



FUTURE NORTHANTS

Latest news on the unitary programme

February 2020

It's all systems go after SCO

*Update from Paul Helsby
Programme Director*

The Structural Changes Order (SCO) – the legislation that formalises the creation of the two new unitary authorities on 1 April next year – was recently passed by Parliament.

All eight councils have been working together on progressing preparations for the new unitaries since the Government originally outlined the proposals in late 2018 and the SCO's approval provides us with the formal confirmation and certainty we need as our work continues.

It also means that preparations are now being made to set up two new shadow councils that will lead the unitary work and elections for these will be taking place on Thursday, 7 May.

The new councillors to be elected by residents on 7 May – 93 in the West and 78 in the North – will initially sit on the shadow councils then automatically become elected members of the new unitary authorities from 1 April 2021.

Work is also continuing at pace on the Design Phase. Teams are making excellent progress towards creating a 'Strawman' for each of the new councils, which are early draft models of how the new services will look and work – [view our Strawman video to find out more](#).

As part of this process we recently engaged Leaders in a series of workshops to gauge their views on future service design. These sessions have provided a valuable insight as we prepare the Strawmen which, once complete, will then be refined and worked upon further to create draft blueprints for the new councils.

It is anticipated the draft blueprints will be ready by June so that they can be considered by the new North and West shadow councils. Once the blueprints are



Leaders at the Environmental & Regulatory Services workshop (above) and (below) Paul Helsby with Andrew Flockhart, left.



finalised later this summer we will then enter the Implementation Phase – the stage when we put the designs into practice to ensure that the new services are ready to go on Day One of the two new councils.

As we progress this new and exciting journey, we are fortunate to be able to draw upon the advice and expertise of Andrew Flockhart, from the Local Government Association.

Former Poole Chief Executive Andrew played a key role in the Dorset unitary reorganisation and is an experienced and knowledgeable 'critical friend' who challenges and provides helpful advice for the whole programme so that we learn from his experience. During his recent visit to Northants, he was impressed with the progress being made and the use of the Engine Room as a 'great working space.'

Portfolio updates

Portfolios from across the Future Northants Programme are busy progressing their various work streams.

Click on the links below to read the latest updates from Senior Responsible Officers across the Programme:

[Adult Social Care and Health & Social Care Integration](#)

[Children's Social care and Education Services](#)

[Growth, Infrastructure and Public Estates](#)

[Revenues & Benefits and Community & Leisure](#)

[Housing](#)

[Corporate Services and Customer & Digital](#)

[Environmental Services and Regulatory Services](#)

Spotlight on shadow arrangements

The Structural Changes Order (SCO) requires two new Shadow Authorities to be formed to lead the work to create the North and West unitary councils. Here's an overview of how these authorities will be set up and what they will do.

What are shadow authorities and how will they work?

The West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire shadow authorities will be responsible for ensuring the safe and legal creation of the new unitary councils on 1 April 2021, including setting their first budgets and Council Tax levels.

They will run alongside the county, district and borough councils until they are abolished on 1 April 2021.

The shadow councils will not be responsible for delivering services

to Northamptonshire residents and this remains the responsibility of the eight existing councils until 1 April 2021.

How will the shadow authorities be set up?

Elections will take place on Thursday, 7 May when residents will be able to vote for the councillors that sit on these new North and West shadow authorities.

There will be 78 councillors in the North – three seats for each of the 26 electoral divisions – and 93 councillors elected in the West – three seats for each of the 31

electoral divisions. These divisions are based on similar geographical areas to the existing county council division areas.

The new councillors will initially sit on the shadow councils then automatically become elected members of the new unitary authorities from 1 April 2021. Members will then serve on the new unitaries until the next elections in 2025.

Each Shadow Authority will have a Leader and an Executive, which will be selected from those elected and will lead on the work to determine the structure, budget and service delivery models for the new councils.

One of the first tasks by each shadow authority will be to appoint interim statutory officer roles, including an interim Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial officer (Section 151).

Where will the shadow authorities meet?

Each shadow authority will decide its own meeting and committee arrangements once it is formed, however ahead of this the North and West Joint Committees will propose interim venues to ensure the shadow authorities can hold their first meetings after the elections in May.

Options currently being explored involve using County Hall in Northampton as an interim West venue and Kettering Conference centre as an interim North venue, with proposals to tour the shadow executives around each unitary area.

The joint committees are currently overseeing the work to create the two shadow authorities and will cease once the new shadows are formed.

Help us spread the word online

You may have noticed that websites and social media channels have been created to provide the latest news and information on Future Northants.

You can find more on the unitary process at

www.futurenorthantsnorth.org

and

www.futurenorthantswest.org

We'll also be using Twitter and Facebook to keep residents informed. These are relatively new and you can help us reach a wider audience by following the accounts and sharing our posts:

Future Northants North:

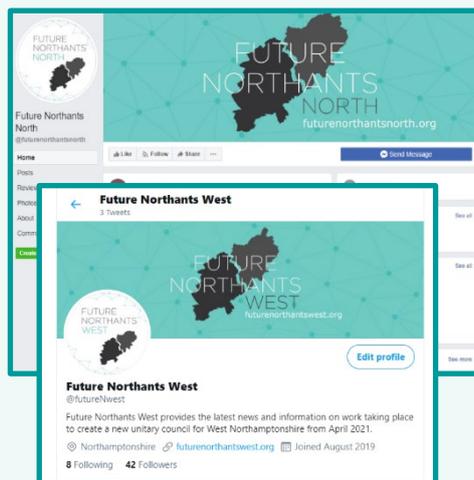
Twitter - @futureNnorth - <https://twitter.com/futureNnorth>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/futurenorthantsnorth/>

Future Northants West:

Twitter - @futureNwest - <https://twitter.com/futureNwest>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/futurenorthantswest/>



Joint committees set to meet shortly

Interim meeting venues for the shadow authorities and proposals for an Implementation Team will be considered at the March meetings of the joint committees.

The West Northamptonshire Joint Committee will meet on 3 March at NCC, One Angel Square at 6pm – [view the agenda and reports here.](#)

The North Northamptonshire Joint Committee will meet on 5 March at 6.30pm at Kettering Borough Council. [View the agenda and reports here](#)