



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

Telephone 01572 722577 Facsimile 01572 758307 DX 28340 Oakham

Minutes of a meeting of the **RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, at 7.00 pm Thursday 26 April 2012

PRESENT: Mr J Munton (elected Chair for Meeting)
Mrs C Cartwright
Mr W Cross
Mr D Hollis
Mr J M Lammie
Mr C A Parsons (substituting for Mr Roper)
Mr D L Richardson
Miss G Waller
Mr A S Walters

In attendance: Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Finance and Asset Management
Mr M Pocock Portfolio Holder for Resources

Officers present: Mrs D Mogg Strategic Director for Resources
Mrs K Sawyer Lawyer
Mr E Smith Lawyer
Mr I Baugh Democratic Services Officer

Apologies: Mr Baines, Mr Roper, Mr Wainwright

920 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were noted from Mr Baines, Mr Roper

and Mr Wainwright.

Mrs Mogg introduced the meeting and noted that in the absence of Mr Roper (chairman) members would need to elect a Chair for the meeting. Mr Parsons proposed Mr Munton to be Chair for the meeting, this was seconded by Mr Hollis. A majority of members voted in support of this. Mr Munton then took the Chair.

921 RECORD OF MEETING

The Record of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 16 February 2012, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

922 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

923 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

924 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions had been received from members.

925 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No Notices of Motion had been received from members.

926 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

927 SHARED LEGAL SERVICES 82/2012

Report No. 82/2012 from the Strategic Director for Resources was received. Mr Pocock introduced the report. The aim of the project had been to move the provision of legal services to Peterborough and to merge the legal teams. The transition had gone smoothly but there had been some additional costs due to the need to employ some additional external legal expertise.

Mrs Mogg introduced Mrs Sawyer and Mr Smith from the Peterborough legal team.

Mrs Sawyer noted that the report presented an overview of the first year of operation of shared legal services. A total of 3000 hours of work had been budgeted for and this target had been met. Mrs Sawyer then invited questions

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) A question was raised about why the extra costs for employment advice could not have been anticipated. Mrs Sawyer pointed out that the costs arose from having to instruct

more expensive external resources however the overall cost of the service was still lower than would have been the case with an in house service.

- ii) A question was asked about what resources were being brought in. Mrs Sawyer noted that some barristers had been required (to deal with some appeal work where a local authority did not have rights of audience) and some additional locum resources had been needed because Peterborough had to delay an internal restructure.
- iii) It was noted that children's services work had previously been carried out by a Leicester law firm and this work had now been brought in house.
- iv) A question was asked why the hourly charge had gone up from £70 to £80 per hour. This was due to a general increase in the cost of providing the service for example training, the procurement of a new case management system and professional subscriptions, however it is still less than the earlier charges of £85 per hour that Peterborough were charging before the transfer took place.
- v) A question was asked concerning the variance in productivity figures (appendix 1). Mrs Sawyer noted that detailed monthly monitoring of performance was carried out. All lawyers were required to be at least 67% productive. Variances may be due to annual leave, meetings and professional development training which were not chargeable.
- vi) Mrs Mogg stated that some advice on capital

projects is still being obtained from Lincolnshire County Council. When those projects conclude this property work will be brought in house.

- vii) Mr Pocock noted that with better training for RCC Officers it was anticipated that more work could be done within Rutland without reference to legal advice. Mrs Sawyer agreed that there were areas identified by Legal Services which could be more self sufficient. A request was made by Cllr Waller that a report be brought to Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time to review progress against the target to make the internal teams more self sufficient
- viii) Mrs Sawyer noted that work in the next 6 months was focusing on the development of a new case management system that would result in improved productivity. Mrs Mogg noted that real improvements in performance management had been achieved and detailed monthly reports were now produced.

AGREED

The contents of report no. 82/2012 were agreed.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND TOPICS

928 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions was noted.

It was suggested that the Chair talk to the Scrutiny

Commission re joint work with this panel.

929 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No other business had been previously noted to the person presiding.

930 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 19 July 2012

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.30 pm

Chairman