

Members' Accommodation for the Shadow Authorities – West Northamptonshire



Overview

- The Growth Infrastructure & Public Estates Leader's Briefing session presented a number of questions to Leaders of the West sovereign councils.
- The aim of the session was to gain agreement on an interim location for Shadow authority Members to hold full council meetings.
- The reason for the urgency of a decision is that the cost to repurpose or modify a space to hold meetings is likely to fall under procurement rules which can necessitate a lengthy tendering process.
- A matrix outlining potential options was presented to the Leaders to help enable the discussion.



What we know - logistical and admin requirements

- The Member's accommodation will need to be ready to hold full Council meetings for the Shadow Authority by 21st May 2020.
- The Member's accommodation for the Shadow Authority will need space for:
 - 93 Members
 - Officers and members of the press and public
- A building(s) to host the Executive Committee meetings (assume meeting space to hold 30)
- A building(s) to host future Committee meetings
- Delegate units in sufficient quantity or an appropriate substitute
- Webcasting arrangements, if required
- Arrangements for recording votes
- Electronic hosting of paperwork
- Democratic Services support for the Shadow Council



Assumptions

- The building(s) where full council meetings are held may not necessarily be the new named HQ for the unitary going forward
- In the short term (May – Sept) the council meetings will be in a space but the support services could be provided by an authority in a different location.
- The Executive Committee and Committees of the Shadow Council will be of a more easily manageable membership size, and could either be held in existing large meeting rooms in existing buildings or in the same building allocated for full council meetings
- Commercial venues are included in the options to ensure geographical reach
- That the full Council meetings will be open, transparent and modern; i.e. willing to consider the adoption of:
 - Webcasting (subject to cost)
 - Social media as a communications channel
 - Paperless meetings
- Costs will need to be carefully managed therefore ‘internal’ venues and equipment may be preferred if the costs including any necessary modifications are lower than an external option. This could include considering the use of large Council owned venues such as leisure centres as an interim measure.
- Delegate units will not be readily available in sufficient quantity and will therefore need to be procured and budgeted for. Consideration needs to be given, set against timescales of hire versus purchase for the new unitary council going forward



Timeline

- Paper on the agreed approach to Joint Committees: March 2020
- Elections: 7th May
- First full council meeting on or before 21st May
- First Executive Committee meeting: before 28th May



- The following questions were posed to Leaders of the **WEST** Districts and Boroughs (Including the County Council) regarding the interim Shadow accommodation;
- Is there a preference for an internal Council-owned venue?
 - Yes, an internal venue is preferable. The collective view was taken to utilise the chamber at County Hall for meetings of the full Shadow Council.
- Is there a preference to hire or buy equipment/furniture?
 - The more cost effective solution is preferable. More detailed costings are required (these are in the process of being requested)
- Is the preference towards low cost repurposing/modification?
 - Yes
- What are the minimum access needs for council meetings?
 - None, although by selecting County Hall good transport links, bus routes and parking are available. No special provisions for Member parking required (no free or dedicated parking provision).
- One venue for both to share or separate sites?
 - No desire to share a site in the North. The West Shadow meetings must be held in a location in the new West authority.
- Does the office space for supporting Officers need to be the same location as the Council meetings?
 - No, not necessarily, although it is possible that the interim CEX will share their time between their Sovereign Council duties and the location of the Shadow authority Leader.
- Should council meetings aim to be paperless ?
 - No. This is a decision for the new authorities to take forward.
- Minimal technical equipment or fully IT enabled e.g. Web casting voting buttons (individual units or sharing)?
 - No. This is a decision for the new authorities to take forwards.
- Just for Shadow Council meetings or also use for Shadow Executive meetings?
 - The collective view was taken for the Exec Committee meetings to rotate between each of the 4 main buildings in the West (N.B. Northampton has two sites, these would only count as one to help ensure a fair distribution of meetings across the West).

Northamptonshire West: Interim Accommodation for Shadow Councils - Recommendations

Following the guidance from the Leaders' workshop the following is **recommended**:

- County Hall is progressed as the preferred location of West Northamptonshire Shadow Council Meeting for the initial short term (May – Sept).
- Detailed costings to be obtained for the configuration of County Hall including the supporting AV system.
- Options for webcasting, paperless offices and electronic voting are not required at this stage – this will be a future decision for the Shadow Council.
- Executive Committee meetings to rotate between each of the 4 main buildings in West Northamptonshire.
- Car Parking will be for members to arrange themselves
- A Members room and office(s) should be available in each of the main council buildings for the new Shadow Council

