



Transformation Committee 17 April 2019

Unitary – Progress Update

Purpose of report

This report provides a progress update on the unitary proposal submitted in August 2018.

1.0 Background

1.1 As the Committee is aware, 7 of the 8 principal authorities in Northamptonshire (every council except Corby BC) submitted a proposal on 31st August 2018 to replace the 8 councils with two unitary authorities, West and North Northamptonshire.

2.0 Recent developments

2.1 All 8 councils have now agreed Terms of Reference for the relevant Joint Committee for their area - West or North Northamptonshire - and have also decided their preferred content of the Structural Change Orders (minute 426 of the Extraordinary Council meeting on 25th February 2019 refers). Those preferences have been submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government ('the Secretary of State').

2.2 At the time of writing this report, we were still awaiting the Secretary of State's decision as to whether to proceed with our proposal and put the Structural Change Orders before parliament. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

2.3 The first meeting of the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee took place on 26th March. The agenda consisted of procedural items such as the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair and confirmation of the Terms of Reference adopted by the constituent councils.

2.4 It remains the position in North Northamptonshire that its Joint Committee will not need to meet until such time as the Secretary of State has made his decision. This will be kept under review.

3.0 Progress with the implementation programme

3.1 While the priority has to be for services to be safe and legal on Vesting Day, discussions are ongoing about the scope for the programme to be more transformational.

3.2 The programme structure and budget are therefore still to be signed off by the Leaders' and Chief Executives' Group.

4.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

4.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report. There are potentially significant implications from the unitary restructure, should it go ahead, and these will be addressed during the course of implementation.

5.0 Privacy Impact Implications

5.1 There are no privacy implications arising directly from this report. There are potentially significant implications from the unitary restructure, should it go ahead, and these will be addressed during the course of implementation.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The restructure is dependent on the relevant legislation being passed and there will be significant legal issues that will need to be addressed in order to create the new unitaries.

7.0 Risk Management

7.1 The primary risks to this council associated with the implementation of the new unitaries are the pressures on staff, particularly management, in participating in and / or running the projects required to do so, and the loss of staff at all levels and the potential difficulty of recruiting to those vacancies given the uncertainty over the future.

7.2 These risks and the steps being taken to mitigate them are set out in the risk register.

- RMCORP012 – Risk of unitary preparations diverting resources from delivery of Corporate/Efficiency Plans
- RMCORP012a – Prepare programme plan, assess resource requirements for delivery of transition to unitary

8.0 Resource and Financial Implications

8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The council has already set aside £500k to fund the costs of the restructure and, as set out in the previous report to this committee, it is likely that significant further sums will need to be allocated to the process. It is considered likely that the balance of the costs to be incurred in 2019/20 can be met through the business rates pilot funding that the Northamptonshire councils were recently awarded.

8.2 Significant staffing resources will be needed to support and deliver the programme of work over the next 15 months. Decisions will need to be taken in due course about the extent to which additional resources are brought in to cover for that loss of capacity and the extent to which current activities are de-prioritised.

9.0 Constitutional Implications

9.1 The new unitaries will need constitutions to be prepared and approved at their first meetings. Drafting has already begun. Provision has also been made within our Constitution for the creation of a Joint Committee prior to the creation of the Shadow Authority, a report for which was approved at the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 25 February 2019 (minute 427 refers) following consideration at this Committee.

10.0 Implications for our Customers

10.1 The resource implications referred to above will be a challenge that we will need to address in order to ensure that we maintain standards of service to our customers.

11.0 Corporate Outcomes



11.1 The intention is to implement the programme in order to achieve a positive impact on all of

the Council's corporate outcomes although, if and when the Council is abolished in 2020, it will be the outcomes adopted by the new North Northamptonshire Council that will become relevant.

12.0 Recommendation

12.1 The Committee is recommended to note the latest update on the unitary situation.

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

Legal	Power:				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers: Previous reports to this Committee on 16 January, 20 February and 6 March 2019					
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