

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting held on 10th February 2020 at East Northamptonshire Council

Present: Councillor Martin Griffiths (Borough Council of Wellingborough) – Chair
Councillor Tom Beattie (Corby Borough Council) – Vice Chair
Councillor Jonathan Ekins (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor John Farrar (East Northamptonshire Council)
Councillor Ian Jelley (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor David Jenney (East Northamptonshire Council)
Councillor Andrew Mercer (East Northamptonshire 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 & Future Northants Strategic Delivery Director)
Paul Goult (Monitoring Officer, Corby Borough Council)
Paul Helsby (Programme Director)
Anne Ireson (Committee Administrator)

NNJC.38 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steven North of East Northamptonshire Council and Jean Addison of Corby Borough Council.

It was noted that Councillor Andy Mercer was acting as a substitute for Councillor North.

NNJC.39 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th January 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.

NNJC.40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

NNJC.41 MATTERS OF URGENCY

None.

NNJC.42 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

None.

NNJC.43 STRUCTURAL CHANGES ORDER – UPDATE

It was reported that the Order had been now been considered by the Second Delegated Legislation Committee of the House of Commons. It was anticipated that the Order would now be considered by the House of Lords on 11th February, after which the Order would be made and the Secretary of State would make a statement.

A link to view the full proceedings would be sent to members of the Committee and would also be made available on the Future Northants North website.

NNJC.44 FUTURE NORTHANTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

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

- Programme Director's Update
- Programme Status
- Design Phase
- Recruitment to Statutory Roles
- Unitary Working with Trade Unions Agreement
- Communications and Engagement
- Change Champions

Members felt that it would be vital to engage with elected members and members of the public. It was noted that tours of the Engine Room had been offered to all elected members in Northamptonshire, the first of which had taken place and received positive feedback.

During discussion, it was stressed that meaningful engagement with trade unions representing staff employed by Councils in Northamptonshire was essential. Additionally, trade union representatives attending meetings must ensure that feedback is given to other representatives and members of trade unions. It was noted that there was a collective willingness for meaningful engagement on both

sides, with a good pattern of feedback through both the unions and change champions.

Officers were thanked for the presentation.

NNJC.45 FUTURE NORTHANTS FINANCE MONITORING REPORT

A report was submitted which provided a summary of the forecast outturn position for the Future Northants Programme.

Explanations for variances in Programme Team costs and NCC Transformation were outlined, and it was noted that the current position, which was subject to constant revision, projected a £29k underspend overall, to be confirmed by the County Council cabinet at its next meeting.

The Business Rates Retention pilots had delivered as per the budget, but this was expected to change going forward.

During debate, clarification was sought on the following matters:-

- Business Rates Retention Pilots - income and benefits
- The meaning of savings (whether cash, efficiency or extra income or benefits)
- The fragility/volatility of NCC services, especially Children's Services, and how this could cause problems for the new unitary authorities if savings were not properly balanced against the projected overspend
- The percentage of Adult Social Care savings against the overall budget and how the unitary authorities would deliver those savings

Members noted that the £29k underspend was expected to improve as the Council moved towards the end of the financial year. £36m of benefits in respect of Business Rates Retention pilots was not defined as income from business rates. The benefits represented the retention of money received through growth from business rates, which was then invested in projects to produce the savings. All savings quoted were cash savings which reduced costs.

An overspend in Children's Services, in the current financial year had been predicted for many months and mitigations planned. The 2020/21 budget has taken into account under-achievements and re-baselined them, which means that the 2020/21 budget will not be fragile. Any historic financial challenges will not carry over to the following year. An additional £12-13m has been planned to invest in children's services.

Adult Social Care savings represented around 10% of the overall budget. These savings would have been delivered independently of the unitary proposals, and some benefit will be seen in the 2020/21 budget. Adult Social Care in Northamptonshire had been assessed as a high performing service, nationally in the top quartile across many areas of the service.

In conclusion to the debate, officers were thanked for their report.

RESOLVED that the forecast outturn position for the Future Northants Programme be noted.

NNJC.46 **FUTURE NORTHANTS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)**

Members received a report which outlined the internal engagement strategy and external engagement strategy for the Future Northants Programme.

Members noted that, since the agenda had been published, extra resources in the County Council consultation team had been used to support engagement work. A toolkit was being created to help deliver engagement activity and identify where a statutory duty to engage existed, for example around Council Tax consultation. Work was already being undertaken with some external partners, such as Voluntary Impact Northamptonshire (VIN), Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC) and the Health Services Network (HSN). Town and Parish Councillors had also been invited to attend engine room tours.

During debate, it was stressed that young people should also be included in the list of external stakeholders, and it was confirmed that engagement would take place through schools and youth groups.

RESOLVED that the internal and external engagement strategies be noted.

NNJC.47 **GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP REPORT**

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

It was noted that the draft Consultation would be considered for approval by the Shadow Council at its first meeting in May 2020.

Two draft documents were submitted for consideration, namely:-

- Access to Information
- Meeting Procedure Rules

Members noted that the following documents would be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the Governance Working Group:-

- Articles of the Constitution
- Code of Conduct for Members
- Member Officer Protocol

It was proposed by Councillor Tom Beattie, and seconded by Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood that the first sentence of Appendix B (Meeting Procedure Rules) be amended as follows:-

“1.2 Meetings of the full council and all main committee meetings be held in the evening and begin at 7.00pm.”

The amendment was debated, with members of the Committee making the following points:-

- Evening meetings would encourage better representation and encourage as many people as possible sit on working groups and committees
- 7.00 pm meetings are reasonable, provided they do not finish too late
- Timing of meetings is an essential part of the Shadow Council, which will set the schedule of meetings for the Council in 2021
- Timing of meetings should be re-considered by the Working Group, if necessary
- 7.00 pm meetings were not family-friendly and members' allowances compensated for the need to take time off from work during the daytime
- It was important for prospective candidates to have prior knowledge of meeting times
- Councillor workloads were less than was the case 10-15 years ago
- Some meetings would need to be during the daytime (for example working groups)
- Travel to meeting venues could be difficult, especially if using public transport

Following debate, a vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

(For the amendment: 10; Against: 2; Not Voting 1)

The amendment was therefore carried.

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the appendices be approved for inclusion in the draft Constitution subject to Appendix B (Meeting Procedure Rules) being amended as follows:-

“Meetings of the Full Council and all main committee meetings normally be held in the evening and begin at 7.00pm.”

- (ii) progress made by the Governance Working Group be noted, and a further update on the draft Shadow Council Constitution be received at the Joint Committee meeting to be held on 5th March 2020.

The Governance Working Group was congratulated for its work on the draft Constitution.

In concluding the meeting, the Chairman thanked the Committee for its contributions and commended the work of officers and the Programme Team. He welcomed the involvement of change champions as work continued toward the elections to elect 78 shadow councillors. The Chairman also commended the cross-party joint working across Councils in North Northamptonshire.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.50 pm)

Signed
Chair

AI-kbc