

# WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

## South Northamptonshire Council Offices

Wednesday, 5 June 2019

**PRESENT:** Councillor Jonathan Nunn (Northampton Borough Council)  
Councillor Richard Auger (Northamptonshire County Council)  
Councillor Adam Brown (Daventry District Council)  
Councillor Alan Chantler (Daventry District Council)  
Councillor Matt Golby (Northamptonshire County Council)  
Councillor Stephen Hibbert (Northampton Borough Council)  
Councillor Phil Larratt (Northampton Borough Council)  
Councillor Stephen Legg (Northamptonshire County Council)  
Councillor Ian McCord (South Northamptonshire Council)  
Councillor Chris Millar (Daventry District Council)  
Councillor Ken Ritchie (Daventry District Council)  
Councillor Danielle Stone (Northampton Borough Council)

**SUBSTITUTES:** Councillor Phil Bignell, for Councillor Rebecca Breese (South Northamptonshire Council)  
Councillor Andrew Grant, for Councillor Peter Rawlinson (South Northamptonshire Council)  
Councillor Martin Johns, for Councillor Chris Lofts (South Northamptonshire Council)

### 1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Rebecca Breese (South Northamptonshire Council)  
Councillor Chris Lofts (South Northamptonshire Council)  
Councillor Suresh Patel (Northampton Borough Council)  
Councillor Peter Rawlinson (South Northamptonshire Council)

### 2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 May 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND MEMBERS

The Chair, Councillor Jonathan Nunn advised the Committee that he had received two requests from members of the public to ask questions of the Committee: David Jones, Chair of Healthwatch Northamptonshire and Mary Clarke, Citizens Advice Bureau.

In addressing the Committee, David Jones explained that Healthwatch Northamptonshire had requested that the West Northants Joint Committee consider and respond to the following question put on behalf of residents across the County.

“What steps are the Joint Committees taking to ensure that the new unitary authorities put respect for diversity and equality of opportunity at the heart of their mission and values so that these principles clearly shape their approaches to developing Health and Social care services, in partnership with NHS colleagues and others?”

The Chair advised the meeting that a written response (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) had been tabled and circulated to all West Northants Joint Committee (WNJC) Members and meeting attendees which set out the steps that had been taken to ensure this objective was met.

The Chair advised that Mary Clarke had contacted the Committee Clerk to advise that she had unfortunately been delayed and he would allow her to address the meeting when she arrived, assuming it was before the close of the meeting.

## **5. REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Councillor Phil Larratt presented the report and reminded the WNJC that the proposed draft Constitution (Appendix A to the report) was for the Shadow Council not the West Northants Unitary Council (WNUC). The Shadow Council could amend, adapt and would likely revisit the draft Constitution for the new WNUC. The Governance Task and Finish Group had identified topics and matters for consideration for the Shadow Council when developing the WNUJ draft Constitution and these were set out at Appendix B to the report.

The documents had been drafted on the basis of the proposed West Northants Unitary Authority becoming operational in April 2020, however, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had now confirmed that the proposal would now be taken forward for the West Unitary Council to become operational in April 2021. Changes would therefore be required to the document to reflect the new date and any other consequential changes following parliamentary approval of the Structural Change Order in October 2019.

Councillor Phil Larratt highlighted that that the Chief Finance Officers were happy with the Financial Procedural Rules but had highlighted the document was a working draft and must be considered in that light.

Councillor Phil Larratt reported that the Task and Finish Groups had worked well together in an atmosphere of openness and transparency and expressed thanks to members of all Task and Finish groups, in particular, Councillor Peter Rawlinson, and officers who have supported the Group.

The Chair thanked the Task and Finish Groups and the supporting officers for their hard work.

In reference to Appendix B, Councillor Matt Golby, commented that with the delay to vesting day, there was more time for work to be done on area committees and in establishing a Youth Council. There was an opportunity to learn best practice from others and this could potentially be done by forming a Working Group.

Councillor Chris Millar commended the work of the Task and Finish Group and commented that the delay to Vesting Day meant there was time for the Shadow Council to give consideration to the areas raised by the Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Ian McCord thanked the Task and Finish Group for their hard work and commented that he believed that the Constitution for the West Northamptonshire Shadow Council should not be approved as set out at recommendation "d". Approval should wait until the Structural Change Order came into force as this could impact on when the Shadow Council comes into being and changes may be needed to the Shadow Constitution. The Task and Finish Group should be asked to meet after the Structural Change Order is published to make amendments as necessary.

The Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer, Northampton Borough Council) confirmed

that the removal of this recommendation would not have a negative impact.

Councillor Ian McCord subsequently proposed that recommendation “d” be deleted and replaced with a recommendation that the Shadow Constitution be referred back to the Task and Finish Group and amend as necessary in light of the Structural Change Order. Councillor Martin Johns duly seconded the proposal.

Councillor Martin Johns commented on the importance for transparency in ensuring that attendance records were made publicly available as soon as practicable.

Councillor Danielle Stone commented that she was appreciative of the Task and Finish Group for listening to comments raised and that the Constitution was a gender neutral document and addressed public access and participation. There were still areas to be addressed such as a Shadow Council website, meeting venues. It was also important that services were based on evidence and what the outcomes should be. She felt that the proposed creation of a single Children’s Trust for the whole county should not yet be accepted as there was still more work to be done.

Referring to the comments made about area committees, Councillor Alan Chantler highlighted that there would be sensitive areas for residents, for example planning, residents would expect decisions to be made by people who knew the areas. It was therefore not necessary to wait for the Structural Change Order to be published to start moving forward.

Councillor Richard Auger, reported that the Task and Finish Group had found there were lots of differing opinions and consensus had to be reached. The Shadow Council could make adjustments as required.

Councillor Chris Millar highlighted the importance of scrutiny being involved sooner rather than later and suggested the Scrutiny Chairs at each Council could meet and discuss the areas each authority are currently reviewing.

Councillor Phil Larratt summed up prior to the vote confirming he was happy to move the recommendations with the amendment to recommendation “d” adding that the Task and Finish Group could start work on amending the draft Shadow Constitution as the revised vesting date was known. Other changes could be made when the Structural Change Order was published. It was imperative that the Shadow Council was safe and legal from the say it came into being.

On being put to the meeting, the recommendations, as amended, were carried unanimously.

## **RESOLVED:**

1. That the discussions undertaken and the subsequent conclusions drawn by the Governance Task & Finish Group at its meeting on 20 May, as stated in section 3 of the report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), be noted and it be further noted that the conclusions drawn have informed the relevant sections in the draft Shadow Constitution (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
2. That it be noted that on 14 May 2019, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government made a written statement to Parliament confirming that the new Unitary Council for the West would, subject to parliamentary approval, be operational from 1 April 2021, with the Shadow Council being set up beforehand.

3. That it be noted that the work undertaken, including the content of the draft Shadow Constitution for the West Northamptonshire Shadow Council (WNSC) and the Matters for Consideration for by WNSC when developing the Constitution for the West Northamptonshire Unitary Council, was based on assumptions on the content of the expected Structural Change Order (SCO) for Northamptonshire and the documents would, following the Ministerial announcement referred to in b) above need to change to reflect the detail in the SCO.
4. That the Governance Task and Finish Group be requested to meet after publication of the Structural Change Order to update and amend the draft constitution for the proposed Shadow Council as necessary for resubmission to the West Northants Joint Committee.
5. That the power to make non-substantive changes, including making any typographical changes, to the draft constitution for the Shadow Council in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the West Northants Joint Committee be delegated to the Lead Monitoring Officer for the proposed West Northamptonshire unitary project.
6. That it be noted that changes would be required to be made to the draft constitution arising from the Structural Change Order, once it has received parliamentary approval, and further approvals to the draft constitution would be brought back to the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee for approval.
7. That the commentary from the Governance Task & Finish Group on what it believes the established Unitary Council should include in the Unitary Council constitution at the point at which it is adopted, be noted.

## **6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair invited Mary Clarke to ask her question to the Committee.

Mary Clarke began by apologising if her question was outside the remit of the Committee but she felt it was important for the topic to be put on the table. Mary Clarke asked the West Northants Joint Committee about funding the voluntary and community sector in the interim period before the unitary authorities were fully established, and also about the likely funding mechanisms in place thereafter as there were currently variances between authorities in terms of grants / funding. If future funding was to be via tender, Mary Clarke queried what scrutiny would be in place to ensure a fair process whereby the lowest bidder wasn't automatically awarded a tender.

The Chair responded to the question explaining that the funding arrangements at each authority would be in place until 2021, subject to the respective council's budget processes. Going forward, one established principle was to work with partners to get the best arrangements for all.

Councillor Danielle Stone commented that the new unitary would need to set principles. She explained that was a champion of co-design and co-delivery which avoided competitive tendering. It was important to work with the voluntary sector to help residents as it eased pressure on other services.

Councillor Ken Ritchie added that there would need to be a serious discussion about voluntary organisations and how they were supported querying if there may be value in establishing a Citizen's Assembly, which could include existing and potential Voluntary Sector partners.

Councillor Ian McCord referred to the “Prospectus for Change” which had recently been launched and set out an integrated approach to delivering Local Government Reform. It would be necessary to look at how each Council currently operated as there were differences and working with, funding and support to the Voluntary Sector should and would be part of this of this work rather than separate extra work.

**7. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE  
THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED**

None.

The meeting concluded at 6:58 pm