



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 on Thursday, 3 July 2014.

Present: Mr J M Lammie - Chairman (in the Chair)
Mr D C Hollis
Mr J R Munton
Mrs C L Vernon
Miss G Waller
Mr A S Walters
Mrs C Cartwright – Substitute for Mr W J Cross
Mr R Gale - Substitute for Mr D L Richardson

In attendance: Mr T C King Portfolio Holder for Places (Development) and Finance

Officers present: Mrs D Mogg Director for Resources
Mrs D Baker Head of Corporate Governance
Miss S Bingham Corporate Support Officer

Also present: Mr P McCourt Interim Head of Legal and Governance – Peterborough City Council
Mr M Rowan Interim Head of Legal – Peterborough City Council

Apologies: Mr W J Cross
Mr D L Richardson
Mr C A Parsons
Mr B Montgomery
Mr M D A Pocock

The Chair reminded the Panel that Members should notify Corporate Support of any apologies for meetings.

139 RECORD OF MEETING

The Record of the Meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 27 March 2014, 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 12 June 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, was confirmed and signed by the Chairman

140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

141 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

142 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No Questions had been received from Members.

143 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No Notices of Motion had been received from Members.

144 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.

145 DRAFT COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Report No. 153/2014 from the Director for Resources was received the purpose of which was to update Members on the recent review of the Council's Complaints Procedure and to set out some proposed changes to the way in which the Council deals with compliments, comments and complaints from its service users.

The Chairman, Mr J Lammie, invited the Head of Corporate Governance, Mrs D Baker, to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. As part of the review process information has been gathered on other Local Authority complaints processes.
- ii. This report is the early part of the policy setting process to gather Members' feedback; the report has been to SMT who support the proposals with a change of terminology from Unreasonable Complainant to Vexatious Complainant.
- iii. The new policy will be a change from a 3 stage to a 2 stage process, which will allow:
 - Increase in customer satisfaction
 - complaints to be tracked more efficiently
 - complaints to be concluded within a 20 day time frame rather than the current estimate of 45 days
 - statistical data to be gathered
 - Clear and regular communication with the customer
- iv. Training, support and guidance will be given to the Customer Service Team and Officers on the new processes and vexatious complaints.

- v. It is proposed that the new policy will have a dedicated page on the website with clear guidance on:
 - the difference between a service request and a complaint
 - when the policy should be applied. Full guidance on action that customer can take if the complaint policy is not applicable.
- vi. All complaints received will be directed to the Corporate Support Team to log and allocate a unique reference number (URN). Stage 1, after logging the complaint will be sent to Head of Service for the relevant department, this will be tracked by the Corporate Support Team. If a complaint has to be escalated to Stage 2, the complaint will be sent to the corresponding Director to action, using the original URN throughout the process.
- vii. Comments and compliments will be logged for monitoring purposes and passed to the relevant Head of Service, but not tracked through the system.
- viii. Complaints would only be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman when the Council's process had been completed.
- ix. The IT system that will be used to log and track all complaints will be an Excel Spreadsheet; this is the same process that is used successfully to log Freedom of Information Requests.
- x. Page 4 of the report point 3.3 should read 'referred to cabinet in due course for their consideration'.
- xi. Complaints that come directly to Ward Members could be directed through the Corporate Support Team, it will be the responsibility of the nominated manager, who is dealing with the complaint, to keep Ward Members informed.
- xii. Any complaints that are received that are not for Rutland County Council will not be logged, but responded to in an appropriate way.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The panel welcomed the opportunity to review the draft policy and the inclusion of compliments; this has been an area that has not been fed back to Officers previously.
- ii. Concern was raised regarding the potential increase of work for the Corporate Support Team due to registering and tracking all complaints. This would be reviewed by Mrs Mogg and Mrs Baker and if necessary adjustments could be made in the future.

AGREED:

The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 153/2014. The detailed policy report to be added to the agenda for 4 September for further consideration.

146 UPDATE ON LEGAL SHARED SERVICE

Report No. 156/2014 from the Director for Resources was received the purpose of which was to report to Members a review paper on the activity of the shared legal services arrangement with Peterborough City Council over its first three years of operation.

Director for Resources, Mrs D Mogg, invited Mr P McCourt - Interim Head of Legal and Governance – Peterborough City Council and Mr M Rowan - Interim Head of Legal – Peterborough City Council to introduce the report.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. The shared service agreement between Rutland County Council (RCC) and Peterborough City Council (PCC) has been in place for 3 years. The agreement is for 5 years with a review after 3 years, however, due to a review of Legal Services at PCC the 3 year review has been put back for 12 months.
- ii. Page 16 of the report shows a breakdown of the cost to RCC. This is shown as an hourly rate as it is the simplest method.
- iii. The estimate of 3000 hours per year has proven to be accurate, however, the this will increase in future years due to:
 - Increase responsibilities given to Local Authority for Health Services
 - Increased contracts and procurements work being undertaken.
- iv. Due to the nature of funding, contracts and procurement work has increased. Both RCC and PCC have found a skill shortage in this area. Action is being taken at RCC with the up-skilling of Officers where appropriate with the support of PCC.
- v. Page 18 shows a breakdown of the Quality of Service. Regular meetings are attended regarding major projects undertaken by RCC and Development Control and Licensing Committee.
- vi. From the 1st June 2014 Human Resources at RCC no longer use the PCC shared service. They now use a specialist Human Resource legal service provider.
- vii. Mrs D Baker monitors the shared legal service with PCC through the Service Level Agreements that have been agreed. It was confirmed that the services is not open for use by all staff.

- viii. Over use of the shared service would be discussed with individual Officers at their monthly one to one meetings to identify any issues.
- ix. Social Workers from RCC have been invited to attend Legal training. This has been well attended. More details of attendance will be provided to Mrs D Mogg to feedback to the Panel.
- x. Page 26, the table showing the Changeable time was to be reviewed and simplified by PCC for future reports.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The Panel commended Officers on the Legal support for planning applications and the advantage of having consistency in having the same legal representative present at Development Control and Licensing Committee meetings.
- ii. Concern was raised that legal representatives may be sent to meetings when unnecessary. This will be reviewed by Mr M Rowan.

AGREED:

The Panel noted the contents of Report No. 138/2014, and requested that the report following the review be added to the appropriate Resources Scrutiny Panel agenda for further consideration before going to Cabinet.

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8.20pm Mrs D Baker left the meeting and did not return

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147 NNDR TASK AND FINISH TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman gave a verbal update on the Task and Finish Group.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i. Due to the lack of volunteers from the Panel the proposed Task and Finish Group for NNDD will not go ahead,
- ii. The Panel discussed the way forward regarding gathering feedback from the local business owners on the proposed changes to the NNDR process.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The Panel was encouraged to undertake the finance training for all Elected Members before they discussed this matter, as this would enhance their knowledge of the subject.

AGREED:

The Panel agreed that a Members Reference Group will be started with the Chairman and Mrs G Waller to gain the required feedback. This would be reported to the Panel at the next Resources Scrutiny Meeting on 4 September.

148 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan was noted.

149 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

150 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

- It was requested that the review of the Corporate Support Team be added to the agenda for the Resources Scrutiny Panel on 16 October.
- Concern was raised that the post of Strategic Communications Adviser has been advertised on the website. Mrs D Mogg confirmed that Mr C Jones who currently holds this post will be leaving RCC. The Panel expressed their regret that Mr C Jones was leaving.
- At Scrutiny Commission on 25 June, it was suggest that a Task and Finish Group should be set up to review finance. The Chairman invited comments from the Panel. It was suggested that this be added to the agenda for the Resources Scrutiny Panel to discuss at the next meeting on 4 September as the Panel Member that suggested this was not in attendance this evening.
- The next meeting would be held on Thursday 4 September 2014.

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The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.41 pm

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