



# Rutland County Council

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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, 12 December 2013

**PRESENT:** Mr J M Lammie - Chairman (in the Chair)  
Mr W J Cross  
Mr D C Hollis  
Mr J R Munton  
Mr D L Richardson  
Mrs C L Vernon  
Miss G Waller  
Mr A S Walters

**In attendance:** Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property, Development Control, Planning Policy, Economic Development and Tourism

Mr M Pocock Portfolio Holder for Highways, Waster and Recycling, Transport and Parking and Revenues and Benefits

**Officers present:** Mr S Della Rocca Assistant Director - Finance  
Miss M Gamston Support Officer Corporate Support Team  
Mrs A Grinney Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Mrs A Hawkins Accountant  
Mrs A Smith Support Officer Corporate Support Team

**Also present:** Mrs D Baker Head of Corporate Governance

**Apologies:** Mr B A Montgomery

## 612 RECORD OF MEETING

- i) The Record of the meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 29 August 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.
- ii) The Record of the meeting of the Special Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 7 November 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## 613 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in respect of the items on the agenda for this meeting.

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7.05 pm Mr Munton joined the meeting

**614 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

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

**615 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

No questions had been received from members.

**616 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS**

No Notices of Motion had been received from members.

**617 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**

**618 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT DISCRETIONARY FUND**

Report No. 256/2013 from the Director for Resources was received.

The Assistant Director – Finance, Mr Della Rocca, introduced the report the purpose of which was to provide Cabinet with an update on the Local Council Tax Support Discretionary Fund.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) £100,000 to remain in Discretionary Fund – for this to be reviewed after Year 1;
- ii) Para 4.3 to Report No. 256/2013 showed a total number of claims of 130 of which 80 awarded and 50 refused;
- iii) Para 4.4 of Report No. 256/2013 gave detailed categorisation of successful claims, of 50 refused many had been signposted elsewhere for help or had taken the option of paying in twelve instalments to ease burden. Under £13,000 had been awarded to date but this was expected to increase significantly before the end of the financial year;
- iv) Officers were minded to suggest that the discretionary fund be left at the present level and reviewed;
- v) Consideration needed to be given to the potential impact of the other welfare reforms in future reviews;
- vi) The Council was working with fuel vouchers received from the Department of the Environment to help those applying for crisis loans. The Council also runs a scheme to supply coal and gas canisters along with the power companies and the water companies also have own scheme;
- vii) Portfolio Holder, Mr King reminded Members that the grant to cover crisis loan payments would not be available for 2015-16 and that consideration needed to be given to future funding and administration;
- viii) Concern was expressed that where a fund was administered out of Oakham, and that possible claimants from villages were not accessing it.

- It was agreed that data was to be sent to Members on the location of claimants;
- ix) It was suggested that the correct forum for further discussion on the administration of the scheme was the People (Adults & Health) Scrutiny Panel;
  - x) Some members queried whether it would be possible to reduce the budget of £100,000 without risk of overspending;
  - xi) Given that the Panel was not unanimous in its support for the fund, that the current scheme continue at a level of £100,000, a vote was taken with six members in support of the fund remaining at £100,000 and two members voting against and there were no abstentions.

## **619 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 2 2013/2014**

Report No. 236/2013 from the Chief Executive was received.

The purpose of which was to report to Cabinet on the Council's Performance for the second quarter of 2013/14 and the year to date.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) Officers to ensure that all Panels received this report in the future;
- ii) Reference was made to employee sickness reporting on Page 9 of Report No. 236/2013 and to note that the average days lost per employee has dropped significantly to 0.94 compared to 1.52 in Quarter 4 2012/13.

### **AGREED**

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 236/2013.

## **620 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT 2013/14 QUARTER 2**

Report No. 241/2013 from the Director for Resources was received.

The purpose of which was to inform Cabinet on how the Council is performing against its revenue and capital budgets and report a forecast year and outturn position as at the 30 September 2013.

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) Cost Centre 3711 Human Resources – the variance was the net effect of agency costs of £50k and savings of £25k arising from a post being held vacant for nine months, plus other small variances;
- ii) Members were advised that there were certain sectors where agency staff had been employed when it had proved difficult to recruit to posts.eg. social workers;
- iii) Officers undertook to provide detailed analysis of costs pertaining to agency staff employed by the Council. This would be circulated to Members of the Panel;
- iv) The New Homes Bonus was based on the net increase in the number of dwellings (additions less demolitions), with extra bonus for affordable homes, empty homes brought back into use and Local Authority owned and managed gipsy site pitches;
- v) Predictions for delivery against the Local Plan had been dampened to 65%;
- vi) Members were advised that forward planning was site specific, some of which had been slightly delayed but it was anticipated that the New

- vii) Homes Bonus would exceed target in the next couple of years;  
National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) – Following the Comprehensive Spending review 2013, the Government had issued a number of consultation documents. The consultation paper on New Homes Bonus suggested mechanisms for the pooling of £400m of New Homes Bonus through local enterprise partnerships. The proposed pooling mechanism would not affect the Council as a unitary authority;
- viii) Portfolio Holder, Mr King advised members that the Government had suggested that the New Homes Bonus top slice should be allocated to the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Government had announced this would not be the case.
- ix) Small business and NNDR support – two years rate of business rate relief for certain business would be funded by central government with local government guaranteed a share;

#### **AGREED**

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 241/2013 and agreed that the officers would circulate details of agency staff.

#### **621 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

Report No. 261/2013 from the Director Resources was received.

Members held no discussion on this item.

#### **AGREED**

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of the risk register and the actions underway to address the risks.

#### **622 2013-14 MID YEAR TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS MONITORING REPORT**

Report No. 290/2013 from the Director for Resources was received.

The purpose of which was to present to Cabinet the revisions to the regulatory framework of treasury management during 2009 which introduced a requirement that the Council receive a mid-year treasury review report, in addition to the forward looking annual treasury strategy and backward looking annual treasury report required previously. The report meets that requirement and incorporates the needs of the Prudential Code to ensure adequate monitoring of capital expenditure plans and the Council's prudential indicators (PIs). The treasury strategy and PIs were contained in report 29/2013 which was approved by Cabinet on 5 February 2013. The underlying purpose of the report supports the objective in the revised CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Investment Guidance that Members receive and adequately scrutinise the treasury management service. The report is structured to highlight the key changes to the Council's capital activity (the PIs), the economic outlook, and the actual and proposed treasury management activity (borrowing and investment).

The following points were noted during the discussion:

- i) That Para 5.2 of Report No. 290/2013 - Capital Expenditure and Financing detailed underspends and carry forwards;
- ii) That the Council held £21m of investments as of 30 September 2013. The amount on deposit included funds from revenue, central Government

- grants and other grants. The breakdown of which was provided in the quarterly reports and the year end accounts;
- iii) Mr Richardson queried the use of capital expenditure against expected funds. The Assistant Director – Finance, Mr S Della Rocca, stated that as funds were not ringfenced the Council was using money that was available to it. When decisions on funding made, members were aware that the Council was in the position of being able to borrow from the Public Loans Board, if required;
- iv) The Chair asked Mr Richardson to email to the Assistant Director - Finance the legislation/guidelines behind his understanding. Mr Richardson agreed to email these.

## **AGREED**

- 1) The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 290/2013 and that Mr Richardson would email legislation/guidelines.

## **PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND TOPICS**

### **623 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN**

HR Review to be brought back to the next ordinary meeting on 27 March 2014 - if possible report will be sent to Panel members before that date

### **624 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **625 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 16 January 2014 – Special Budget meeting – apologies Mr T King  
Thursday 27 March 2014 – HR Update

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.27 pm

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Chairman