



Rutland County Council

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Record of a special meeting of the **CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham at 7.00 pm on **Thursday 24 June 2010**.

PRESENT: Mr N M Wainwright (in the Chair)
Mr V Dighé
Mr L J Duckham
Mr T C Ellis
Mr P J W Golden
Mr P D Ind
Mr B W Roper

Also in Attendance Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Development and Finance

OFFICERS
PRESENT: Mr M Baish Director of Corporate Services
Mrs J Wall Director of Development
Mrs C Sanderson Head of Asset Management and Property Services

APOLOGIES: Mr T G Lovell

160 RECORD OF LAST MEETING

The record of the meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel held on 22 April 2010, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

161 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr N M Wainwright declared a personal but non-prejudicial interest in item 7, Corporate Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy, in that he is the Local Authority School Governor for Catmose College

162 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

163 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions were received from Members

164 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion were received from Members.

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

166 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Report No 117/2010 from the Directors of Development and Corporate Services, as considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 15 June 2010, was received. The report presented the Corporate Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy for 2010 to 2013 prior to its submission to Council. The Plan set out the processes by which Rutland County Council managed its property assets and allocated capital resources to maximise their contribution to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Objectives.

The Head of Asset Management and Property Services addressed the Panel and advised Members that the format of the document had changed slightly from previous years. The Capital Strategy and the Asset Plan were intrinsically linked, therefore the two had been combined into a three year rolling plan. The Council's assets made up the bulk of the Plan; managing efficiency was also an important aspect, as was how the Plan would be reviewed and challenged going forward.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Improved documentation had been introduced during 2009/10 and had been used for all project work across the team. Going forward, a review would be undertaken in 2010/11 to assess whether this improved documentation had had a positive impact on project management within the team.
- b) A number of projects had been outstanding for a substantial amount of time and funding for projects could also not be guaranteed until money had been ring fenced.
- c) As the updates to the Plan had commenced prior to the General Election held in May 2010, some of the judgements and comments contained in the background documents information were not in line with new policy.
- d) Deliverable projects could not be finalised until October 2010. The Government's spending review was due to happen in the autumn of 2010.
- e) The Local Transport Plan was subject to a mix of grant and borrowed funding. Going forward, this was to be looked into, with a view to progressing supported borrowing.
- f) A review of the funding formula would be undertaken over the forthcoming year.
- g) Roads could not be sold, however they were still classed as assets. Highway funding came through as grant and borrowed funding and a CMDN had been raised in 2009 which stated "not to automatically borrow". Going forward, more detail on projects was to be provided prior to investment.
- h) With regards to procurement for repairs to buildings, the East Midlands Property Alliance Framework was used for any works over £10,000.00. Smaller

contractors, registered with Constructionline, were procured for smaller works. This process was identified as being of best value, as the procurement process was efficient and it cut down on the design skills that were needed in house.

- i) Work had been undertaken to ensure that the Council was getting value for money from contractors. Contractors had previously been allocated on an individual job basis, but going forward work would be undertaken in order to see if jobs could be grouped together utilising the same contractors. This would be more cost effective in the long term.
- j) A certain percentage of funds had to be spent on contractors located within certain proximity of the site. For works under £10,000.00 the Rutland area would be searched first; if no suitable contractor could be found, then the search would be widened.
- k) A lot of work engaging with clients was undertaken during the early stages; this was especially prevalent with regard to schools. Contractors would approach the schools at an earlier stage to advise on the works situation and to help meet the schools' expectations. Monitoring controls were also in place to ensure that this arrangement was in no way abused.
- l) The way the Council valued its assets was dictated by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Many of the Council's assets were valued at market value, however if an asset became a disposable asset in the future, its value would be re-evaluated.
- m) The majority of assets were, at that time, working for the Council. However, Barleythorpe Hall and its associated grounds were likely to go back on the market in July 2010, as was a part of Ashwell depot. There were numerous other assets which were used, but that did not necessarily generate an income, for example the library.
- n) The units at the back of Ashwell depot were not fully utilised, this being down to issues with the planning policy regarding retail tenants. An update on the empty units would be brought back to the Panel in due course.

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EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was

RESOLVED

- (i) That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following business in accordance with Procedure Rule 239 (Exclusion of Access by the Public and Press)
- (ii) That any elected Members present who were not members of the scrutiny panel be allowed to remain during consideration of the following exempt business in accordance to the access to information provisions of Procedure Rule 239.

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Following discussion of these items the public and press were re-admitted to the meeting.

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167 CATMOSE COUNCIL ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS

A briefing note from the Director of Development was received. The briefing note provided the Panel with an overview of the buildings currently occupied by the Council for administrative purposes.

The Director of Development addressed the Panel and advised Members that the Council currently spent around £385,000.00 on running and managing its administrative buildings. During any one day, only 60% of the work desks were occupied and going forward, work share space could help reduce the Council's footprint and operational costs. In the long term, although initial investments would be required, the potential benefits of exiting some of the buildings could be up to £100,000.00.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) The cost of running a building such as Catmose House was extremely high.
- b) The Adult Social Care team had been indentified as working in a poor environment.
- c) It was identified that there was a lot of wasted space at Catmose House and this was being looked into. Flexible working and the further utilisation of IT, therefore reducing paper copies, would all help to better utilise the space available. The possible loss of staff during the possible hard times would also be factored in.
- d) Going forward, there would be the possibility of shared services with other local authorities.

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The Panel agreed to take item 10 on the agenda next.

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

168 PERFORMANCE MANGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 4 2009/10

Report No. 110/2010 from the Chief Executive was received. The report for the fourth quarter of 2009/10, presented progress in a consolidated way and grouped against the Council's strategic aims and objectives.

The Panel was advised that the report had been to various scrutiny meetings for comment.

Members did not wish to make any further comment on the report.

SCRUTINY

169 VALUE FOR MONEY

The Director of Corporate Services gave a presentation to the Panel which highlighted information from the Audit Commission.

Rutland had been compared with other unitary authorities in order to gauge the Council's performance against numerous indicators, these included financial and population indicators. The information gathered from the Audit Commission highlighted these comparisons.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Rutland was one of the lowest authorities with regards to spend per head and therefore provided good value for money.
- b) Rutland was an authority with the lowest numbers of households and the highest numbers of children.
- c) As unitary authorities were both rural and urban in nature, the authorities which had been used for comparison with Rutland could be adjusted as the reports from the Audit Commission were not standard. This would enable a clearer overview of Rutland's performance against its most similar comparators.
- d) Rutland gave good value for money with regards to Adult Social Care; however, there were performance issues which had been highlighted.
- e) Rutland was one of the lowest spending authorities with regards to children and young people.
- f) Going forward, it would be of benefit for each of Rutland's Scrutiny Panels to receive a similar presentation highlighting indicators relevant to their areas.
- g) The information which had been collated had been used to evidence value for money to the Auditors.

The panel commended the piece of work produced and commented that it would be a useful tool going forward, especially if the information could be drilled down further.

Members were advised that the link to the Audit Commission website would be forwarded to them in due course.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND TOPICS

170 SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN

The Panel received the latest version of the Forward Plan for consideration.

There were no specific requests for any updates on any of the items listed. However, an update on Ashwell Depot was requested for the meeting due to be held in November 2010.

171 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No other urgent business.

172 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 29 July 2010 at 7.00pm.

Agenda items to include: Central Government changes in funding.
Update on Manton Pumping Station

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.43 pm.

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