



Minutes of a meeting of the **RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, at 7.00 pm on Thursday, 27 March 2014.

**PRESENT:** Mr J M Lammie - Chairman (in the Chair)  
Mr G Conde  
Mr W J Cross  
Mr B Montgomery  
Mr J R Munton  
Mrs C L Vernon  
Miss G Waller

**In attendance:** Mrs C Cartwright for Mr D C Hollis  
Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Places (Development) and Finance  
Mr M D A Pocock Portfolio Holder for Places (Environment and Transport) and Resources

**Officers present:** Miss S Bingham Corporate Support Officer  
Mr S Della Rocca Assistant Director – Finance  
Mrs A Grinney Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Mrs A Hawkins Accountant  
Mrs D Mogg Director for Resources

**Also present:** Mr J T Dale

**Apologies:** Mr D C Hollis  
Mr A S Walters  
Mr D L Richardson

## **866 RECORD OF MEETING**

The Record of the Meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 12 December 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

The Record of the Meeting of the Special Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 15 January 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **867 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

For the record:

In respect of item 8, NNDR Discretionary Relief Policy:

- Mrs C L Vernon stated that she worked in education, this may have no bearing on the item, however, wanted to make the Panel aware.
- Mrs C Cartwright stated that she was working in a Charity Shop in the

- County.
- Mr J Lammie stated that he was a member of Uppingham Cricket Club.

## **868 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No petitions, Deputations or Questions had been received from Members of the public.

## **869 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

No Questions had been received from Members.

## **870 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS**

No Notices of Motion had been received from Members.

## **871 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.

## **872 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS**

Report No. 2/2014 from the Director for Resources was received the purpose of which was to update Members on the administration of Discretionary Housing Payments for 2013/14 and to seek Cabinet's approval of the Discretionary Financial Assistant Regulations 2001.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, invited the Portfolio Holder for Places (Development) and Finance, Mr T C King, to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. The report was due to go to Cabinet on 21 January 2014; however, Cabinet had requested that the report go to Resources Scrutiny Panel first. Any feedback on the report would be welcome.
- ii. The addition of Special Educational Needs is to be added to the list of care leavers on page 12, paragraph 5.6 of the report would be taken back to the relevant department.
- iii. The funding that Rutland County Council receives from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for 2014/15 will be £32,000, which is a reduction. The whole amount is expected to be spent.
- iv. When Officers are forward planning a holistic approach is taken to this process so that all means of support are brought together, no benefits are looked at in isolation. It was noted that the Panel would find it useful to look at all areas of support and associated figures together,

at the same meeting.

- v. It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to support ex-service personnel in the first instance, before the Service Welfare Fund would be approached. The provision for ex-service personnel would be included in the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy under paragraph 5.6.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Concerns were raised regarding giving authority to the Assistant Director (Finance) in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance to review Discretionary Housing Payments policy in future years. This would be for minor and statutory changes only. The wording of the recommendation would be amended to reflect this concern.

**AGREED:**

- i. Subject to the inclusion of the wording 'minor and statutory' into recommendation 2.2 the panel supported the recommendations in the report.

**873 NNDR DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY**

Report No. 60/2014 from the Director for Resources was received the purpose of this report was to present Members with an updated Non-Domestic Discretionary Rate Relief Policy and to seek approval for a newly introduced Retail Rate Relief Policy.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, invited the Portfolio Holder for Places (Development) and Finance, Mr T C King to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Retail Rate Relief changes have come from Central Government, the report outlines Rutland County Council's actions.
- ii. There are three main business areas that require more explanation and consideration:
  - Sports Clubs – Some small sports clubs do not pay Business Rates (NNDR), however, if clubs were to be holding events, such as weddings, they would be generating additional revenue. This could be taking business from other establishments within the county and could be eligible for NNDR.
  - Charity Shops – Some charity shops sell manufactured new items and one has an in-house coffee shop. Should they be eligible for NNDR Relief? Currently there is a statutory 80% relief that is applied.
  - Volunteer Groups – If a volunteer group was to put a commercial tenant into their property should they be eligible for NNDR Relief.

- iii. The Panel may wish to consider speaking to the groups above regarding NNDR and NNDR Relief to gain more understanding, as this would fall under the Panel's remit.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The Panel discussed the best way of speaking to the relevant groups to gain the information they require. The following options were discussed:
  - Inviting groups to attend a Resources Scrutiny Meeting that would be dedicated to this subject only.
  - Implementation of a Task and Finish Group.
  - Contact all groups that could be affected in writing.
  - Implementation of a Scrutiny Review Meeting.
- ii. Concern was raised regarding point 4 of the policy, profit from bars (page 31), and if the funds are to be used to be used to support the club.
- iii. Officers were commended on their work on the new policy.

**AGREED:**

- i. The Panel endorsed the Non-Domestic Rates Retails Policy (Appendix B).
- ii. The Panel agreed to implement a Task and Finish Group that would report back at the next Resources Scrutiny Panel Meeting on its terms of reference. The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, was to contact all Panel Members outside the meeting.

The majority of Members supported the recommendations.

**874 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 3 2013/2014**

Report No. 36/2014 from the Chief Executive was received the purpose of which was to report on the council's Performance for the third quarter of 2013/14 and the year to date.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, invited the Director for Resources, Mrs D Mogg, to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Areas that have improved since the report was published:
  - Freedom of Information (FOI) request responses have improved from 55% to the end of the third quarter to 90% for January and February 2014. This is due to the implementation of the new Corporate Support Team and the new procedures now being adhered to. A large number of the FOI requests received are commercial and marketing requests. FOI responses will be available on the website going forward which will streamline the process further. The cost of FOI requests to Rutland County

Council was looked at last year; Officer's time taken up responding to requests was estimated to be approximately 2 to 3 full time equivalent members of staff . The weekly list of FOI requests submitted to Rutland County Council will be circulated to all Councillors by email.

- In January 2014 100% of agendas and 93% of minutes were published within the deadline set out. This was also due to the implementation of the Corporate Support Team.

- ii. Page 181 of the report states that Rutland County Council employs over 3 times more staff over the age of 65 than under 25. This may be something that the Panel may wish to look at in more detail in the future. Rutland County Council has increased the number of apprenticeship opportunities and has had some positive successes with the current apprentices. Officers have attended events and given presentations at colleges previously, this may be an opportunity that could be explored further.

Factors that may have contributed to this are:

- Rutland's demographic.
- How we recruit, increased use of social media to attract younger applicants.
- Consideration to be given to training posts as experience is hard to gain in a rural community such as Rutland?

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. Officers were commended on the improvements made with the implementation of the Corporate Support Team.
- ii. Concerns was raised regarding the issue of the average age of Councillors for Rutland County Council, this reflects the same issue as the age of staff.

#### **AGREED:**

- i. The Panel noted the comments of report 36/2014 and the majority of members supported the recommendations.

#### **875 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT – QUARTER 3 2013/2014**

Report No. 31/2014 from the Chief Executive was received the purpose of which was to report on how the Council was performing against its revenue and capital budgets and report a forecast year end outturn position as at 31 December 2013.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, invited the Director for Resources, Mrs D Mogg, to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. The position for the Resources directorate was widely the same as

when the report was published.

Members held no discussion on this item.

**AGREED:**

- i. The Panel noted the comments of report 31/2014 and the majority of members supported the recommendations.

**876 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

Report No. 75/2014 from the Director for Resources was received the purpose of which was to update the Resources Scrutiny Panel on the current status of the Risk Register.

The Chairman, Mr. J Lammie, asked for comments and questions.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Re-assessment of the Risk Register is needed to review the allocation of the indicator colours and this should alleviate some concern over the number of amber coloured indicators.
- ii. Support would be given by Peterborough City Council for urgent, short notice issues in the absence of the Communications Officer.
- iii. Feedback on the induction that current Councillors received would be welcome. Plans are in place to develop the induction process following the election in May 2015. Working with the Youth Council is a good idea; this will be taken into consideration in the development of the new induction plan. The development of a video for new Rutland Councillors in conjunction with e-learning modules to be made available on the Councillor area of the website is being developed. The Head of Corporate Governance, Mrs D Baker, will be simplifying the member's area of the website.
- iv. The feedback from the trip to Germany will be confirmed and circulated via email outside the meeting.

**AGREED:**

- i. The Panel noted the comments of report 75/2014 and the majority of members supported the recommendations.

**877 PROGRESS ON HUMAN RESOURCES REVIEW**

An oral update from the Director of Resources was received.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Carol Snell has been appointed to the post of Head of Human Resources.

- ii. The team structure is being developed and reflects the previous comments of the scrutiny panel.
- iii. The Scrutiny Panel will be kept up to date with further progress.

Members held no discussion on this item.

**878 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was received to consider Scrutiny issues to review.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, asked for comments and questions.

Members held no discussion on this item.

**ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

**879**

Extra copies of the Resources Scrutiny Panel papers can be found in the Members room if required by substitute Panel Members.

**880 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 8 May 2014.

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Chairman closed the meeting at 8.48pm.

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