

North Northamptonshire Joint Committee

Statutory Officer Appointments Working Group

Meeting held: 15th August 2019

Present:- Cllr Ian Jelley (Chair), Cllr Helen Howell (ENC), Cllr Sandra Naden-Horley (NCC), Cllr Mark Pengelly (CBC), Sarah Macintosh (KBC), Paul Goult (CBC), Stella Jinks (ENC/CBC/BCW), David Pope (KBC)

19.SO.01 Welcome by the Chair & Introductions

Councillor Ian Jelley welcomed attendees to the meeting

19.SO.02 Update on the Statutory Change Order & Role of the Working Group and Timelines

Paul Goult provided the meeting with an update on the Statutory Change Order (SCO).

It was heard that advice received from MHCLG intimated that the SCO would be laid in parliament during October 2019 with an intention for the necessary legislation to allow for the unitary process to formally take shape being in place by the end of the year. In addition, MHCLG had provided an indication of the key issues to be addressed over the next few months.

Elections for the shadow authority were planned for 7th May 2020, at which point 78 new members for North Northamptonshire would be elected. The shadow authority would then have until 1st April 2021 to ensure everything was in place to allow the new unitary authority to adopt the powers of the County Council and existing borough and district authorities.

Ahead of the May 2020 elections, the County Council and the four borough and district authorities in the north of the county had formed the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee (NNJC). The committee had identified a number of topics for consideration going forward, one of which related to Statutory Officer (SO) Appointments. The SCO would provide authority to the NNJC to arrange the process for the selection and recruitment of:

- Interim Head of Paid Service
- Interim Chief Finance Officer
- Interim Monitoring Officer

- And, if appropriate a Returning Officer for the purpose of the first elections to the new unitary body

In addition, the NNJC had asked the group to consider the recruitment and selection process for the permanent Head of Paid Service for the new unitary body. It was likely that the SCO, once laid, would also mention the same processes for both the Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer. The meeting noted that it was possible that the MHCLG would request that these permanent positions be filled by 31st December 2020.

It was **AGREED** that the group ask the NNJC whether work should be undertaken in relation to the recruitment of a permanent Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer for the new unitary as it was likely this would be required at a later date.

19.SO.03 Consideration of Draft Scoping Report

The meeting considered the draft scoping report that provided the objectives and required outcomes of the group's work. The report also provided details of responsible officers and a proposed methodology to allow for completion of the work.

The meeting heard that Sam Maher, Director of HR and Councillor Development at East Midlands Councils (EMC) would provide scrutiny of the work of the group to provide a level of independent assurance. Sam had a significant level of experience in relation to Statutory Officer appointments and this knowledge could prove to be very valuable going forward.

It was **AGREED** that Sarah Macintosh and Stella Jinks would obtain examples of SO job descriptions from EMC with a view to putting together a draft version prior to the next meeting of the group. In addition, personal profiles to fit each position could be prepared.

The group heard that it was working to a suggested deadline of November for completion of its work, with an interim report taken to the NNJC from the group Chair at the meeting on 16th September.

It was noted the SCO would be likely to specify that the interim SO positions would be appointed from among existing local authority statutory officers in North Northamptonshire.

There was also an assumption that the permanent position of Head of Paid Service for the new unitary body would be recruited to through an open advert.

In response to a question whether there was confidence that the interim roles could be appointed to from the existing staff pool, it was heard that consideration needed to be given to the addition of extra workloads on SOs and whether this would require additional remuneration.

The group received advice in relation to the adoption of a number of plans covering a series of possible eventualities in relation to interim SO appointments, including the potential for recruitment from deputy SO positions, secondments from other authorities or transition of officers from among the authorities comprising West Northamptonshire.

It was noted that in relation to the possible requirement to appoint a Returning Officer for the elections in May 2020, it was likely that this issue would be covered as part of the SCO.

It was **AGREED** that the NNJC be recommended to consider the branding and aesthetic of any potential adverts for both the interim and permanent SO positions.

It was **AGREED** that contact be made with the LGSS in relation to the work of the group.

It was **AGREED** that the Chair draft an interim report to be presented to the September meeting of the NNJC with the draft scoping document as an appendix.

19.SO.04 FUTURE MEETING DATES

It was **AGREED** the next meeting of the group take place on 4th September at 10am. Further meetings would be scheduled as required.

Signed _____

(Chair)

(The meeting started at 10:00am and ended at 10:41am)

DJP