

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting held on 24th June 2019 at Kettering 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 John Farrar (East Northamptonshire District Council)
Councillor Ian Jelley (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor David Jenney (East Northamptonshire District Council)
Councillor Steven North (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)
Liz Elliott (Chief Executive, Borough Council of Wellingborough)
Martin Hammond (Executive Director, Kettering Borough Council)
Norman Stronach (Chief Executive, Corby Borough Council)
Paul Gault (Monitoring Officer, Corby Borough Council)
Mark Dickenson (Chief Finance Officer, Kettering Borough Council)
Sharon Richardson (Local Government Reform Team)
Anne Ireson (Committee Administrator)

NNJC.01 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor David Jenney and seconded by Councillor Jason Smithers that the Chair be elected by secret ballot.

The motion was not carried.

It was proposed by Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood and seconded by Councillor Andrew Scarborough that Councillor Martin Griffiths be elected Chair.

It was proposed by Councillor David Jenney and seconded by Councillor Jason Smithers that Councillor Steven North be elected Chair.

The Committee having agreed that it was not necessary for nominated councillors to give a brief speech, the matter proceeded to the vote as follows:-

Councillor Griffiths (10)
Councillor North (4)
Abstention (1)

RESOLVED that Councillor Martin Griffiths be elected Chair of the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee.

Councillor Griffiths took the Chair.

NNJC.02 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor Jean Addison and seconded by Councillor Kevin Watt that Councillor Tom Beattie be appointed Vice Chair.

It was proposed by Councillor Jason Smithers and seconded by Councillor Jonathan Ekins that Councillor Victoria Perry be appointed Vice Chair.

Voting was as follows:-

Councillor Tom Beattie (9)
Councillor Victoria Perry (4)
Abstentions (2)

RESOLVED that Councillor Tom Beattie be appointed Vice Chair of the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee.

NNJC.03 APOLOGIES

None.

NNJC.04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

NNJC.05 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chair made some opening remarks to the Committee. It was felt that the vast experience of the Committee represented a golden opportunity to deliver transformed services for residents of North Northamptonshire by building on progress through the existing joint arrangements of the Joint Planning Committee and Joint Delivery Committee.

Discussion was held in relation to the public's right to speak on items on the agenda. The agenda indicated that, as the terms of reference and standing orders had yet to be agreed at the meeting, there would not be an opportunity at the first meeting for members of the public to speak on items on the agenda. However, it was felt that the Committee should allow people to speak as a gesture of goodwill.

Following debate, it was acknowledged that, although potential speakers may have been discouraged from attending as public participation had not formed part of the agenda, it was felt that in the interests of openness and transparency members of the public present at the meeting should be given the opportunity to speak for three minutes on items on the agenda.

Four members of the public indicated that they wished to speak.

(At this juncture the Chair asked if there were any objections from persons present at the meeting to being filmed. There were no objections)

NNJC.06 TERMS OF REFERENCE

A report was submitted which presented the terms of reference that had been agreed by sovereign councils for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee.

Following a question regarding timing of future meetings, it was **agreed** that this should be prioritised as part of the work for the appropriate working group and reported back to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Debate ensued on the nature of the joint committee as a voluntary body and it was noted that the committee could not unilaterally amend, add to or delete from its Terms of Reference, with changes having to be agreed by each of the partner authorities through their respective Full Council meetings. This potentially could mean that the Joint Committee in its present form could be dissolved and re-constituted with new Terms of Reference should one partner authority not approve any changes. Additionally, references imposed by Government in the Structural Changes Order could potentially impact on the work of the Joint Committee, and the terms of reference would therefore need to be monitored to ensure they

remained fit for purpose and encompassed the required level of decision making.

It was noted that Item 8 on the agenda proposed the creation of a Terms of Reference Working Group.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Terms of Reference for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee be noted; and
- (ii) it be noted that any additions, amendments or deletions to the Terms of Reference required the prior approval of all sovereign councils.

NNJC.07 AGREEMENT AND STANDING ORDERS

A report was submitted which sought approval for procedures and standing orders in relation to the operation of the Joint Committee.

Discussion was held on the following aspects of public participation as contained in Section 13 of the proposed draft Agreement and Standing Orders which had been submitted for consideration:-

- The timescale for requests in writing to be submitted to the Proper Officer and the need to adopt the best practice in the interests of public participants
- The overall discretion of the Chair, as set out in paragraph 11.5 of the draft Agreement and Standing Orders
- The timing of speakers' contributions to the meeting

During debate, it was felt that it was important that public speakers address the committee in a relevant way, which would be best achieved if they made their contribution immediately after the report author had introduced the report rather than at the start of the meeting.

It was felt that two clear working days' notice should be given if a question was to be asked or a member of the public wished to comment on an agenda item. Additionally, restricting the number of speakers or the overall time allocated for public speakers might be unfair to speakers and hinder wider discussion, particularly on items of a contentious nature.

It was considered to be important that members of the public could influence decision-making, but there was also a need to stress that public speakers could only speak, or ask questions, on items that were listed on the agenda and were within the remit of the committee. It was noted that it was intended to include a Frequently Asked Questions section on the planned website, which could include guidance on public right to speak.

Members also felt that no arbitrary limit should be placed on public participation as it sent out wrong signals about the way the Joint Committee was to be run. However, it was agreed that public participants should be required to inform the Proper Officer beforehand, and that two clear working days' notice was appropriate to allow an informed response to any questions to be given at the meeting.

Following the conclusion of debate, the following amendments were proposed to the Agreement and Standing Orders.

Paragraph 13.2 be deleted and replaced with the following:-

“13.2 Public participation will normally be taken at the start of each item, after the report has been introduced by its author. A speaker will be allowed up to three minutes.”

Paragraph 13.4 be deleted.

RESOLVED that the Agreement and Standing Orders be approved subject to the amendments outlined above.

NNJC.08 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

It having been previously agreed to allow public speakers at the meeting, the four members of the public who had indicated their wish to speak were invited to address the Committee on items on the agenda.

Councillor Jim Hakewill

Councillor Hakewill addressed the Committee on the subject of public participation, stating that people would only have a limited amount of time following publication of the agenda in which to notify the Proper Officer of their intention to speak at the meeting and ward councillors should not have to give notice. Councillor Hakewill also sought assurances that agendas and minutes of working groups would be available to members of the public and that a method of counting down the three minutes allowed would be utilised to help public speakers time their contribution.

In response, Councillor Hakewill was advised that working groups were constituted of officers and members and were not decision-making bodies, with recommendations being reported to the Joint Committee for decision. It was envisaged that working groups would not be held in public, but any associated papers would be available for public inspection.

Dorothy Maxwell

In addressing the Committee, Dorothy Maxwell made the following points:-

- Agendas and minutes should be distributed to all councillors in North Northamptonshire
- Finance and funding should be transparent
- The names of councillors on the Committee should be made available to the press

In response, it was noted that agendas and minutes would be posted on Kettering Borough Council's website with links included on all partner authorities' websites. If individual authorities wished to circulate further to their members, they could do so.

The cost of the transformation programme would be of considerable interest and would be communicated to members of the public throughout the whole process. The speaker was informed that there was no need for a single scrutiny of finance across the whole programme, as individual authorities carried out their own scrutiny. Also, there would be a programme of dates for meetings going forward, which would give an additional opportunity for scrutiny of any financial information.

The names of members of the Committee were contained on the agenda, which was a public document that was also sent to the press.

Members then discussed the role of the Leaders' Oversight Board where any financial information would be broken down in detail.

Councillor Clark Mitchell

Councillor Mitchell requested that the work of the working group relating to the timing of meetings be prioritised and recommendations brought back to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

In response, it was agreed that this request would be forwarded to the relevant working group.

Martin Evans

Martin Evans expressed support for the decision taken in relation to public speaking. He asked how the administrative costs of 78 councillors on the Shadow Council could be justified.

In response, the speaker was advised that the Structural Changes Order would be likely to contain a recommendation for 78 councillors for North Northamptonshire. However, following the initial elections, an independent boundary review would be carried out during the first four years of the new Council.

NNJC.09 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

A presentation was given by Sharon Richardson of the Local Government Reform Team.

The presentation outlined the following topics:-

- The timeline for phases between April 2019 until April 2021
- Integrated programme workstream portfolios and lead SROs
- The challenge
- Mobilisation of the integrated programme
- Recruitment
- The approach for delivering unitary
- Baselining
- Analysis
- Timeline for baselining and disaggregation work

Following the presentation, Members queried whether only permanent staff were eligible to be appointed to the Integrated Programme and it was noted that enquiries from both permanent staff and those on fixed term contracts may be considered, with the programme resourced firstly with councils' own staff to keep costs as low as possible.

Discussion was held on the development and approval of the Disaggregation Rule Book, and it was felt that there needed to be clarity on the presumption of disaggregation unless there was a clear reason not to disaggregate services, as the two Unitary Authorities would develop in different ways and opportunities should not be missed to work more effectively for future services. It was acknowledged that services, such as Children's Services, represented a good example of a service that could not be disaggregated.

It was noted that services would be disaggregated unless there was a good reason not to do so. If a decision was made not to disaggregate a service, there would be a robust evidence base to support that decision. An example was given of a high cost contract that could cost millions of pounds to the taxpayer to split apart. Such decisions would be routed through the design and discovery boards, which would be leader-led.

In response to a question for opportunities for members of the public to have an input into certain aspects of the work, it was noted that the Communication and Engagement Strategy was committed to engaging with the public. Additionally, the local elections next year were an opportunity for members to engage with the public on the blueprint for the new authorities. By May 2020, work would be at the implementation phase and there would be lots of different ways to engage with the public on the process.

Members sought information on how the Joint Committee could oversee the detail of the process, and it was noted that the Committee had responsibility for the delivery of the programme and managing risk as details came through for approval. Regular updates would also be provided. SROs were accountable across the whole of the county until implementation and the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee would also receive county-wide updates. Reports would be submitted by the Leaders' Oversight Board and presented by members, with SROs available to give assistance and more detail if required.

In conclusion to the debate, the thanks of the Joint Committee were extended to Sharon Richardson and Theresa Grant for the presentation and answering members' questions.

NNJC.10 ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report was submitted which considered the establishment of four working groups and sought agreement for the Terms of Reference, membership and reporting timeline of each group. It was noted that working groups were non-decision-making, looking at dedicated areas of interest to come up with options and ideas to present recommendations back to the Joint Committee.

Operational procedures were outlined in respect of appointment of Chairs of Working Groups.

It was proposed by Councillor Victoria Perry and seconded by Councillor Mick Scrimshaw that Councillor Jonathan Ekins be appointed Chair of the Governance Working Group

The motion was unanimously carried.

It was proposed by Councillor Steven North and seconded by Councillor John Farrar that Councillor David Jenney be appointed Chair of the Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group.

It was proposed by Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood and seconded by Councillor Russell Roberts that Councillor Ian Jelley be appointed Chair of the Statutory Officer Working Group.

Voting was as follows: Councillor David Jenney (6); Councillor Ian Jelley (8).

It was proposed by Councillor Victoria Perry and seconded by Councillor Jonathan Ekins that Councillor Jason Smithers be appointed Chair of the IRP Working Group.

It was proposed by Councillor Tom Beattie and seconded by Councillor Andrew Scarborough that Councillor Jean Addison be appointed Chair of the IRP Working Group.

Voting was as follows: Councillor Jason Smithers (3); Councillor Jean Addison (8)

It was proposed by Councillor Martin Griffiths and seconded by Councillor Steven North that Councillor David Jenney be appointed Chair of the Terms of Reference Working Group.

Unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:-

(i) the establishment of the following working groups be approved:

- Governance Working Group
- Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group
- Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) Working Group
- Terms of Reference Working Group

(ii) the following Members be appointed Chair of the respective working groups, and a maximum of four further Members appointed to each working group as detailed within the report:

Councillor Jonathan Ekins – Governance Working Group
Councillor Ian Jelley – Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group
Councillor Jean Addison – IRP Working Group
Councillor David Jenney – Terms of Reference Working Group

(iii) the terms of reference for each of the working groups as contained at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and the operational procedures as detailed within the report be approved.

NNJC.11 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

A report was submitted which sought approval for a draft schedule of meetings for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED that the schedule of meetings for the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee be approved as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 8.20 pm)

Signed
Chair

AI-kbc