



Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in The Jeffrey Room at The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on Monday 4 July 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present	Councillor Ian McCord (Chair) Councillor Andrew Grant (Vice-Chair) Councillor Jamal Alwahabi Councillor Sally Beardsworth Councillor Paul Clark Councillor Maggie Clubley Councillor Rupert Frost Councillor Keith Holland-Delamere Councillor Mark Hughes Councillor David James Councillor Koulla Jolley Councillor Colin Morgan Councillor Azizur Rahman Councillor Danielle Stone
Also Present:	Councillor Mike Hallam, Portfolio Holder for HR & Corporate Services
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor Ken Pritchard Councillor Richard Solesbury-Timms
Officers	Martin Henry, Executive Director - Finance (Section 151 Officer) Sarah Reed, Executive Director - Corporate Services Alison Golding, Assistant Director - Human Resources Mitchell Thomason, Transformation Project Manager Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager Richard Woods, Democratic Services Officer

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair thanked Councillor Danielle Stone, the outgoing Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the hard work she had put in as Chair of the Committee during the previous municipal year and paid particular tribute to the work she had done for her role launching and establishing the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Function in its inaugural year.

The Chair referred to the Scrutiny training that had taken place recently and urged the committee to submit their feedback forms. The content of the training was briefly discussed.

5. **Urgent Business**

The Committee considered one item of urgent business, which was a report submitted by the Chief Information Officer pertaining to a notification of an urgent decision taken by the Leader of the Council to renew the organisation's Microsoft 365 Licences.

In introducing the report, the Executive Director – Corporate Services advised that Microsoft 365 Licences provide basic communication, information storage, email, and electronic office tools to all Council staff, and, given the size of the organisation, it was appropriate to obtain licensing through a trusted Microsoft provider who could act as a reseller.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding how the situation whereby the Council's urgency procedures processes were required to be enacted had occurred, the Executive Director – Corporate Services explained that a failure of process to identify the renewal as a key decision meant that it was not therefore possible to have the expenditure of a renewal approved by Cabinet before the licences would expire. Failure to renew them would consequently have caused a loss of key business systems to the entire Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the decision taken by the Leader of the Council under urgency procedures be noted.

6. **People Strategy**

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the Executive Director – Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Human Resources which was a continuation of the presentation given at the previous meeting of the Committee, and which sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the new People Strategy, the underlying project activity and progress on the delivery of its key commitments. Councillor Mike Hallam, the Portfolio Holder for HR and Corporate Services, was also in attendance virtually to answer any questions arising from the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the breakdown of the Council's workforce, the Assistant Director – Human Resources advised that 88% of the Council's workforce lived within the Council area, with just 12% living outside. The Committee noted that it was important to have a high percentage of the workforce living within the Council's area, as this would provide staff with a vested interest in delivering the best possible services for their area, thus helping to make West Northamptonshire a great place to live, work and visit.

The Assistant Director – Human Resources also provided a verbal update on the ongoing Pay and Grading project, with a report on its progress due to go before Cabinet on 12 July 2022. The current phase of the project was to align those staff on interim terms and conditions, who are those who are those who joined the authority or changed posts after 1 April 2022, onto the new West Northamptonshire Council pay structure. Once the current phase of the project is delivered, work could then begin on transferring staff on former sovereign council terms and conditions, who make up the majority of the Council's workforce, onto the new pay structure. The Assistant Director – Human Resources noted that this would involve matching existing staff into job families, which had been designed to best reflect the diversity and type of roles across the Council, however this would be a considerable undertaking and would take several months.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding pay protection, the Assistant Director – Human Resources confirmed that existing staff on former sovereign council terms and conditions would receive pay protection under TUPE legislation for a minimum of two years. However, it was anticipated that, due to investments in the workforce and in pay, only a minimum number of staff would be negatively impacted by the pay and grading proposals.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (2) That, following a request from the Chair, regular updates on the pay and grading project be brought before Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the future.

7. Annual Report 2021/2022 - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Draft Annual Report for the 2021-22 municipal year.

The Annual Report highlighted some of the key pieces of work that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had undertaken during its inaugural year, and what issues the Committee would focus on in the upcoming year. The report made particular reference to the Committee's Budget Scrutiny process that took place during the winter of 2021-22. This activity represented the scrutiny and oversight of the Council's inaugural budget by way of a whole-committee Task and Finish Group, divided into breakout rooms to review particular areas of the Budget. The effectiveness of this activity had been widely praised by Members and Officers alike,

and the Committee affirmed its commitment to hold a similarly effective Budget Scrutiny process in the 2022-23 municipal year.

Another area of focus for the Committee during the 2021-22 municipal year was scrutiny input to ensure the development of social value and how the Council could positively affect communities by considering socio-economic and environmental factors when planning and implementing decisions and processes. The Committee scrutinised the Social Value Framework and the positives of the social value approach were emphasised throughout.

The report also outlined the key pieces of scrutiny work that were coming up at the start of the 2022-23 municipal year, with three new Task and Finish Groups launched to look at the Council's Expenses Policy, Treasury Management activities and also the modernisation of the Council's systems. There were also a number of key issues contained within the work programme, including Budget Monitoring and Budget Scrutiny, to which the Committee would pay particular focus to during the 2022-23 municipal year.

Resolved

(1) That the Annual Report 2021/2022 be approved for presentation to Full Council.

8. Treasury Management Task and Finish Group

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager submitted a report which recommended that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider for approval the draft scope of the Treasury Management Task and Finish Group.

Resolved

(1) That the draft scope of the Treasury Management Task and Finish Group be approved.

9. Expenses Policy Task and Finish Group

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager submitted a report which recommended that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider for approval the draft scope of the Expenses Policy Task and Finish Group.

Resolved

(2) That the draft scope of the Expenses Policy Task and Finish Group be approved.

10. Veolia Waste Contract

The Committee considered a request from a Committee Member that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee include the Veolia Waste Contract on its Work

Programme and undertake scrutiny work in relation to how the contract is delivering value for money.

In considering the request to include the Veolia Waste Contract onto the Work Programme for Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Members of the Committee suggested that, due to both the corporate and place implications of the contract, a piece of joint scrutiny work be undertaken with Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding waste contracts for West Northamptonshire in the form of a Joint Task and Finish Group. Any such Task and Finish Group would review how the contract was delivering value for money, the performance of the contract, and any environmental impacts of the contract.

Members of the Committee also suggested that input be sought from the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) regarding scrutiny activity of the contract, however the exact details of such input would be considered when the scope (terms of reference) of the review were agreed.

A number of Members of the Committee expressed an interest sitting on a joint Task and Finish Group to review the contract, with the Membership of such a group to be finalised in due course in consultation with the Chairs of both Corporate and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved

- (1) That the Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to contact the Chair of Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore the possibility of establishing a joint Task and Finish Group between the Corporate and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committees for scrutiny of the Waste Management Contracts for West Northants Council.
- (2) That a scoping document for the Joint Task and Finish Group be drafted and brought before the next meeting of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

11. Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered its Work Programme.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the addition of items relating to the Waste Management Contract, and the Budget Setting Process and Medium Term Financial Plan to the next meeting of the Committee, the Committee Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Chair: _____

Date: _____