

Members' Accommodation for the Shadow Authorities – North Northamptonshire



Overview

- The Growth Infrastructure & Public Estates Leader's Briefing session presented a number of questions to Leaders of the North Northamptonshire sovereign councils.
- The aim of the session was to gain agreement on an interim location for Shadow authority Members to hold full council meetings.
- The reason for the urgency of a decision is that the cost to repurpose or modify a space to hold meetings is likely to fall under procurement rules which can necessitate a lengthy tendering process.
- A matrix outlining potential options was presented to the Leaders to help enable the discussion.



What we know - logistical and admin requirements

- The Member's accommodation will need to be ready to hold full Council meetings for the Shadow Authority by 21st May 2020.
- The Member's accommodation for the Shadow Authority will need space for:
 - 78 Members
 - Officers and members of the press and public
- A building(s) to host the Executive Committee meetings (assume meeting space to hold 30)
- A building(s) to host future Committee meetings
- Delegate units in sufficient quantity or an appropriate substitute
- Webcasting arrangements, if required
- Arrangements for recording votes
- Electronic hosting of paperwork
- Democratic Services support for the Shadow Council



Assumptions

- The building(s) where full council meetings are held may not necessarily be the new named HQ for the unitary going forward
- In the short term (May – Sept) the council meetings will be in a space but the support services could be provided by an authority in a different location.
- The Executive Committee and Committees of the Shadow Council will be of a more easily manageable membership size, and could either be held in existing large meeting rooms in existing buildings or in the same building allocated for full council meetings
- Commercial venues are included in the options to ensure geographical reach
- That the full Council meetings will be open, transparent and modern; i.e. willing to consider the adoption of:
 - Webcasting (subject to cost)
 - Social media as a communications channel
 - Paperless meetings
- Costs will need to be carefully managed therefore ‘internal’ venues and equipment may be preferred if the costs including any necessary modifications are lower than an external option. This could include considering the use of large Council owned venues such as leisure centres as an interim measure.
- Delegate units will not be readily available in sufficient quantity and will therefore need to be procured and budgeted for. Consideration needs to be given, set against timescales of hire versus purchase for the new Unitary Council going forward



Timeline

- Paper on the agreed approach to Joint Committees: March 2020
- Elections: 7th May
- First full council meeting on or before 21st May
- First Executive Committee meeting: on or before 4th June



- The following questions were posed to Leaders of the **NORTH** Districts and Boroughs regarding the interim Shadow accommodation;
- Is there a preference for an internal Council-owned venue?
 - Not specifically. The options of East Northamptonshire House, Corby Cube and Kettering Conference Centre (external) were given preference. Further work to understand venue capability was required before a decision was made.
- Is there a preference to hire or buy equipment/furniture?
 - The more cost effective solution is preferable. More detailed costings were required
 - Is the preference towards low cost repurposing/modification?
 - Yes, value for money is a key consideration.
- What are the minimum access needs for council meetings?
 - Member car parking essential (however consideration should be given to any loss of income for internal venues as a result). A geographically central location is desirable.
- One venue for both to share or separate sites?
 - No desire to share a site in the West. The North Shadow meetings must be held in a location in the new North authority.
- Does the office space for supporting Officers need to be the same location as the Council meetings?
 - No, not necessarily.
- Should council meetings aim to be paperless ?
 - No. This is a decision for the new authorities to take forward.
- Minimal technical equipment or fully IT enabled e.g. Web casting voting buttons (individual units or sharing)?
 - Delegate units are crucial. Web casting of meetings is non essential but a nice to have.
- Just for Shadow Council meetings or also use for Shadow Executive meetings?
 - Depending on scheduling availability, a rotation of the Executive meetings across the North is preferable.

North Northamptonshire : Interim Accommodation for Shadow Councils - Recommendations

Following the guidance from the Leaders' workshop it was requested that further analysis was undertaken of 3 preferred sites – East Northamptonshire, Corby Cube and the Kettering Conference Centre. The analysis was subsequently provided to the Leaders who made the following recommendations:

- Kettering Conference Centre was selected as the **recommended** option for the Shadow Council meetings.
- It was also requested that the Kettering Conference Centre should be bulk booked for the rest of the year and that costs should be negotiated down further due to the additional bookings

Following guidance from the Leaders it was also **recommended** that:

- Delegate units are hired for the Shadow Council meetings.
- Options for webcasting, paperless offices and electronic voting are not required at this stage – this will be a future decision for the Shadow Council.
- Executive Committee meetings to rotate between each of the main buildings in North Northamptonshire.
- A Members room and office(s) should be available in each of the main council buildings for the new Shadow Council.

