

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

**Meeting held on 16th January 2020
at Corby Borough Council**

Present: Councillor Martin Griffiths (Borough Council of Wellingborough) – Chair
Councillor Tom Beattie (Corby Borough Council) – Vice Chair
Councillor Jean Addison (Corby Borough Council)
Councillor Jonathan Ekins (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor Helen Howell (East Northamptonshire District Council)
Councillor Ian Jelley (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor David Jenney (East Northamptonshire District Council)
Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood (Borough Council of Wellingborough)
Councillor Victoria Perry (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor Russell Roberts (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor Andrew Scarborough (Borough Council of Wellingborough)
Councillor Mick Scrimshaw (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor Jason Smithers (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor Kevin Watt (Corby Borough Council)

Also Present: Theresa Grant (Chief Executive, Northamptonshire County Council)
Paul Gault (Monitoring Officer, Corby Borough Council)
Paul Helsby (Programme Director)
Anne Ireson (Committee Administrator)

NNJC.24 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steven North and John Farrar of East Northamptonshire Council.

It was noted that Councillor Helen Howell was acting as a substitute for Councillor North.

NNJC.25 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 be approved and signed by the Chair.

NNJC.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

NNJC.27 MATTERS OF URGENCY

None

NNJC.28 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Dr David Jones of Healthwatch submitted a question in respect of Item 6 on the agenda in accordance with Standing Orders.

Councillor Chris Stanbra of Northamptonshire County Council requested to address the Committee on Items 8 and 13 on the agenda in accordance with Standing Orders.

NNJC.29 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REVISED COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

A report was submitted which outlined amendments to the Terms of Reference agreed by sovereign councils for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee and which sought agreement to a revised schedule of meetings.

Dr David Jones of Healthwatch addressed the Committee, outlining the budget and functions of Healthwatch. He then asked the following question:-

“What steps are the Joint Committees taking to ensure that the new unitary authorities put respect for diversity and equality of opportunity at the heart of their mission and values so that these principles clearly shape their approaches to developing health and social care services, in partnership with NHS colleagues and others?”

The Chair responded as follows:-

“We would like to take this opportunity to highlight that we, the five constituent authorities that make up this Committee, have always integrated our equality and diversity commitments into our day-to-day work, and that approach remains as we move towards two new authorities in the county.

The Prospectus for Change document published earlier this year sets out our commitment to establishing a strong vision for equality and improving equality outcomes through a set of agreed principles that include:-

- *working with our partners to secure the best outcomes for our communities*
- *embracing technological innovation that supports our services and the needs of customers*
- *making decisions informed by robust and focused data, evidence and intelligence*

We know that working with our partners is the most efficient way of addressing any local inequalities and will help us to create two new authorities that will meet the diverse needs of our staff, residents and businesses, not just in health and social care but in all services.

To underpin the commitment made in the prospectus, I would like to propose that, following the establishment of the North Northamptonshire shadow authority, a working party be set up to support delivery of equality and diversity management in the design of services and to help promote areas of good practice.”

Dr Jones thanked the Committee for its response, welcoming the commitment to partnership working.

RESOLVED that;

- (i) the revised schedule of meetings for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved; and
- (ii) the amended Terms of Reference for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report; be approved.

(Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood joined the meeting at 7.15 pm)

NNJC.30 FUTURE NORTHANTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members received a presentation which gave an update on the Future Northants Programme in relation to the following projects:-

- Programme Set-up and Discovery phase
- Design Phase Approach
- Communications and Engagement

Following the presentation, members noted that the Northamptonshire (Structural Changes) Order 2019 had been laid in Parliament and was expected to become legislation during February 2020.

During discussion, members questioned the timing of member engagement for background work, the formal approval process to be adopted during the next three months and member visits to the engine room.

Members noted that the presentation represented a condensed version of the full document. Key points for member engagement in terms of the straw man were outlined in the wider, more detailed Future Northants programme document. Working groups would be set up for the two joint committees when the straw man had been drawn together and touch points had been factored in for member engagement and full member briefings. Visits to the engine room would also be arranged during this time.

During further discussion, assurances were sought that the final blueprint would not be produced until the Joint Committee had finished its work.

In terms of the formal approval process, reference was made to the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee. Recommendations to the Shadow Council and its Committees would be submitted for approval once the Shadow Council had been set up in May 2020. The Shadow Council would be the sovereign body going forward from that point. Time for finalising blueprints had been factored into this process.

In accordance with the Structural Changes Order, final decisions on many issues could not be taken until the Shadow Council met. However, normal business could progress until this time and it was not anticipated that the progress of the programme team would be hindered.

The Discovery phase of the Future Northants Programme had recently concluded with all outcomes achieved. Anticipated outcomes through the Design phase, including the financial position, had been set out. From February 2020, these would be monitored against the Future Northants baseline financial position and reported to the Joint Committee.

The Chair thanked officers for the update and presentation.

NNJC.31 FUTURE NORTHANTS FINANCIAL UPDATE

A report was submitted which provided an update on the baseline financial position for the Future Northants Programme and advised of the financial control/reporting processes for the Programme.

Councillor Stanbra of Northamptonshire County Council addressed the Committee, urging caution and pointing out that the County Council was facing a shortfall of £500,000 this financial year and was unlikely to

deliver the savings set out at the beginning of the year. He also asked how the Adults TOM calculation had been made.

In response to Councillor Stanbra's comments, Members noted that the baseline financial position for the Future Northants programme, as set out in the report, represented a baseline against which monitoring could take place. From February 2020, a monitoring report would be produced for the Joint Committee for each meeting.

It was anticipated that, by the end of the current financial year, Northamptonshire County Council would balance its budget and deliver the total savings figure, mitigating any shortfall with substitute savings. Non-recurring savings had been accounted for in the budget for next year. It was stressed that unitary authorities would not inherit any legacy under-achievements in savings from the County Council. There was confidence that the benefits realisation model would be achieved.

During debate on the financial update the following points were made:-

- Confirmation was sought that all Northamptonshire Councils had make provision in their budgets for a further £1.9m contribution from each council
- Proper governance and scrutiny for each council in respect of virement decisions of the Leaders' Oversight Board should be ensured as there could potentially be conflicts of interest
- What would the position of the Leaders' Oversight Board be after establishment of the Shadow Council?
- Caution regarding the Northamptonshire County Council budget position was urged and projected savings in the medium term questioned

In response, Members noted that individual councils' budgets would not be approved until February. However, it had been agreed that each council would include a £1.9m contribution in their proposed budgets. The eight Leaders and eight Chief Executives that constituted the Leaders' Oversight board had all adopted the statement contained within the submitted report giving authority to S151 officers and Leaders to make decisions on the contribution. Therefore, the Board was made up of sixteen people who had all been given statutory authority to make decisions on behalf of their council. This type of collective decision-making was legitimate.

The eight sovereign councils would remain accountable for their activities until 31st March 2021 and decisions would still have to be made by sovereign authorities on recommendations from Shadow Councils. The Shadow Council would not have a budget in its own right. Therefore sovereign councils would still have to approve financial decisions.

It was noted that the decision-making process was outlined in the Structural Changes Order. The first review of monitoring against the baseline financial position would be carried out and submitted to the Joint Committee at its meeting to be held on 10th February 2020 and would be in the public domain, which would ensure transparency. It had been agreed that scrutiny would be carried out by individual councils. Any virements would be transparent through programme financial reporting to the Joint Committee, with officers instructed by elected members to deliver outcomes.

Discussion was then held on the method of multiplication of savings over a five-year period. It was noted that this figure represented a typical medium-term financial plan, showing anticipated savings each year.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the baseline financial position for the level of Future Northants programme investment and benefits estimated to arise from the LGR Programme as shown in Appendix 1 of the report be noted;
- (ii) the financial monitoring process for reporting to the Joint Committee outlined in section 4.1 of the report be noted; and
- (iii) the Future Northants programme delegations for reporting virement between Programme Workstreams and the process for reporting changes to the baseline financial position for investment and benefits outlined in section 4.2 of the report be noted.

NNJC.32 GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP REPORT

A report from the Chair of the Governance Working Group was considered regarding progress made to date on the compilation of a draft Constitution for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Council.

It was planned to submit some parts of the draft Constitution to the next meeting of NNJC for consideration.

Debate ensued on timings of planned meetings for the Shadow Council and its Committees. Members expressed some concern over the planned start time for Executive meetings and the timing of Shadow Council meetings which were scheduled to take place during the afternoon.

Members requested that enough time to read the draft sections of the Constitution be given to Members prior to meetings.

The Chair thanked members of the Working Group for their work.

RESOLVED that the progress made by the Governance Working Group be noted and a copy of the draft Shadow Council Constitution (or parts of the Constitution) be submitted to the Joint Committee meeting on 10th February 2020.

NNJC.33 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL WORKING GROUP – INTERIM REPORT

A report from the Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel Working Group was submitted regarding recommendations made by the Group for the Joint Committee to determine. An update on the work of the group was also given.

In response to a question, it was noted that projected costs of the Panel were based on £600-£700 per day, with a figure included for travel and other expenses incurred by panel members.

During debate, Members urged that Carers' Allowance be taken into account as it would be important to remove as many obstacles as possible to allow elected members to attend meetings.

It was noted that all members of current Independent Remuneration Panels in Northamptonshire had been contacted inviting expressions of interest in sitting on the Panel for the Shadow Council.

RESOLVED that:-

(i) the Joint Committee delegate to the lead Monitoring Officer authorisation to contact:-

- Professor Steve Leach
- Ms Sue Watts
- Mr Gerard Dempsey

to confirm their acceptance of a position on the Independent Remuneration Panel for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Council;

(ii) Professor Steve Leach be invited to act as Chair of the Panel;

- (iii) the lead Monitoring Officer liaise with the Panel Members to arrange for the conduct of the review exercise, within the timetable set for the establishment of a Shadow Council;
- (iv) the Panel, at a minimum, be invited to accept representations from the Independent Remuneration Panel Working Group;
- (v) the reasonable costs of Panel Members be met from the Local Government Reorganisation programme, following discussion between the lead Monitoring Officer and the lead Chief Finance Officer; and
- (vi) should a need arise, delegation be given to the lead Monitoring Officer to liaise with Independent Members from other local authorities to fill any vacancy that may arise in Panel membership.

NNJC.34 STATUTORY OFFICER APPOINTMENTS WORKING GROUP – INTERIM REPORT

Notes of the Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group were submitted for consideration.

The Chair of the Working Group verbally presented a summary of recommendations at the meeting.

The Chair thanked members of the Working Group for their work.

RESOLVED that the notes of the Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group be received.

NNJC.35 INTERIM STATUTORY OFFICER RECRUITMENT

A report was submitted which outlined the approach to the recruitment of interim statutory roles for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Unitary Council.

During debate, Members emphasised the need to ensure that the selection process was robust and subject to scrutiny. It was felt that officers should check and verify references. It was noted that the sub-group could carry out shortlisting, but the selection process must be carried out by members of the Shadow Council within fourteen days of it being formed.

RESOLVED that the recruitment and selection approach to the Interim appointments of Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer be endorsed.

NNJC.36 **CONTINUATION BEYOND 8.30 pm**

In accordance with Standing Orders, it was

RESOLVED that the meeting continue beyond 8.30 pm, if necessary, in order to conclude the business of the meeting.

NNJC.37 **PERMANENT STATUTORY OFFICER RECRUITMENT**

A report was submitted which outlined the proposed approach and timetable in relation to the permanent recruitment of statutory roles for the North Shadow Unitary Council.

Councillor Stanbra of Northamptonshire County Council addressed the meeting in accordance with Standing Orders. He stated that the permanent statutory officer roles were fundamental to the success of the new authorities and the timetable should allow for the Shadow Authority to agree the selection process and possibly carry out technical interviews. The timetable should also allow the new Chief Executive to have involvement in shaping the senior officer team.

In response, Members noted that the structure of the recruitment process would ensure the decision was taken by the Shadow Authority. However, preparatory work would be undertaken first to enable that decision to be made and the ideal situation would be to include the Chief Executive in decisions on senior officer appointments.

Debate was held on likely costs for recruitment agencies and consultants. It was noted that these had been based on estimates, with the likely costs included within the budget.

It was felt that provision for the cost of appointing to some non-statutory roles should also be included, as it was possible that the Shadow Authority may want to continue further with recruitment to other senior leadership roles.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the key milestones and timescales for permanent recruitment be endorsed;

- (ii) the tendering specification (Appendix 1 of the report) be approved and the tendering process be started in January 2020 and a provider engaged for February 2020;
- (iii) the following next steps be approved:
 - North Northamptonshire Joint Committee agree permanent Statutory Officer job descriptions and remuneration packages
 - the roles be advertised nationally through search agency (*subject to agreement of job descriptions, remuneration packages and Statutory Changes Order being agreed.*)

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair thanked officers and members for their work.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.29 pm)

Signed
Chair

AI-kbc