

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 6 July 2009

PRESENT: Councillor Anthony Woods (Chair); Councillor Chris Millar (Deputy Chair); Councillors Wendy Amos, Sandra Barnes, Jim Bass, Robin Brown, Richard Church, Stephen Clerke, Keith Davies, Jane Hollis, Ken Melling, Andre Gonzales de Savage, John Townsend, Paul Varnsberry and Mr David Dickinson.

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

The Chief Executive of South Northamptonshire Council called for nominations for the appointment of a Chairman.

Councillor Chris Millar proposed and Councillor Sandra Barnes seconded that Councillor Tony Woods be appointed Chairman of the Joint Planning Committee for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Woods be appointed Chairman of the Joint Planning Committee.

The Chairman welcomed members of the public to the meeting and explained that the West Northamptonshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee had been established by statute to be the planning policy authority for West Northamptonshire. The Councillors of the Committee had been appointed by their respective councils and there were three observers who had non-voting rights from Wellingborough Borough Council (as being affected by some of the potential growth), West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (as the delivery vehicle that would be making the development control decisions) and a representative of the Labour Party as the life of the strategy would be until 2026. The Joint Planning Committee was supported by the Joint Planning Unit, which comprised professional planning officers, and it was also supported by a senior officer from each of the Councils sitting on the Programme Board. The Joint Planning Committee would set the overall planning policy and each council would have its own policies within that framework, for example, Northampton Borough's Central Area Action Plan. Furthermore, each District Council and the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation would make development control decisions within that framework.

The decision that the Joint Planning Committee would be making at this meeting was to approve the emergent Joint Core Strategy for public consultation. In November a pre-submission draft would be published for consultation prior to being submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2010. It was hoped that as many people as possible would contribute to the formal consultation period. The Chairman explained that the headline figures of housing and jobs had been set by Government and the Regional Assembly and could not be reduced, however a higher number of homes and jobs could be planned for. The Joint Planning Committee was attempting to do the best it could for West Northamptonshire; and jobs and infrastructure would be vital to the success of the Strategy.

The Chairman explained that anyone wishing to object to any of the proposals contained in the emergent Joint Core Strategy would need to give reasons to support their objection, for example that the flood risk assessment for a particular area indicated that the land in question was not suitable for the proposed development or that a proper traffic assessment

study had not been carried out. Objections should make reference to and use the evidence base, which had been published on the Internet. It would also be helpful if such objections also made suggestions as to where the development could go, equally referring to the evidence base, for example that in this location there was no flood risk and that the highways network was suitable to serve the proposed development. The Chairman commented that these plans would have a life of up to thirty years and clearly not all the development would happen quickly. The Joint Planning Committee felt that it was important to get the maximum benefit for the existing population and for new people coming into the area.

2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN

The Chairman called for nominations for the appointment of a Vice-Chairman.

Councillor Sandra Barnes proposed and Councillor Richard Church seconded that Councillor Chris Millar be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Planning Committee for the ensuing year.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Chris Millar be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Planning Committee for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Planning Committee held on 21 April 2009 were signed by the Chair.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillors Sandra Barnes, Chris Millar and Tony Woods declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as members of the WNDC Board.
2. Mr David Dickinson declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as a member of WNDC.
3. Councillors Sandra Barnes, Stephen Clarke and Tony Woods declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as members of the East Midlands Regional Assembly.
4. Councillor Andre Gonzales de Savage declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as Vice Chairman of Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council.
5. Councillor Wendy Amos declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as a member of WNDC's Planning Committee for Daventry.
6. Councillor P D Varnsvery declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Emergent Joint Core Strategy, as being acquainted with one of the speakers.

6. MATTERS OF URGENCY

None.

7. EMERGENT JOINT CORE STRATEGY

The Chair reported that Sally Townsend had tabled a question in accordance with the Joint Planning Committee's Supplementary Procedural Rules, which she then read out as follows:

"Is the JPU confident that the delivery of jobs and infrastructure will happen in support of the dwelling numbers identified in the Joint Core Strategy? History, experience and evidence show that jobs and infrastructure don't follow the housing build or is slow in coming forward or in being delivered. Existing residents need to be confident that the evidence for the needed infrastructure and finance is available for its delivery before more dwellings are built because jobs will not follow and more of the same will happen without commuting and increased traffic.

Are the JPU confident that developers will not state that they can only deliver if the housing is built and then avoid the risk of the developer going into liquidation, as many have already done, leaving dwellings empty and sites not finished?

If these risks are not evaluated and funding put in place to alleviate the shortfall, what will the JPU do to ensure the delivery of the Joint Core Strategy Vision?"

The Chairman commented that the document before the Joint Planning Committee was the Emergent Joint Core Strategy. Evidence had been and was continuing to be gathered in respect of what infrastructure was required. This had been referred to consistently throughout the process so far. Additionally, meetings with the highways authority and Department of Transport had taken place and would continue to do so. The base line study of public service providers also included the utility providers, the Police, education, health and many of these groups were already sharing their plans to meet the demand that the proposed growth would bring. The Strategy needed to show how infrastructure could be delivered and it would also identify gaps in funding. Several parts of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy referred to highways and public transport needs and also referred to the risks involved in delivering the strategy. The Joint Committee could not control the survival of individual developers but the planning period itself was over 25 years. The current situation in Daventry with the appeals provided a clear example and a warning of what could happen if a policy framework were not in place.

Mr David Haywood MBE, on behalf of CLASP, a registered charity interested in the archaeology of West Northamptonshire, commented that the Charity was primarily concerned with investigating the Romano/British history of West Northamptonshire and noted that other periods of history were also richly represented in the area. He commented that the Strategy should include the digging, recording and preservation of this historic landscape and include what would happen to any finds. Mr Haywood commented that CLASP would be happy to provide any assistance they could, as they already did for WNDC. He noted that the document was silent on these matters.

The Interim Head of the JPU commented that in respect of archaeology, the national guidelines were not considered part of a Core Strategy and it was not expected to repeat National Guidance. She noted that green infrastructure was included within the Emergent Joint Core Strategy and that an environmental sensitivity assessment had already taken place. She further commented that the assistance of CLASP would be welcomed.

Mr Rod Sellers, on behalf of the Residents Alliance of East and West Hunsbury and

Collingtree, commented that the residents had viewed the Emergent Joint Core Strategy with dismay and equally were unhappy that saying no to the proposals was not an option. The Residents Alliance were also dismayed that the Government were using outdated and flawed population figures, which had been taken up by the local planners. The Residents Alliance were also dismayed that the proposal by a local developer appeared to have been incorporated into the Policy, ie a development for 2,200 houses on farmland and golf course adjacent to Collingtree. He had previously written to the JPU and put forward reasoned arguments, including the fact that the development would not be sensitive to the existing community. He commented that the JPU had not yet carried out assessments of flood risk, landslip, highways needs and noise from the M1. He commented that the proposals provided nothing for existing residents.

The Chair commented that he had received correspondence from Mr Murray Croft on behalf of the Residents Alliance and on the same subject dated 5 July 2009 and enclosing previous correspondence on the same subject dated 9 November 2008.

Mr Allen Clarke, an English local historian and archaeologist, commented that it was part of Government policy that development should pay respect to and enhance local archaeology. He referred to the general plight of archaeology within Northamptonshire and compared this with RSS8, which stated the importance of archaeology. He was disappointed that the Emergent Joint Core Strategy did not make greater reference to this subject and commented that he could provide documentary evidence to support his statement. He noted that the Northampton Central Area Action Plan recognised PPG15, ie the protection of the built heritage but did not include PPG16, which concerned protecting archaeology below ground. He regarded this as a weakness. He commented that good strategy formed good policy and that the Strategy should comply with national advice and best practice.

The Interim Head of the JPU repeated her previous comment that a Joint Core Strategy was not required to repeat National Guidance. She also referred to the inclusion within the Emergent Strategy of green infrastructure and cultural heritage.

Mr Clarke commented that the term "Emergent" tended to imply that the document was in an immature stage of development and felt that it should make reference to national policy at a local level.

The Interim Head of the JPU submitted a report that sought the approval of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee to the publication and public consultation on the Emergent Joint Core Strategy as appended to the report. She noted that the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) would be the long term strategic plan for the development of West Northamptonshire and that it was a spatial policy document that dealt with places and activities that would take place within them. The production of a JCS was a legal requirement, which the partner authorities of Northampton Borough, Daventry District, South Northamptonshire and Northamptonshire County Councils had been required to produce by the Government. The four councils were working in close co-operation with the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) who would be a key body in the delivery of development and infrastructure. She noted that a pre-submission draft of the JCS was due for publication in November 2009 to meet the timetable, when a further period of consultation would take place. The JCS would then be submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2010 and an examination in public by the Planning Inspectorate around September 2010. She confirmed the statement of the Chairman that it was not an option to say no to the principle of growth but local choices could be made as to how this growth would be implemented. Further clarification of job provision, housing market needs and transportation assessments were all required. She commented that the stage had been reached for the current document to be made available for public debate and to move forward from the issues and options documents previously published in 2007. The Emergent JCS set out the preferred

directions for strategic growth, particularly around Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley; the pivotal importance of retail investment to town centre regeneration; the essential need to deliver infrastructure and the policy approach to sustaining rural communities and the character of the countryside. The publication of the Emergent JCS would allow for a wide discussion and would help service providers to consider their plans for dealing with the growth. The strategy was about existing communities as well as new ones. It was not the final plan; it needed to reflect what local people wanted especially in terms of facilities that would benefit existing communities.. She noted that a sustainability appraisal of the Emergent JCS was ongoing and would be published alongside the JCS as part of the consultation in mid-July 2009.

The Interim Head of the JPU commented that following advice from Queens Counsel that the Committee should consider an additional recommendation to the report as follows:

“That the Interim Head of the JPU is delegated authority in consultation with the Chair of the Joint Planning Committee to make further editorial changes that:

- clarify the policy approach and the response sought from consultees, for example that each section includes a “policy approach” as that in the sections covering 4.8.3 – Green Infrastructure and Cultural Heritage,
- improve the readability and signposting of the document, and
- correct any grammatical and typographical errors.”

Queens Counsel advice had been that the final sentence of paragraph 1.12 on page 2 of the report be deleted and replaced by:

“Consultation arrangements will provide further opportunities for the public to make representations at the pre-submission stage.

The Interim Head of the JPU noted that once the Emergent Joint Core Strategy was published for consultation a number of public exhibitions, briefings for Councillors and Parish Councils and other events aimed at other stakeholders, such as developers and landowners, would be undertaken. The consultation that had take place and the comments received were required to be made available to the Joint Planning Committee. She noted that the focus growth in the plan period up to 2031 was on Northampton, including regeneration in Northampton to relieve pressure on the other towns although they too were clearly to be allocated some growth.

A discussion ensued in respect of the report, comment being made on the importance of infrastructure and the need for the growth to be infrastructure led. It was noted that it was critical to have a JCS in place so as to avoid the current situation in Daventry, where development was being led by appeals from developers against refusal of planning permission because a policy framework did not currently exist. It was also noted that the regeneration of Northampton town centre, Daventry and Towcester would be critical to the success of the Strategy and that it was also important that whilst villages also needed services rural areas could be protected from significant development beyond those areas that will be subject to urban extensions. These could be handled sympathetically.

The Interim Head of the JPU then referred to the appendix to the report, which set out the Emergent Joint Core Strategy and circulated four “matters” to be considered as amendments to the document.

Matter 1 was to insert into the Foreword on page iii some further paragraphs as follows:

“The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy will be the long term strategic plan for the development of the area so it will deal with the big picture of what will happen here. It will be a “spatial” plan which means it deals with places and the activities that happen within them. It will replace parts of the local plans for Daventry District, South Northamptonshire District and Northampton Borough.

This document is the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy- “emergent strategy”. It sets out current thinking with respect to the policy approach that should be taken in West Northamptonshire and is based on the evidence collected to date. It is not a draft plan or final strategy but is based on a significant body of work.

Following a six week consultation period, further work with key stakeholders and further evidence gathering this thinking will become firmer, the document will change and it will become the Joint Core Strategy that will be put forward for submission to the Government Office for the East Midlands. At that point- in November 2009 a further consultation period will take place.

At present some parts of the now well developed evidence base are clearer than others- the contents of this plan must not, therefore, be seen as a firm commitment to the policy approach contained within although much of the evidence base is strong in the context of the objectives of the plan. Where further work is needed we have endeavoured to note this in the text. The evidence base can be found on the following website:

www.westnorthamptonshirejpu.org

We want to know whether the proposed policy approach is supported? If so, why? And if not, why not?
Respond to:”

and Matter 2 was to insert on page 5 paragraph 2.0.1 paragraphs headed Spatial Portrait Summary as follows-

“Spatial Portrait Summary

West Northamptonshire sits at the cross roads of the East and West Midlands regions well within the influence of the economy of London. The Capital’s influence on the area will persist throughout the plan period and beyond. West Northamptonshire is set to receive a significant amount of growth with around 62,000 new dwellings and over 37,000 new jobs between 2001 and 2026. It requires considerable investment in transport, utilities, health and other social infrastructure to support this growth and ensure vital towns and rural areas. The people of the area come from diverse social groupings and bring a wide range of skills and qualities to the areas’ economy and social life.

West Northamptonshire has:

- Excellent connections to the rest of the country and mainland Europe particularly by rail- contrasting with increased congestion.
- Attractive rolling rural landscapes typified by mixed agricultural use, woodland and country houses together with many rivers, lakes, reservoirs and canals that also characterise its towns.
- A strongly defined settlement pattern with Northampton as the primart town, market towns and villages.
- High levels of car ownership and usage.
- Abroad based economy with high economic activity rates.
- High house prices in parts of the area but in comparison with national prices affordability is relatively good, particularly given its close proximity to the south east.
- Areas of high incomes and wealth contrasting with areas of significant deprivation particularly in Northampton and Daventry.

Wide ranging cultural and sporting facilities, including international assets such as Silverstone race circuit.

Key Matters for the Strategy

The need to accommodate growth is not a choice- the area is a national growth area and this growth must be managed to benefit existing and future residents, visitors and businesses.

Elements of the existing infrastructure in West Northamptonshire are at or close to capacity. Compared to the growth sought, the infrastructure capacity would be inadequate in terms of transport and utilities- the strategy will address this need to support additional growth with the appropriate physical, social and green infrastructure and its delivery is reliant upon a host of public sector partners. Investment is needed to ensure that the towns do not become so congested that it affects economic performance or diminishes the quality of life to the extent that it becomes an unattractive place to live.

Some parts of the towns have great potential for regeneration, renewal and revitalisation which the strategy will address. These include the western and eastern arcs of Northampton (for renewal), the town centre of Northampton (for regeneration) and the commercial centres of Towcester, Brackley and Daventry (for revitalisation). In addition the commercial centres of Northampton require improvement.

Competition with other towns in the locality means that the commercial centres lose trade to other towns and retail parks eg Northampton loses significant trade to Milton Keynes and its retail parks, yet could provide a very different offer in terms of retail and leisure experience, whilst Daventry needs to maintain a position in relation to its near neighbours as they grow eg Northampton, Rugby, Banbury and Milton Keynes. This is to be addressed in the strategy.

The connections between and within some of the towns need to be improved to make the area an effectively functioning network. This will be addressed.

Some of the towns in West Northamptonshire would benefit from enhanced cultural and social facilities namely in Northampton and Towcester. This too is to be addressed in the strategy.

The need to manage the impacts of climate change and reduce the environmental impact of the area is pressing. The strategy will address this matter”

The Joint Committee agreed to the inclusion of these paragraphs.

Matter 3 referred to the removal of paragraph 3.0.3 on page 8 and the insertion of:

“The Local Area Agreement

The Joint Core Strategy will support and help deliver the range of targets contained within the Local Area Agreement for Northamptonshire. The current Local Area Agreement runs from 2008-2011.”

The Joint Planning Committee agreed to this amendment.

Matter 4 referred to the insertion of further paragraphs after 4.0.1 on page 12 and after paragraph 4.0.2, also on page 12.

The Joint Planning Committee agreed to this addition.

The Joint Planning Committee agreed to the amendment of the Vision on page 9 in respect of the fifth paragraph so as to remove the word “centre” and be replaced by “market town”.

The Interim Head of the JPU referred to paragraph 4.0.6 on page 12 and commented that there were further concerns in respect of the identified sites of Northampton South and Northampton Junction 16, which should reflect the comments made on page 30 respect of flood risk assessments and highways assessments.

A discussion ensued in respect of Northampton Junction 16, there being a discrepancy between the land area identified for employment potential and the SELA study of the area. Comment in respect of the sustainability of the site was discussed in terms of it having no sense of place. The Interim Head of the JPU noted that this site had been put forward as employment land if sufficient sites could not be identified within the existing urban areas and that the SELA study is a piece of evidence that is still being completed.

Reference was then made to the proposed development at Northampton North between Moulton and Overstone. Councillor Church proposed and Councillor Millar seconded that the following statement be added in a suitable location of the Emergent JCS:

“The core strategy will seek to strengthen the role of Northampton University, Moulton College, Northampton College and other centres of learning, enabling them to become hubs for generating economic activity and foster specialist business clusters.

The university, colleges and other centres of learning will provide an opportunity to establish a stronger identity for their respective neighbourhoods and will enable higher density mixed use developments in their locale.

Learning opportunities in West Northamptonshire will be maximised by the ready physical access to the university and other higher, further and lifelong learning facilities. These facilities will be a key feature in varying the local skills base, attracting new employers and affording generations the chance to stay in West Northamptonshire rather than seeking employment outside the county”

In answer to a question the Interim Head of the JPU noted that housing evidence was being reviewed and updated through the Housing Market Needs Assessment, which would probably lead to a revision of the affordable housing requirement for South Northamptonshire Council. She agreed that the table on page 16 would highlight that this was the case and that current evidence had to be used in this version of the strategy.

At this juncture the Chair proposed that in accordance with the Joint Planning Committee’s Supplementary Procedural Rules the two hour guillotine on the length of meetings be waived so as to allow the discussions to continue. This proposal was accepted.

Councillor Chris Millar proposed and Councillor Ken Melling seconded that paragraph 4.3.16 be reworded to read:

“DIRFT is a current strategic location for storage and distribution and, as a significant site, is noted in the key diagram. The East Midlands Plan requires further rail serviced sites to be provided for within the West Northamptonshire housing market area during the Plan period. DIRFT is potentially a location for further storage and distribution growth due to its rail connection and market viability. A Route Utilisation Strategy and Rail Freight Study are currently being drafted and developed. On conclusion of this strategy and study a preferred choice can be made with respect to further strategic location for storage and distribution.”

The proposal was agreed.

The Interim Head of the JPU noted that Sections 4.3 and 4.5 needed to be clarified by an explanation that assessments were still being worked on.

At this juncture the Chairman adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes at 20:10 hours until 20:15 hours.

In respect of Section 4.5.1.11, relating to Northampton South East, the Interim Head of the JPU asked the Joint Planning Committee to note the need to include a flood risk assessment as well as the evidence base to support the potential development of 18,000 dwellings. It was noted that the initial housing figure to 2026 was 6,250, but it was believed that the proposed infrastructure enhancements would allow for the development of up to 18,000 dwellings over the longer planned period to 2031. She noted that work in detail on transport modelling and other supportive infrastructure was taking place. The JCS needed to say at this stage that the evidence suggested that this level of growth could be sustained.

Comment was made on the need to consider East/West transportation flows particularly in Northampton North and also improvements to the A43, it being noted that the County Council had already looked at what was needed for the A43. It was also noted that road improvements could be phased. The Director for Planning and Regeneration noted that the JCS was a strategic document and once agreed it would influence the spending plans of different funding bodies. Where infrastructure was needed this would form part of any planning permission and would be made an absolute requirement.

In answer to a question the Head of the JPU noted that once all existing planning permissions and site assessments had been taken into account, the urban capacity figure for Northampton stood at about 5,500. This capacity was being considered in the light of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. It was noted that the figure quoted was lower than previous studies have indicated but that the difference might be partially explained by a different treatment of allotment land and increasing evidence that former commercial buildings had not been developed for housing at the previously anticipated rate. David Dickinson noted that an assessment of employment land on brown field sites was outstanding and that NEL intended to carry out such a survey from September.

The Interim Head of the JPU noted that the final bullet point under paragraph 4.5.4.2, in respect of Brackley North and the infrastructure required, should be deleted. She noted that on page 45 the retail capacity figures should be included using the evidence from the Retail Capacity Study.

In respect of paragraph 4.8.1.4 it was noted that Billing was mentioned twice and one of the references should be deleted and replaced by St Davids.

A discussion ensued with regard to Sixfields and the fact that it was not included in the hierarchy of retail centres. It was noted that Sixfields was not regarded as a district centre and therefore was not given specific mention within the JCS. It was also noted that the Joint Planning Committee had already agreed to the regeneration of Northampton Town Centre as the primary commercial centre. The recent Retail Capacity Study had made it clear that the town centre had been adversely affected by out of town retail parks. The JCS did, however, acknowledge Kingsthorpe and Weston Favell as local centres.

It was noted that South Northamptonshire Council had commissioned a Rural Interim Housing Policy in respect of the sustainability of villages, as two appeals had recently been lost because such policy was not already in place. It was noted that evidence to support the hierarchy of villages to accommodate growth needed to be clear.

In respect of developing infrastructure the Director of Planning and Regeneration noted that there were several ways in which funding might be secured, either through Government investment or private sector investment and that there were ways to develop front ending of the funding. This would give Developers certainty about the future, which helped them to make the investment necessary. If the money was provided up front then the Developer could get this money back over the life of the project. Details of how this might work in the West Northamptonshire context needed to be further considered.

The Interim Head of the JPU noted that the West Northamptonshire Sports Strategy provided good information on sports and leisure needs, as well as children's play. These would be important aspects of the JCS. It was also noted that even in sensitive environments development was not necessarily ruled out. It was a question of whether the development could be carried out in a sufficiently sympathetic or sensitive way.

The Interim Head of the JPU confirmed that paper copies of the Emergent JCS would be sent to all Parish Councils who would also have the opportunity of consultation meetings with the JPU. Residents Associations would be circulated with the documents in non-parished areas and copies would be placed in libraries and schools (where possible).

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the report, as amended at the suggestion of Queens Counsel, be received.
- (2) That the publication of the Emergent Joint Core Strategy as set out in Appendix A and as amended by the Joint Planning Committee be published for the purpose of public consultation to commence as soon as practicable for a 6 week period.
- (3) That the Interim Head of the JPU is delegated authority in consultation with the Chair to make further editorial changes that:
- clarify the policy approach and the response sought from consultees, for example that each section includes a "policy approach" as that in sections covering 4.8.3 – Green Infrastructure and Cultural Heritage,
 - improve the readability and signposting of the document, and
 - correct any grammatical and typographical errors.

8. FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT PROTOCOL

The Head of Corporate Services for South Northamptonshire Council submitted a report that sought approval to a Financial and Procurement Protocol so as to clarify the arrangements in relation to the operation of the Joint Planning Unit. He noted that the proposal would put the Protocol and Memorandum of Intent and the proposed service contracting arrangements on a formal contractual footing. He commented that the respective Section 151 officers and Monitoring Officers of all four councils had been consulted. The Head of Corporate Services noted that paragraph 16 of the Protocol should be amended by the replacement of "31 May" by "31 October". At the suggestion of Councillor Stephen Clarke it was agreed that paragraph 56 of the Protocol should be expanded to make clear that where an audit report contained an assurance level or recommendations that would normally result in reference to an Audit Committee locally, such reference should apply for any JPU related reports.

- RESOLVED:** (1) That the Finance and Procurement Protocol as amended and appended to the report be agreed.
- (2) That the officers of the partner authorities seek approval as quickly as practicable to the completion of a legal agreement incorporating the Protocol, the Memorandum of Intent and agency arrangements to enable South Northamptonshire Council to contract for the relevant services on behalf of all partner authorities.

The meeting concluded at 21.11 hours