



# Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 10th November, 2016 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Mr A Walters Mr O Bird  
Mr G Conde Mr W Cross  
Mr J Lammie Mrs L Stephenson (Substitute)  
Miss G Waller

**APOLOGIES:** Mr K Bool – Due to Chairman’s duties  
Mr B Callaghan Mrs D MacDuff  
Mr A Stewart

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Mrs D Mogg Director for Resources  
Mr S Della Rocca Assistant Director – Finance  
Mrs A Grinney Revenues & Benefits Manager  
Mrs K Cross Corporate Support Officer

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr O Hemsley Portfolio Holder for Resources  
(excluding Finance) Culture, Sport & Recreation, Tourism and Housing  
Mr J Green Clockwise – Credit Union  
Mrs S Fletcher Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

## **345 RECORD OF MEETING**

The Record of the Meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Panel held on 11 August 2016, copies of which had been previously circulated were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **346 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **347 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

## **348 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

## **349 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS**

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

**350 CONSIDERATIONS OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE PANEL FOR A DECISION IN RELATION TO CALL IN OF A DECISION**

No matter had been referred to the Panel for a decision in relation to call-in of a decision in accordance with Procedure Rule 206.

**351 QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Report No. 191/2016 was received from the Director for Resources. The purpose of the report was to inform all members of the full year forecast position at Quarter 2 for 2016/17 and to alert them to any issues that may impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- a) The Financial Crisis Support budget would reduce in 17/18 however there was no change to the policy and additional funds could be made available from an earmarked reserve if required.
- b) Overspends in the People Directorate was due to pressures on demand led budgets. In these cases, the Council has a statutory duty to respond.
- c) Members sought clarification as to what the S106 monitoring budget was spent on. (Following the meeting, the Assistant Director clarified that the budget was used as a contribution to staffing costs).
- d) The 'total uncommitted funding available' set out in the capital section was funding not formally committed to projects in the capital programme at this point. Officers clarified that some of this funding was ring fenced so could not be used freely and for some funding other commitments had been provisionally made e.g. supporting the Free School bid, but a formal project not yet created

**AGREED:**

1. That the Panel **NOTED** the Report.

**352 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT**

Report No. 133/2016 was received from the Director for Resources. The purpose of the report was to provide members with strategic oversight of the Council's performance for Quarter 2 of 2016/17.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- a) The same range of comparators should be used in all areas to make the reports more consistent.
- b) Members sought clarification that issues raised at Scrutiny would be reported to Cabinet. The Chair confirmed that he had a pro-forma to complete in order to inform Cabinet of issues raised at the Scrutiny Panel.
- c) Project Sunshine had a RAG rating of amber. This was a reflection on the substantial amount of work that needed to be done before the 'go live' date of the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016.
- d) The new website should go live in January 2017. It would be a 'soft launch' in January and would then be launched more publically when additional functionality

became available. The Panel requested to view the new website before launch. The Director for Resources confirmed they would be inviting Rutland Access Group and other companies to test the website and accessibility before it went live.

- e) The Director for Resources confirmed that a number of changes had been made to improve the Customer Services Team. Those changes included extra staff, additional training and standardisation of responses/greetings. The front waiting area was in the process of being remodelled. In future it would hold a front desk with a workstation so that people could self-serve. Floor walkers would also be available during busy times of the day and the area would be fitted with a more relaxed seating area. The front desk would also complete a survey to identify the split between corporate visitors and public visitors to the reception area.

**AGREED:**

1. That the Panel **NOTED** the content of the report.
2. That the Panel would be able to view the new website before launch.

**353 COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS: ANNUAL REPORT**

Report No. 150/2016 was received from the Director for Resources. The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the management and effectiveness of the Council's Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- a) The Monitoring Officer confirmed that neither she nor RCC had any jurisdiction over parish councils and could not deal with parish council complaints. The Monitoring Officer reported that she would advise ward members of any Parish Council complaints received in the future.
- b) The Panel congratulated the department on a thorough report and suggested that on occasion more detail might be helpful.
- c) Members commented on the number of complaints received regarding Christmas refuse collections. They requested that if the collection date falls on a different day to the normal collection, that the general public are informed of the change.
- d) Council Tax Banding is not a function of RCC it is done by the Government Valuation Office Agency and a link can be found on the RCC website.

**AGREED**

1. That the Panel **NOTED** the content of the Report.
2. That the Director for Resources would pass the Panels comments regarding Christmas refuse collections on to the Director for Places.

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Meeting Adjourned 8.05pm  
Meeting recommenced 8.15pm

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**354 POVERTY SCRUTINY PROJECT**

Report No. 153/2016 was received from the Director for Resources. The Scrutiny Commission had agreed to undertake a review of Poverty in Rutland. The project objectives were:

- To develop and agree definition(s) of Poverty in Rutland;
- To develop a Council policy in the form of a White Paper to be approved by Full Council that will outline for Rutland how the Council will act to positively impact on poverty within the County.

The following areas were identified for the Resources Scrutiny Panel to take forward:

- Review of the Crisis Fund
- Financial Awareness

The Director explained that Debt was added after a separate meeting with the Chair.

The Director for Resources introduced guest speakers Mr J Green representing Clockwise Credit Union - Leicestershire and Rutland Branch and Mrs Sheila Fletcher representing Citizens Advice Bureau - Rutland.

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8.30pm Director for Resources left the meeting

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During the discussion the following points were noted:

- a) Some of the awards for the Crisis Fund were referrals rather than financial awards. They were classed in the report as financial awards but may have had no cost to the authority. Members asked for the actual amount of funding awarded to be included in future reports.
- b) The Panel expressed concern that the Council does not currently routinely review the system to discover what impact (if any) the crisis funds awarded had on the claimants. This was debated at length. Officers explained that if they had repeat claimants they were aware of issues. However, if claimants do not present themselves again, the Council did not contact claimants to see how they are getting on. It was noted that there was a cost to this.
- c) It would be helpful if the list of identified organisations who could also offer assistance was up-to-date. People could then be signposted to these associations when they come to us for Crisis Fund awards. The Council does have a list but there may be other organisations who can also support.
- d) The Panel requested a more in-depth breakdown of the profile of people who come to RCC for crisis fund awards. The Panel were informed that, although this was not an in-house system, officers would see what information could be made available.

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Councillor Stephenson left the meeting at 9.10pm.

Mr J Green – Clockwise left the meeting at 9.10pm.

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- e) It was confirmed that the Crisis Fund budget would not be reduced in the next budget – it would remain at £25k

- f) CAB explained that individuals were often reluctant to seek advice and when they did it was often too late. Council officers added that whilst they encouraged individuals to take advice, there was no guarantee that this advice was sought. Officers were considering options as to how we may offer support conditional of advice being sought.
- g) Members agreed that the Council should try to persuade schools to teach financial life skills to children and that this issue should be taken forward
- h) The Panel questioned whether the RCC debt recovery process was making the poverty situations worse. It was confirmed that the debt recovery process was laid down in legislation but that once a liability order had been granted RCC had more freedom over the recovery process.

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During the consideration of Item 10 and in accordance with Procedure Rule 119, the Scrutiny Panel AGREED to extend the finish time for the meeting to 10.15pm.

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### **AGREED**

- 1. The Panel **DISCUSSED** the contents of the Report
- 2. A discussion should be held with the Director for People regarding the future involvement of schools in teaching financial life skills to young people.
- 3. Copies of RCC's debt recovery letters should be brought along for discussion at the next meeting.

### **355 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN**

The panel reviewed the Forward Plan.

### **356 ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

No items of urgent business had previously been notified to the Chairman.

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

Thursday 16 February 2017 at 7.00 pm, Council Chamber

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**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 10.05pm.**

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