

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting held on 5th March 2020 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 Council)
Councillor Ian Jelley (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor David Jenney (East Northamptonshire Council)
Councillor Steven North (East Northamptonshire Council)
Councillor Tom Partridge-Underwood (Borough Council of Wellingborough)
Councillor Victoria Perry (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor Elayne Francis (Borough Council of Wellingborough)
Councillor Mick Scrimshaw (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor Jason Smithers (Northamptonshire County Council)
Councillor Lesley Thurland (Kettering Borough Council)
Councillor Kevin Watt (Corby Borough Council)

Also Present: Theresa Grant (Chief Executive, Northamptonshire County Council & Future Northants Strategic Delivery Director)
Paul Gault (Monitoring Officer, Corby Borough Council)
Paul Helsby (Programme Director)
Callum Galluzzo (Committee Administrator)

NNJC.48 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Russell Roberts of Kettering Borough Council and Andrew Scarborough of the Borough Council of Wellingborough

It was noted that Councillor Elayne Francis was acting as a substitute for Councillor Andrew Scarborough. It was also noted that Councillor Lesley Thurland was acting as a substitute for Councillor Russell Roberts.

NNJC.49 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2020 be approved and signed by the Chair.

NNJC.50 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

NNJC.51 MATTERS OF URGENCY

None.

NNJC.52 PUBLIC SPEAKERS

Councillor Jim Hakewill of Kettering Borough Council submitted several questions in respect of Item 12 on the agenda in accordance with Standing Orders.

NNJC.53 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

During discussion, questions were raised regarding the permanent recruitment of statutory officers. It was questioned whether a Director of Children's Services would be appointed across Northamptonshire or for each individual unitary authority. It was further noted that consideration had been given to all proposals regarding the delivery of the trust model with any decisions being made using a strong evidence base. The Shadow Authority would make the final appointment.

Officers were thanked for the presentation.

NNJC.54 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 favourable variance of £1.9m compared to the baseline position due to all posts not being filled from the assumed start day in September 2019.

It was also noted that there had been a favourable variance of £679k on investment in terms of NCC transformation and £8.1m adverse variance on benefits. The variance on benefits of £8.1m had been mitigated with savings and additional income across all services in NCC to produce their current overall projected outturn position of £29k underspend, as confirmed at the February Cabinet meeting at Northamptonshire County Council.

Members also noted that new savings proposals were approximately £23m for 2020/2021 and that these proposals were part of the current budget setting cycle and were to be confirmed in February 2020.

During debate, clarification was sought on whether opportunities were being sought at a strategic level within the programme team in terms of future funding opportunities in the medium to long term to ensure that North Northamptonshire were considered for any potential funding from any scheme going forward.

Members noted that steps were being taken to ensure that the new authority was in the best possible position to seek further investment and funding opportunities. The investment team were working closely with the existing sovereign councils and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) to ensure representation at both leader and officer levels. The importance of having a growth strategy for both the North and West was also stressed and there had been further commitment from SEMLEP to engage with both unitary authorities moving forward.

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.55 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Members received a report which sought to inform members of the Risk Management Strategy for the Future Northants Programme.

Members noted that, it was recommended good practice to include a Risk Management Strategy in a programme of work of this size and complexity and that the strategy had been subject to discussion and input by both the Design Board and the Leaders' Oversight Board.

It was heard that the purpose of the strategy was to embed effective risk management in the Future Northants Programme by establishing a risk management framework that provided:

- An effective and efficient control environment
- The overt allocation of accountability for risk management throughout the organisation
- A well-established risk assessment process
- Performance monitoring of risk management activity
- Communications process to support risk management

During debate, it was stressed that the necessary failsafe mechanism associated with the various risks of the programme needed to be in place to minimise any issues that may arise. It was noted that overall risks would be reviewed on a regular basis

RESOLVED That the North Northants Joint Committee accept and endorse the Future Northants Programme Risk Management Strategy.

NNJC.56 **APPOINTMENT OF IMPLIMENTATION TEAM**

Members received a report which sought the North Northants Joint Committee to confirm the designation of the Programme Management Office (PMO) as the “Implementation Team” as required by the Northamptonshire (Structural Changes) Order 2020.

It was noted that if agreed, the Implementation Team would be in place and cover the Implementation Plan workload until the Shadow Council came into force in May 2020, at which point the Council may review the Plan and its implementation.

RESOLVED that:-

- (I) That the Programme Management Office be designated as “the Implementation Team” for the purposes of the Northamptonshire (Structural Changes) Order 2020 with immediate effect;
- (II) It be noted that the leader of the Implementation Team was the Chief Executive of Northamptonshire County Council (Theresa Grant)
- (III) It be noted that the Deputy Leader for the Implementation Team was Graham Soulsby (Kettering Borough Council Managing Director) for the North and George Candler (Northampton Borough Council Chief Executive) for the West.

NNJC.57 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.

Three draft documents were submitted for consideration, namely:-

- Articles of the Constitution
- Responsibility for Functions
- Financial Procedure Rules

Members noted that the following documents would be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the North Northants Joint Committee;

- Shadow Executive Committee Procedure Rules
- Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules
- Staff Employment Procedure Rules

During debate, clarification was sought regarding the council tax support scheme arrangements as part of the Financial Procedure Rules. It was noted that although council tax support was a key element of the budget setting, it did not form part of the formal budget setting process. Further clarification would be provided by the next meeting of the Future Northants Joint Committee.

Clarification was sought by members regarding the appointment of statutory officers' deputies. It was noted that appointments at this level would be delegated to officers, and that it was important not to confuse the role of members with that of the role of the Head of Paid Service in respect of officer appointments.

Members were advised that adoption of the Constitution would be a matter for the Shadow Council and documents within the Constitution could be expanded if necessary, with members making the decision on the preferred structure going forward. The Financial Procedure Rules in respect of contracts would be further discussed with officer colleagues and any amendment brought back to the Committee if required.

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

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the appendices be approved for inclusion in the draft Constitution
- (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 30th March 2020.

NNJC.58 SHADOW COUNCIL – CODE OF CONDUCT

Members received a report which sought the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee to approve a draft Code of Conduct, for submission to the Shadow Council

Members noted that a separate Officer/Member Protocol was due to be submitted at the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 30th March 2020 and that, if adopted, this Code of Conduct would apply to the Shadow Council only.

RESOLVED that:-

- (I) The draft Code of Conduction be approved for submission to the Shadow Council
- (II) Authority be delegated to the lead Monitoring Officer to contact existing Independent Persons to confirm their interest in acting in that capacity for the Shadow Council 2020/2021
- (III) It be noted that a further report was to be submitted to the Joint Committee regarding Officer/Member protocol and other associated codes.

NNJC.59 LOCATION FOR SHADOW COUNCIL MEETINGS

A report was received which outlined the recommended location for the North Northamptonshire Shadow Council meetings.

It was noted that in selecting the venue both Council owned and external venues were considered. After due consideration of options presented at a workshop session, the leaders of the sovereign councils by majority, recommended a preference for Kettering Conference Centre to best meet the needs of the full council meetings. .

Councillor Jim Hakewill of Kettering Borough Council addressed the Committee in accordance with Standing Orders and asked the following questions:-

- 1) *“Will there be webcasting of all meetings of the North Northamptonshire Unitary Council from the first one after the May 7th elections?”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“No. Currently there are no plans to webcast meetings of the Shadow Council. This matter can of course be reviewed by the Shadow Council once it is in situ.”

- 2) *“How much space will be available for members of the community to attend the Meetings of the North Northamptonshire Unitary Council?”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“A public gallery will be set aside for meetings. This may vary in size dependent upon the venues used, however it is currently the intention that all committee meetings of the Shadow Council will be held in existing sovereign council facilities, all of which have space for the public to attend.”

- 3) *“Max Caller was formerly the Chairman of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). Possibly the most knowledgeable person on the number of Councillors and their representational roles in the Country. When was the decision made, and by whom, to ignore the Max Caller report’s recommendation that there be 45 Councillors on the North Northamptonshire Unitary Council, which logically would have been extended to 52 on the basis that two Councillors were elected per County Division, (of which there are 26 in the North)?”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“The Council size has been set by the Structural Changes Order approved by Government. It is likely that the Boundary Commission will instigate a full review in the next couple of years; any recommendations they make will be in force for the unitary council elections in May 2025.”

- 4) *“Was any thought given to where the new Unitary Council, comprised of 78 Councillors, could meet in existing local government buildings before deciding on that number?”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“The number was set in the Order by Government. Size of meeting venues is not a proper criterion to use on determining a Council size. The number is based on 3-Member wards (following County Council divisions). I would refer you to the agenda item “Location for Shadow Council Meetings”.

- 5) *“Can the existing Council Chambers in Corby, Wellingborough, Kettering and East Northamptonshire accommodate 52 Councillors?”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

Yes, 52 councillors may be able to be accommodated, but we will have 78 councillors plus officers, press and public.

- 6) *“Under what Constitutional regulations can properly elected Councillors from any of the five existing Council’s in North Northamptonshire be excluded from meetings of the North Northamptonshire Joint Committee whether in, or outside, the period of Purdah? (this was inferred to be the case at the last meeting of the Committee when it was indicated that it would meet during April).”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“The NNJC will not formally meet in April unless there is a need to call an extraordinary meeting. All councillors will continue to be kept updated on progress through Future Northants communications.”

- 7) *“What assurance will the Chairman give that all meetings of workshops and other councillor chaired meetings, whether held in private and confidential or not, will be advised to all currently serving councillors who are presently elected to the five Councils in the North of Northamptonshire? This to give tangible evidence to the open and transparent intentions of all involved in creating the new Council.”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“There are no NNJC working group meetings scheduled for April/May 2020.

The intention is that a Workshop will be held in April, to include members of the Joint Committee, facilitated by officers (not chaired by elected members). Therefore, this will not be a formally convened ‘Joint Committee’ meeting held in private which is the suggestion.”

- 8) *“What is/are the intended date(s) for the first meeting of the Shadow North Northamptonshire Unitary Council”*

The Chair responded as follows:-

“Currently it is envisaged that the first Full Council meeting of the North Northamptonshire Shadow Council will be held at 7:00 pm on Thursday 21st May 2020.”

- 9) “What are “Delegate Units” (Item 12 3.2 Page 2)? What in the PowerPoint presentation in the Appendix are “appropriate substitutes”?”

The Chair responded as follows:-

“Delegate units are microphone units, commonly used in Council Chambers. Appropriate substitutes would be other microphones or audio equipment.”

During debate the following points were raised by members: -

- Money would be better spent on investing on existing venues rather than spending on hiring a venue/equipment
- Webcasting in any form would be required from the first meeting of the shadow authority due to the increased interest by members of the public
- Alternative/Purpose built venues such as Corby Cube were better suited to hosting the Shadow Council due to location and facilities.
- Cost analysis for each proposal was needed by members to enable them to effectively compare the different venues.
- Logistically, Kettering was ideal due to its central location and adequate parking facilities and infrastructure
- Block bookings should be put in place to secure the best possible deal for the shadow authority. The Shadow Council should then make the decision on where the future meetings should be held.

It was proposed by Councillor Ekins to defer the decision of the location for the Shadow Authority meeting until more financial information had been provided.

The motion was not seconded and therefore fell.

Following further debate on suitability of venues, accessibility, parking and other key considerations, a vote was taken on the recommendation:-

(For the recommendation: 10; Against: 5)

RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the selection of the Kettering Conference Centre, as the location of the North Northamptonshire Shadow Council meetings, be approved
- (ii) all other committee meetings that will be required for North Northamptonshire Shadow Council will make use of existing rooms in the four sovereign council buildings.

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 8.16 pm)

Signed
Chair

CG-kbc