



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP
Telephone 01572 722577 Facsimile 01572 758307 DX 28340 Oakham

Record of a meeting of the **CORPORATE SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham at 7.00pm on **Thursday 18 November 2010**

PRESENT: Mr N Wainwright – Chairman (in the Chair)
Mr M E Baines (for part of the meeting)
Cpt 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: Mrs V Brambini Head of Capital Projects (for part of the meeting)
Miss T D Stokes Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES: Mr K A Bool, Miss C L Jones

602 RECORD OF MEETING

The Record of the Meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel held on 7 October 2010, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

603 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Regulations, Members were invited to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they might have and the nature of those interests in respect of items on the Agenda and/or indicate if Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

During consideration of Report No 228/2010, Update on Better Schools for All, Mr P D Ind declared a personal interest as his grandson currently attends Southfield Primary School.

604 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

605 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from members.

606 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No Notices of Motion had been received from members.

607 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

608 BETTER SCHOOLS FOR ALL UPDATE

Report No 228/2010 from the Head of Capital Projects which provided an update on the costings to be provided for the projects, was received.

The Head of Capital Projects introduced the report which provided details of the budget and costs to date in respect of the programme of works for various schools in Rutland. During consideration, it was noted that some schools were spending beyond the original allocation which was in accordance with the Cabinet's decision to allow schools in a poor condition to be brought up to standard. Expenditure was being tracked on a school by school basis and it was anticipated that any flexibility with underspends or overspends could be re-allocated in order to achieve the programme of works within the approved budget. It was noted that any contingency available from the Little Build project could go into Post 16, if that was the Council's preference as opposed to borrowing.

Clarification was sought in respect of the extra works to Ryhall Primary School which, it was noted, were highlighted as requiring additional spending following the condition survey. Cabinet's approval was gained in respect of spending over budget due to the additional works required to the roof, lighting works and further expansion to the heating system.

As a result of the programme of works, it was noted that the lifespan of the buildings had been prolonged, although a complete re-build had not been undertaken. The Authority was working to a five-year asset management plan in terms of an ongoing maintenance programme for Rutland's schools.

Clarification was sought in respect of any expected grants in the future and how works would continue to be funded. In response, it was anticipated that the Government would make available further capital grants over the next few years however, distribution of grant funding would be dependent on individual schools' requirements.

Discussion ensued regarding the transfer of funds to Rutland's foundation school (Southfields) and three voluntary aided schools. In particular, the implications for Southfield School should Catmose College go down the Academy route, were highlighted. Should two schools decide to federate, funding would only be released if they moved to foundation or academy status. Further work was required on the funding arrangements for academies. It was noted that the majority of primary schools wanted to remain with the local authority for support.

Referring to Cottesmore Primary School, it was noted that works had not progressed to date due to the imminent closure of the RAF base. Discussions were ongoing with the Governors.

Discussion ensued regarding opportunities for shared services with a view to future funding arrangements however, it was noted that by using the East Midlands Property Alliance (EMPA), a shared service arrangement was effectively already in place.

In conclusion, it was noted that the whole Better Schools for All programme should be complete by August 2011; the deadline for using the grant funding.

---oOo---

At 7.20pm, prior to discussion of the following item of business,
Mr Baines joined the meeting.

---oOo---

609 POST 16 BUDGET UPDATE

Referring to the proposed purchase of the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) building in Barleythorpe, the Portfolio Holder, Mr King, indicated that consideration was currently being given to assessing the site's suitability as the future location of the Rutland County College Post-16 facility. In particular, early ideas on what refurbishments and modifications might be required in order to offer an appropriate facility as a post 16 learning establishment, were being sought.

Referring to the proposed work plan, it was intended to submit a planning application in Spring 2011 and complete the refurbishment of the site for Summer 2012.

Clarification was sought in respect of other suitable buildings for the provision of post 16 education for Rutland in the future. Mr King explained that vast work was undertaken to find a suitable site however, after examining other post 16 colleges and buildings, the EEF site was considered to be highly suitable. Its location, being semi-embedded within a business environment, fitting the financial model and its overall balance provided an excellent opportunity in terms of future post 16 education.

In addition, a 24 bedroom accommodation block was sited to the rear of the main building which, it was believed, could have considerable commercial value in terms of either tuition facilities or accommodation.

Clarification was sought in respect of the Authority's proposed ownership of the site. It was proposed that the Authority should own the building and then enter into a peppercorn lease with the College. There were currently no proposals to develop the agricultural land, although this might be an option for the future.

It was noted that the Authority and the Rutland County College Trust were working well. The Authority currently had two members on the Trust but was limited to 20% of the overall vote, although combined with CBEC and Tresham, the structure was fairly strong. A Working Group had been convened to monitor finances and ensure courses were cost effective and relevant.

To enable discussion which involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, it was

RESOLVED

That the public and press be excluded.

Discussion ensued regarding the amount and timing of the payment that would be due to the Authority upon disposal of the site.

---oOo---

The public were re-admitted to the meeting.

---oOo---

610 COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder, Mr King gave a presentation on the current position regarding the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). He referred to the increasing gap between public sector receipts and expenditure which had been growing since 2001. Receipts had dropped and expenditure had risen drastically. Local Government had taken a bigger cut than most other public authorities. The Government had announced that the cut in local government spending would be an average of 7.3% over the next four years. The cut in the first year could be higher than 7.3% and less in the next three, but overall the average reduction would be 7.3% over four years. Work on consultation to change the formula was commencing and regard for the difference between urban (large) and rural (small) areas was currently an issue.

The detail of the CSR was expected to be announced in December 2010 and at this stage it was unclear as to whether a one year settlement would be announced with an indication of future years' spend thereafter.

In addition to the freeze in council tax for 2011/12 and an indication that most ring fenced funding would disappear, an incentive for delivering more new houses would be offered to councils. Those councils who delivered houses at an average level would not lose or gain in funding, however, those who delivered more houses would gain and similarly those who delivered less housing would lose. It was noted that this would not be "new money", but a re-distribution of current finances, although the Planning Delivery Grant would be stopped. Funding would not necessarily come through until after the delivery of houses and the Portfolio Holder indicated it would be important for the Authority to meet the average level of house-building, at least.

Discussion ensued regarding the Authority's position in relation to the CSR. In particular, it was noted that the Authority had calculated £3M in cuts. Demand led budgets had also been assessed resulting in potentially £600K pressures, in addition to natural growth in population increase. Therefore, consideration as to possibly £4.5M in savings to counter-act Government cuts and growth was needed, together with the phasing of further cuts over the following four years. Consultation with the community would commence in January 2011 and its views would be sought in respect of where cuts should be made and possible charging for services. Further work was being undertaken regarding staff terms and conditions. The Portfolio Holder indicated that it was important that cuts should, as far as possible, be made in year 1 as this would create a better financial model for years 2, 3 and 4.

In conclusion, the Panel believed it was important to explain that all public service agencies were suffering from the Government cuts and further savings would need to continue to be identified.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND TOPICS

611 SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2010/11 AND REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN

The Panel agreed that a degree of flexibility was required in order to consider issues at short notice.

No items listed on the Forward Plan for December 2010 to March 2011 were requested for future consideration by the Panel.

612 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No items of urgent business had been previously notified to the person presiding.

613 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 16 December 2010 at 7.00pm

- Q2 Performance Management 2010/11
- Q2 Financial Management 2010/11
- Draft Local Economic Assessment
- Consideration of Comprehensive Spending Review (dependent on timing of Government's announcement)
- Little Build – brief summary/review from the Project Board and latest position regarding budget.
- Big Build – update

---oOo---

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.15pm.

---oOo---