



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

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Record of a Meeting of the **SPECIAL RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham at 7.45pm on **Thursday 19 January 2012**.

PRESENT: Mr B W Roper – Chairman (in the Chair)
Mr W J Cross
Mr D C Hollis
Mr J Munton
Mr D L Richardson
Miss G Waller
Mr A S Walters

Also in Attendance: Mr M D A Pocock Portfolio Holder for Resources
Mr J T Dale

OFFICERS: Mrs H Briggs Chief Executive Officer
Mrs A S Brown Democratic Services Officer
Ms S Dring Head of Business Support – Resources
Mrs D Mogg Strategic Director for Resources
Ms T Stankley Technical Accountant
Mrs L Wakeford Head of Business Support – Places

APOLOGIES: Mr M E Baines, Mr Lammie and Mr Wainwright

657 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.

No declarations of interest were received.

658 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

659 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from members.

SCRUTINY

660 BUDGET 2012/13 UPDATE

Introducing the report, the Strategic Director for Resources, Mrs Mogg, firstly apologised for any confusion caused in respect of the number of different papers issued for this meeting. It was confirmed that the focus of the meeting would be report numbers 205/2011 and 9/2012. Report number 205/2011 had been presented to Cabinet on 20th December 2011 and included four options around the Medium Term Financial Plan and if the Council should accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant or one of the other options presented.

Clarification was also given regarding minute number 618 (xi) of the Cabinet Record of Decisions from the 10th January 2012, which read as if the £41k money from the Community Infrastructure Levy would be used to fund the IT pressure noted within minute number 618 (x). This was not the case and Cabinet would be requested to make an amendment to that record at the next meeting of the Cabinet on 31st January 2012.

In terms of the Resources Directorate, Mrs Mogg highlighted particular items for the panels attention:-

- a) Appendix 1 of Report No. 9/2012 in respect of Pension Costs and External Audit & Inspection Fees, this had been taken from the budget next year and would not result in an impact on front line services.
- b) In respect of Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefits, the figures presented were based on the actual number of claimants presented to central government at the reporting midpoint. The budget for this was expected to change slightly throughout the year depending on the number of claimants.
- c) Significant areas of pressure were noted within the IT section including the requirement to fund a rolling programme of assets. Since the figures were reported to Cabinet, more work had been undertaken which was looking to reduce the amount of budget required. Officers were confident that this would be achieved and were looking to report this within the final budget to be reported to Cabinet in February 2012.

The following points were noted during discussion:-

- i) In respect of Coroners charges, it was clarified that the cost identified was an increase but that there had been a change in the way the costs were apportioned. A fixed cost was now paid to the coroner based on the population irrespective of how many people within the county passed away.
- ii) It was confirmed that outsourcing of certain elements of the IT Department had been investigated but that this had not been considered for the department as a whole. A significant amount of expenditure was also committed to for software.

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Mr Richardson joined the meeting at 7.55pm, having previously indicated he may be slightly late.

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- iii) Revised figures were being finalised in view of the IT budget including existing software packages. There were approximately 57 different types of software currently in use, some of which were specialised and used only by limited numbers of staff. Detailed information was formally requested by the panel as and when it became available.
- iv) Clarification was received that the budget line for Elections General covered the canvassing process and the maintenance of the electoral roll.
- v) The amount spent on senior management was highlighted and officers asked if, following the restructure, the balance between managers and operational staff had been successful and if future cuts were required would this balance be looked at again. It was confirmed that the Resources structure was constantly under review and changes had, and would, be made where appropriate to ensure a good balance between management and operational staff. The Chief Executive confirmed that this would be the case across the whole organisation, reviewing overheads including senior management as a result of decisions made within the organisation.
- vi) A contingency budget, named Corporate Subscriptions, was included in the budget to support one off events, for example in 2012 the Olympic Torch would be passing through Rutland which would require relevant road closures and police support. Also the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations may result in events which the Rutland Lieutenancy must support. Although the Local Authority were not obliged to support events of this type, it was difficult not to accommodate these requests. Work would be done, however, to ensure that these costs were kept to a minimum.
- vii) Although members were given the opportunity to scrutinise the options available, and the majority content to do so, Councillor Richardson noted that without specific figures in relation to Council Tax he was reluctant to give full support to the proposals.
- viii) Clarification was received that all comments received from Scrutiny Panels would be fed back to Cabinet prior to the final decision being made.
- ix) For future reports, panel members would receive an additional report that showed the budgets subjectively i.e. staff costs, premises costs, supplies and services, etc.

RESOLVED

That the scrutiny panel agreed with the direction of the budget and that comments be fed back to Cabinet prior to the final decision being made.

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.22pm

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