



**West
Northamptonshire
Council**

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Monday 16 January 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present	Councillor Ian McCord (Chair) Councillor Andrew Grant (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jamal Alwahabi Councillor Paul Clark Councillor Maggie Clubley Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere Councillor Mark Hughes Councillor David James Councillor Ken Pritchard Councillor Azizur Rahman Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms Councillor Danielle Stone
Also Present:	Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Leader of the Council) Councillor Mike Hallam (Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services)
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor Sally Beardsworth Councillor Rupert Frost Councillor Colin Morgan
Officers	Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer) Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services Belinda Green, Assistant Director - Revenues and Benefits Alison Golding, Assistant Director - Human Resources Mitchell Thomason, Transformation Project Manager Simon Bryant, Business Intelligence Manager Richard Corless, Business Intelligence, Policy & Performance Lead Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager Richard Woods, Democratic Services Officer

31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33. **Chair's Announcements**

There were no announcements from the Chair.

34. **Pay and Grading Review**

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director – Human Resources and the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services which provided an update on the Council's ongoing Pay and Grading project for all staff.

In introducing the presentation, the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services explained that the aim of the project was to create a local pay structure for West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) that is underpinned by job evaluation, to ensure the Council operates a logical, transparent, lawful, and equitable approach to pay. The Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services emphasised that as a new employer, and with a staff on a mixture of new WNC terms and conditions and sovereign Council terms and conditions, it was paramount to implement a pay structure for new starters and those transferring roles within the organisation to ensure equal pay and mitigate the risk of equal pay claims.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the progress of the project to date, the Assistant Director – Human Resources advised that the Council's staff headcount currently stood at 2,762 and that 43% of the workforce were now on interim WNC terms and conditions, with over 500 jobs now matched to the job family architecture. The Assistant Director – Human Resources added that since the previous update on the project to the Committee, there had been a change of approach in that the matching of roles to WNC pay bands was now completed ahead of recruitment to vacant posts, in order to mitigate the risk of needing to evaluate an individual's pay shortly after they have begun working for the authority.

In addressing further questions from Members regarding staff who had transferred into WNC under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment (TUPE) from the previous sovereign authorities, the Assistant Director – Human Resources reiterated that pay and conditions for these staff were protected at the point of transfer, and that any proposed change to a transferring employee's contract would not be lawful if the sole reason for the variation is the transfer, therefore the Council was unable transfer all staff to the new WNC terms and conditions on mass. A transfer-related variation may only be lawful in certain circumstances, where a valid ETO (economic, technical, or organisational) reason exists, however this would be for the employer to demonstrate and would carry a higher risk to the Council. Therefore, the project to manage the eventual transfer of all TUPE-related staff onto the new WNC local pay structure would be a separate undertaking altogether, therefore a further update on this work would be brought before Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee later in 2023.

Resolved

(1) That the contents of the presentation be noted.

- (2) That the Cabinet Member for HR and Corporate Services be requested to provide Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee with further update on the pay and grading project in the summer of 2023.

35. Performance Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report from the Business Intelligence, Policy & Performance Lead which provided an update on the Council's performance metrics for the current year against the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan as at the end of Q2 2022-23.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council (in place of the Cabinet Member for Finance) together with the explained that measuring the Council's performance indicators intended to create a meaningful dashboard of measures capable of providing members and officers with good insight into the Council's performance, in order to identify and highlight good performance and areas where performance requires improvement.

The Business Intelligence, Policy & Performance Lead added that due to the ongoing transformation of teams, services, and systems as part of establishing West Northamptonshire Council as a new authority, it had been identified that some indicators and metrics will require further development in order to provide a more complete view of service performance, which was exacerbated in cases where the previous legacy authorities operated different delivery models for the same services.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding how the scorecard data was collected, the Business Intelligence Manager explained that data is fed in from all directorates and teams across the authority and is then analysed and utilised to monitor performance and identify areas where improvement may be required. The Council also utilised a wide range of nationally published local authority databases tracking a wide range of statistics, which formed the main source of the Council's benchmarking information.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

36. Revenues and Benefits Performance Update

The Executive Director – Finance submitted a report which provided an overview of the Revenues and Benefits Service and the work that has taken place so far to stabilise and deliver the service since vesting day and outlined the transformation work that was planned for the next 18 months.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council (in place of the Cabinet Member for Finance) explained that on vesting day, West Northamptonshire Council inherited a complex range of existing service delivery models from the previous sovereign Councils, which led to a full options appraisal and business case being undertaken

which ultimately led the service being brought back in-house. This allowed for the implementation of a uniformed operating model in order to deliver improvements to service provision, a streamlined process, and a reduction in costs.

The Assistant Director – Revenues and Benefits added that against the backdrop of significant transformation, the service had also been required to deliver the rollout of a host of government grants and initiatives including but not limited to covid grants, business support and cost of living support, the delivery of which had been a significant undertaking for existing resources across the service.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding future planned transformation activity, the Assistant Director – Revenues and Benefits advised the Committee that a number of transformation projects were in the pipeline, including the establishment of a single software system including the migration of data and merging of databases. A business case for this work had been drafted and considered by Cabinet in November 2022, with an ambition to commence work on this project following the conclusion of annual billing in April 2023.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) That the transformation plans for the Revenues and Benefits Service and progress made to date be supported.

37. Treasury Management Review

The Chair of the Task and Finish Group - Councillor Stone presented the final report of the Treasury Management Task and Finish Group, which sought to understand West Northamptonshire Council's treasury management strategy and policies and monitor progress on treasury management in accordance with CIPFA's codes of practice.

The Task and Finish Group acknowledged that there was a need for ESG's (environmental, social and governance) classification and sustainable finance to be reviewed in a year's time, and therefore recommended that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider a review of the ESG classification framework and how the Council's investment policies and treasury management practices meet these issues on its work programme for 2023-24.

The Executive Director – Finance added that the Council was also awaiting guidance from CIPFA on the ESG framework, which upon release would be further considered as part of budget setting for future years.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Treasury Management Task and Finish Group be approved.

- (2) That a review of ESG classifications be considered for inclusion on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for the 2023-24 municipal year.

38. Quarterly Revenue Monitoring Report

The Committee considered a report from the Executive Director – Finance which set out the forecast financial position of the authority at the end of Q2 2022-23.

In introducing the report, the Executive Director - Finance explained that the forecast outturn position for the 2022-23 financial year as at the end of Q2 was an overspend of £3.7, after the use of £30.1m of budget contingencies previously set aside in the budget for risks that have subsequently been realised in the current financial year.

The Executive Director - Finance added that whilst the authority had seen a significant impact on its finances as a result of local and national external factors beyond its control, directorate management teams had continued to work hard on reducing the cost of service delivery to support the Council's legal obligation to deliver a balanced budget, whilst ensuring that services were still delivered without a corresponding reduction in service quality or provision.

Members of the Committee also noted that whilst the information contained within the report related to Quarter two 2022-23, quarter three had since ended and therefore the information under consideration was out of date. In response to this point, the Executive Director – Finance explained that budget scorecard data was fed in from all departments and that it takes a period of time for data to be analysed and an accurate outturn position to be established, therefore whilst Q3 had recently ended, the data for Q3 was still being analysed and a more accurate position would be reported at a later date.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report be noted.

39. Review of the Committee's Work Programme 2022-2023

In response to questions from the Committee regarding waste contracts, the Deputy Democratic Services manager advised that waste contracts were on the work programme of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and that a joint cross-party working group to review waste contracts had also been set up outside of the Overview and Scrutiny framework, therefore further information would be circulated to Members in due course.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

40. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting closed at 7.48 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____