development of policy. Cabinet Members have portfolios or areas of responsibility (e.g., Housing) for which they take executive decisions.

#### Councillor (Member)

An elected local representative on the Council, a Councillor represents the interests of the people who live in their ward and Northampton as a whole

#### **Pre-decision Scrutiny:**

O&S may inform Executive decisions on topics on the Forward Plan by making evidencebased recommendations or advice prior to formal decision by the Executive.

#### Review

A study led by Scrutiny Councillors on a current issue, selected by the Committee. It aims to identify areas of good as well as poor practice, compare performance with other Councils' countrywide, and challenge existing practice where relevant.

The review will lead to recommendations for improvements to relevant Cabinet Members as well as outside agencies, such as health trusts. While these are not obliged to support the recommendations, effective consultation has been proven to lead to consensus and to Cabinet support for reviews undertaken.

If English is not your first language and you need help in translating this document please contact <u>Tracy Tiff</u> on 01604 837408.

Jesli angielski nie jest Twoim jezykiem ojczystym a potrzebujesz pomocy w przetlumaczeniu tego Если английский не Ваш родной язык и Вам нужна помощь с переводом этого документа, то свяжитесь с Трайсу Тиф.Тел. 01604 837408

Haddii afka Ingriisigu aanu ahayn luuqad-daada kowaad oo aad u baahan-tahay in lagaa caawiyo turjumidda warqaddan fadlan kala xidhidh Tracy Tiff tilifoonka 01604 837408

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### LARGE PRINT AND TAPE

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