

TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

Date: 6 March 2019

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Helen Howell (Chairman)
Colin Wright (Vice Chairman)
David Jenney (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Tony Boto Richard Lewis
Harriet Pentland Richard Gell
Janet Pinnock Roger Glithero JP

453. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Marian Hollomon and Steven North.

454. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2019 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

455. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman invited those who wished to do so to declare any interests in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

456. UNITARY UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided a report on unitary developments, which included the following areas of update:

- i) A decision by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) was still awaited in respect of local government reorganisation. It was hoped this would be announced prior to the Easter recess of the House of Commons;
- ii) Proposals for the Structural Change Order to be submitted to MHCLG and the creation of a joint committee to prepare for a shadow authority for north Northamptonshire had now been agreed by Northamptonshire County Council, Borough Council of Wellingborough and Corby Borough Council, with Kettering Borough Council considering the proposals that evening, 6 March. Subject to the Structural Change Order being approved in parliament, the Shadow Authority would be required to meet within 14 days of that date;

- iii) The implementation plan and workstreams for the unitary programme were currently being reviewed with the new Programme Director, Keith Cheesman;
- iv) The budget for the programme was still being discussed and was likely to be higher than initially anticipated; about one-third of the costs were anticipated to be borne by the new authorities. This was not expected to have any impact on East Northamptonshire Council's own finances as it had already set aside £500,000 to fund the costs of the restructure and the proposed budget and reserve levels being considered by council on 4 March had been prepared to provide flexibility for additional monies required, but limited to the overall resources provided.

RESOLVED:

That the unitary update be noted.

(Reason: to keep Members up to date with developments on the unitary proposal)

457. PREPARING FOR UNITARY

The Business Transformation Manager provided a report updating members on the progress made in improving the council's services for residents, business and staff for the transition to a unitary council serving East Northamptonshire, Wellingborough, Corby and Kettering, and which introduced further work required to maintain momentum towards a safe and legal unitary council, for which further funding was requested.

It was noted that over the last year or two the Council had commenced or delivered a number of projects which were essential in themselves, but in many cases also supported the transition to unitary; these included:-

- ICT transformation;
- Joint working;
- HR shared service;
- Office Transformation project; and
- Paperless working

Having now completed the planning element of the paperless working programme, members noted that the proposed next phase of the programme would require additional funding, but that this would provide a number of benefits arise from successfully completing phases 2 and 3 of the project, including:-

- i) Bringing the council in line with North Northamptonshire council counterparts, which already worked with digitised data and documentation;
- ii) Enabling future mobile working across the council and possible satellite offices/remote working as the council headed towards unitary status;
- iii) Complying with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), with all document files assessed and categorised allowing for the application of an automated retention schedule;
- iv) A reduction in the time taken to respond to Freedom of Information or subject access requests.

A further workstream was also now emerging, which was staff development. This would involve a programme of training and development to ensure members of staff were prepared for working in a new unitary environment. The Chief Executive reported that he and the Leader had recently sent out a letter to all staff inviting expressions of interest in working on the unitary programme. This would involve a requirement for:

- Project roles - project manager, business analyst and project support
- Subject matter experts;
- Acting up into internal vacancies where principal posts had been seconded to the unitary programme;

Members were pleased to note that 50 staff had expressed an interest in this work. Further updates on this workstream would be presented to committee as work on it progressed.

RESOLVED:-

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) That option 1 of the paperless working proposal be endorsed;
- (c) That the Finance and Performance Sub-committee be recommended to approve the expenditure budget of £157,000, to be funded from the Local Government Re-organisation reserve, to deliver the remaining phases of the Paperless Working programme.

(Reason – to ensure GDPR compliance and to ensure our workforce is suitably skilled)

458. UPDATE ON THE OFFICE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

The Business Transformation Manager provided a report on the key elements of the Office Transformation Project (OTP). Members noted a small change to the third line of the final paragraph of section 4.1 of the report which should have read ‘...to be reduced to enable it to *fall* within overall Programme budget.’

Arising from discussion, the following principal points were noted:-

- i) Lessons learned arising from delivery of phase 1a of the project would be carried through to the further stages of the programme, with staff continuing to be engaged from a communications perspective to ensure feedback was captured;
- ii) The overall responses of planning staff to the change in their office environment were extremely positive. An example of feedback received that would be actioned whilst not originally in the scope of the project for future phases was the inclusion of sound insulation for meeting rooms;
- iii) The movement of staff from the Redbrick element of the Cedar Drive facility would enable the leasing of additional office space which would yield a potential income of £61,452 per annum, to be realised at the completion of phase 1b of the programme.

RESOLVED: that

Progress being made on the Office Transformation project be noted.

(Reason – to place the Council in the best position possible during a significant period of transformation and change.)

Chairman