



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

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Minutes of a meeting of the **RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, at 7.00 pm Thursday 6 September 2012

PRESENT: Mr B Roper (Chairman – in the Chair)
Mrs C Cartwright
Mr W J Cross
Mr D Hollis
Mr J M Lammie
Mr B A Montgomery
Mr J Munton
Mrs C L Vernon
Miss G Waller
Mr A S Walters

In attendance: Mr R J Gale

Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Finance and Asset Management

Mr M Pocock Portfolio Holder for Resources and Places Operations (including Highways and Waste services)

Officers present: Mr I Baugh Democratic Services Officer
Mrs D Mogg Strategic Director for Resources

Apologies: Mr D Hollis, Mr E Baines

294 RECORD OF MEETING

AGREED

That the Record of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 19 July 2012, copies of which had been previously circulated, be confirmed.

295 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

296 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received from members of the public.

297 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from members.

298 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No Notices of Motion had been received from members.

299 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE PANEL FOR A DECISION IN RELATION TO A CALL IN OF A DECISION

No matter was referred to the Panel for a decision in relation to call in of a decision in accordance with Procedure Rule 206.

SCRUTINY

300 Q1 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2012/13

Report No. 164/2012 (Q1 Performance Management Report) was received from the Chief Executive.

Mrs Mogg introduced the report. With regard to 4.6 (Audit Recommendations) more detail would be provided to the Audit & Risk Committee on 25 September. On page 5 of the report it was noted that the sickness figures for Resources were inflated due to a number of staff being on long term sick leave. There had been no significant changes in performance on FOI responses. Areas for improvement included recovery of sundry debt and some Democratic Services indicators.

On page 8 it was noted that IT service desk calls and response times were moving towards their target times.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) A question was asked whether changes in sickness reporting procedures had led to any changes; it was noted that procedures had not changed but were being more rigidly enforced by managers. It was noted that officers were now starting to review sickness management policies. When these new policies are in force appropriate training will then be provided to all managers.
- ii) A question was raised as to whether or not we compare our sickness figures with other authorities. It was noted that comparisons are difficult but we do compare figures with the national average for local authorities and Rutland are well below these figures.

AGREED

The contents of Report no 164/2012 were noted by the Panel.

301 Q1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT 2012/13

Report No. 146/2012 from the Strategic Director of Resources was received.

Mrs Mogg introduced the report and noted that at present an overspend of £264k was being reported. Resources financial issues were documented in Appendix A3 on p49. Some financial pressure existed around welfare reform and housing support.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i). A question was asked whether the proposed IT solution was a package or in-house. It was noted that the package used is an off-the-shelf package used by several other Local Authorities.
- ii). A Question was raised concerning the Minimum Revenue Provision budget. It was noted that this was a statutory calculation and the final position was not known at the time the budget was set. Paragraph 4.13 noted details of outstanding legal claims, the figures were estimates based on the probability of the claims being made and were included in budgets. Following changes to international financial reporting rules all such claims have to be declared even if not all materialised.
- iii). A question was asked about changes to the model for business rates, this would not take effect until April 2013, the Council was working to model the income based on the latest Government proposals. These would not be finalised until later in the year.
- iv). A question was asked regarding the overspend of £490k and the extent to which this was a financial pressure. It was noted that the actual figure was £264k and we were still in Q1. As a result of tighter budgetary control and management further savings would be drawn out as the year progressed.
- v). A question was asked about the expenditure on agency staff. It was noted that this had not resulted from any restructuring but the retirement of key senior personnel; skilled interim staff were required to carry forward important safeguarding work. There was some discussion about the extent to which savings would mean cuts to services. It was noted that this was not the case at present. Savings can still be made to avoid actual cuts to services.

AGREED

The contents of Report no 146/2012 were noted by the Panel.

302 UPDATE ON COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

Report No. 172/2012 was received from the Strategic Director of Resources. Mrs Mogg introduced the report and noted the work being carried out regarding the consultation process. The website was up and running and officers have been visiting libraries to meet with members of the public. It was

noted that the current Government proposals intend for there to be no financial impact on Town and Parish Councils and were working on a national reduction of the order of 10%. In practice, Authorities for whom comparative information had been obtained showed a range of 16-22%. The Government were assuming that the level of take-up of benefits would reduce.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i). A question was asked about when the consultation letter was sent to Parishes; it was noted this would go out by the end of the week.
- ii). A question was asked about the number of forms completed in libraries; these were still to be counted. It was agreed that Mrs Mogg would circulate the web link to all members.
- iii). A request was made for a breakdown of the impact of the changes on different groups.
- iv). A question was asked about using Rutland Radio for the consultation. It was noted that an item had gone out in the early stages.
- v). It was suggested that the Scrutiny Panel may wish to see the outcome of the consultation before they were presented to Cabinet. It was agreed to arrange a special meeting of the Scrutiny Panel to discuss the outcome.
- vi). A question was asked whether the proposals were from the Conservative government; it was noted that they were proposed by the Conservative/Liberal coalition.
- vii). A question was asked concerning the fact that previously the government had reimbursed against claims now it was as bulk figure – what happened in future? It was noted that this will be built into future Council budgets and was part of the Government's aim to localise services and service provision. The risk to the Council would be falling levels of employment, eg Armed Forces redundancies.
- viii). A question was asked as to how many people in Rutland only just had their heads above the financial water. It was noted that only partial information on this was available.
- ix). Mr King noted the event on 26 September to explain the implications of the changes in detail to members. An invite would be issued tomorrow.

AGREED

- **The contents of Report no 146/2012 were noted by the Panel.**
- **To arrange a special meeting of the Panel to scrutinise the outcome of the consultation process.**

303 FORWARD PLAN

The Chairman noted the following items that were due to be presented to the Panel:

18 Sept – report on Treasury management

12 Nov – draft Council Tax support paper to Cabinet

The Chairman noted that the report on IT Services would be presented to the December meeting of the Panel.

The Panel was awaiting a follow up report re Legal Services , this should come to the December meeting.
The Chairman agreed to respond to the issues raised by Cllr Richardson via the next Scrutiny Commission meeting.

It was suggested that when the legal services report was discussed that representatives of the various departments which use their services be invited to attend and comment.

304 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

It was requested that the agenda of the next Parish Council forum meeting be sent out as soon as possible to alert Parishes to the item on Council Tax Support.

Mrs Mogg noted that she would be going on maternity leave in mid November, work was underway to finalise and arrange cover for her period of absence.

The Chairman and the Panel Members wished Mrs Mogg well.

305 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 6 December 2012

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.08 pm