

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Jonathan Nunn, Chair, (Northampton Borough Council)
Councillor Richard Auger, Vice Chair, (Daventry District Council)

Councillor Adam Brown, Daventry District Council
Councillor Alan Chantler, Daventry District Council
Councillor Ken Ritchie, Daventry District Council
Councillor Phil Larratt, Northampton Borough Council
Councillor Stephen Hibbert, Northampton Borough Council
Councillor Danielle Stone, Northampton Borough Council
Councillor Matt Golby, Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Malcolm Longley, Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Stephen Legg, Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Suresh Patel, Northamptonshire County Council
Councillor Ian McCord, South Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Rebecca Breese, South Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Peter Rawlinson, South Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Chris Lofts, South Northamptonshire Council

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies from Members of the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee.

2. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Wednesday 5th June 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. DEPUTATIONS/PUBLIC ADDRESSES

There were none.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

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

There were none.

6. FUTURE NORTHANTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chief Executive of Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) gave the Committee a presentation on Future Northants - Programme Update. The salient points were highlighted.

In response to questions around Trade Unions, Change Champions and their demographics, the Committee heard that all service areas across the Authorities were represented by a Change Champion; the Change Managers were working well, organising their own events, getting information out to staff and feeding back concerns. It was explained by the Director of People for NCC, that Trade Unions had been provided with draft proposals and further meetings with them had been arranged.

In response to a question around assets, the Committee heard that the Structural Changes Order (SCO) stipulated that there must be agreement regarding the division of assets by the “go live” date. It was noted that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) would not interfere with these arrangements if they were resolved locally.

The Committee was informed that the LGA had appointed a “critical friend” who had been through the unitary process before; this representative met regularly with the four Chief Executives of the Sovereign Councils and produced notes; these were not published, however, the Chief Executive, NCC, agreed that a report detailing the results of the LGA review would be beneficial. They further heard that their roles in respect of decision-making were clearly set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR). Members would be given sufficient information to be able to make those decisions. There would be touchpoints throughout the design process where details could be fed back to the wider membership and a full briefing at the blueprint stage, allowing Members to be engaged with the final sign-off of the programme. It was explained that the SCO was an order of interest and was expected to be passed through Parliament in 4-6 weeks. MHCLG would be meeting with the Leaders of the Sovereign Councils on 22nd January 2020 where it was hoped that further information would be given in respect of the SCO.

In response to a question around the various service contracts, it was explained that designing the organisations would precede the Financial Strategy; at that stage it would become clear whether the new organisations could carry out their duties and the blueprint for an affordable organisation model would be built. Regarding the highways contract, it was agreed by the Leaders that the contract would go out to tender in the next few weeks. An update would be brought to the Leaders Oversight Board in February 2020. The public would also be notified of this in the coming weeks, along with a notice for an extension of the current highways contract.

Councillor Richard Auger commented that when pricing up services, the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee needed to understand that they would not know how much money they had to spend, so as many options as possible were necessary so that when the Shadow Authority was created, it had an opportunity to choose services based on price.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

7. FUTURE NORTHANTS FINANCE UPDATE

The Section 151 Officer for Daventry District Council submitted a report providing an update on the financial position for the Future Northants Programme and highlighted salient points.

In response to a question regarding savings in both Children and Adult Services, the Committee heard that the majority of savings had already been made and these were detailed in monthly monitoring reports produced by Northamptonshire County Council. Adult Social Care was delivering savings, however there were some issues with Children’s Social Care. The monitoring reports detailed mitigations where savings could not be achieved in one area, they would be achieved in another. A monitoring report would be brought to the WNJC at its meeting in February that would provide further details in respect of the savings in relation to the delivery of the figures contained in the appendix.

In response to questions regarding business rates, the Committee heard that a contingency had been kept aside in case of any fluctuation, the exact amount having been based on predicted figures.

In answer to a question regarding the financial position and the estimated forecast 5 year total cash savings of up to £430 million, the Committee was advised that risk assessments would be undertaken and a contingency kept regarding business rates. There were annual forecast savings of £85.9 million. Monthly monitoring reports are produced. It was highlighted that there would be substantial savings when the West went to Unitary.

RESOLVED:

1. The baseline financial position for the level of Future Northants programme investment and benefits estimated to arise from the LGR Programme as shown in the Appendix 1 is noted.
2. The financial monitoring process for reporting the Joint Committee outlined in the report is noted.
3. The Future Northants programme delegations for reporting virement between Programme Workstreams and the process for reporting changes to the baseline financial position for investment and benefits outlined in paragraph 3.2.11 of the report is noted.

8. INTERIM STATUTORY OFFICER RECRUITMENT

At this juncture statutory Officers, apart from the two advising the Committee, left the room.

The Director of People for Northamptonshire County Council presented a report that outlined the approach to the recruitment of interim statutory roles for the West Northamptonshire Shadow Unitary Council.

In response to questions, the Committee heard that the Chief Executives from the seven Sovereign Councils would be encouraged to apply for the interim roles and if there was no interest, a further report would be submitted to the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee detailing a further option.

The NCC Director of People highlighted the key points contained in the report:

- The interim role of the Chief Executive of the Shadow Authority would be a full time role from May to October 2020.
- The Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer would undertake these role, as well as their existing substantive roles.
- The Interim roles are very different to the permanent roles.

The Committee made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query, the Committee heard that the budget for the Shadow Authority would be published later this year.
- It was anticipated that the permanent roles would be in place by December, if not October 2020.

RESOLVED that:

1. The recruitment and selection approach to the Interim appointments of Head of Paid

Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer is endorsed.

9. PERMANENT STATUTORY OFFICER RECRUITMENT

This report outlined the proposed approach and timetable in relation to the permanent recruitment of the Statutory roles for the West Shadow Unitary Council.

The NCC Director of outlined the timetable for the recruitment process. It was highlighted that it was expected that successful candidates for the roles would have to give 3-6 months' notice, possibly longer.

The Committee made comment:

- The recruitment process was welcomed.
- It was noted that Terms and Conditions would not be finalised until May 2020. Benchmarking would take place.

RESOLVED: that:

- 1- The key milestones and timescales for permanent recruitment are endorsed.
- 2- The tendering specification (as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report) and the tendering process is started in January 2020; and a provider engaged for February 2020 are endorsed.
- 3- The next steps are endorsed:
 - West Northamptonshire Joint Committee to agree permanent Statutory Officer job descriptions and remuneration packages (January 2020).
 - To advertise the roles nationally through search agency (subject to agreement of job descriptions, remuneration packages and Statutory Changes Order being agreed.)

The meeting concluded at 7:30 pm