



# Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP.  
Telephone 01572 722577 Facsimile 01572 75307 DX28340 Oakham

Minutes of the **MEETING of the RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL** held in the on Thursday, 16th February, 2017 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:**

Mrs R Burkitt	Mr K Bool
Mr B Callaghan	Mr G Conde
Mr W Cross	Mr J Lammie
Miss G Waller	

**APOLOGIES:**

Mr O Bird	Mrs D MacDuff
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## **OFFICERS**

**PRESENT:**

Mrs D Mogg	Director for Resources
Mr S Della Rocca	Assistant Director – Finance
Mr A Nix	Head of IT and Customer Services
Mrs A Grinney	Revenues & Benefits Manager
Miss S Bingham	Governance Co-ordinator – Corporate Support
Mr K Silcock	Administration Assistant – Corporate Support

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr O Hemsley	Portfolio Holder for Resources (excluding Finance) Culture, Sport & Recreation, Tourism and Housing
Mr T Mathias	Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Places (Highways, Transport and Market Towns)

## **600 RECORD OF MEETING**

The Record of the Meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Panels held on 10 November 2016 and 18 January 2017, copies of which had been previously circulated were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **601 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **602 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS**

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

## **603 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS**

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

#### 604 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

#### 605 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.

#### 606 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) Oakham Cemetery:
  - Oakham Town Council (OTC) had decided not to take on the maintenance of Oakham Cemetery. Therefore, this would stay with Rutland County Council who would not be provided with a contribution for grounds maintenance from OTC.
  - Concern was raised that OTC is the only parish in Rutland that do not maintain their Cemetery, this matter would be raised with OTC on a future occasion.
  - Mr Mathias, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Places (Highways, Transport and Market Towns) informed the Panel that he would feedback if there was any legal requirement for OTC to maintain Oakham Cemetery.
- ii) There had been an increase in weddings leading to an increase in revenue for registrars.
- iii) There has been a reduction in the revenue for Building Control. This was due to a drop in demand for this service which could have been caused by increased usage of external providers. Mr Mathias would provide the Panel with a written answer as to the reasons for this drop in revenue.
- iv) Rutland County Council (RCC) would work with the Schools Forum and individual schools to avoid financing the Dedicated School's Grant overspend.
- v) Members commented regarding underspends on the Better Care Fund and questioned whether schemes that had been delayed should proceed if existing performance was not affected. This would be raised at Cabinet.
- vi) It was confirmed that when business units at Oakham Enterprise Park become vacant, there may be a need to undertake remedial or other work prior to them being re-let. This would be addressed as part of the budgeting process.

#### **AGREED:**

That the Panel **NOTED** the Report.

#### 607 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) Members noted they would like Cabinet to seek reassurance from Officers that action is being taken where performance was below target.
- ii) Members asked for Cabinet to look at the fly tipping problem, if it was not addressed, the issue would get worse.
- iii) Mrs Mogg, Director for Resources, confirmed that there were no significant issues with the Agresso upgrade. The annual leave module is not yet fully implemented but the intention had always been that this would be part of the next step of the project. This indicator should be green.
- iv) Benchmarking had been done with other local authorities with regard to calls answered in one minute in customer services. The Council is in line with other authorities, and does not have the resources to enable all calls to be answered within one minute. The Council was encouraging customers to channel shift to use the website.
- v) Members commented on the processing for Housing Benefit claims being categorised in red. It was noted that the Benefits team had been through a review, with staff members moving to new jobs. This is likely to be a short term performance issue, with improvements before quarter 4, when the backlog is cleared and the introduction of a risk based procedure for processing claims.
- vi) Mrs Grinney, Revenues & Benefits Manager, confirmed that all claims were backdated to the date that the claim was received by the Council.

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Mr Mathias left the meeting at 19:35 and did not return.

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**AGREED:**

That the Panel **NOTED** the content of the report.

**608 DEMONSTRATION OF NEW WEBSITE**

Mr Nix, Head of IT and Customer Services, gave a presentation on the new Rutland County Council website that is due to launch 6<sup>th</sup> March. The main changes to the website include the following:

- i) New Content Management System which was based on partnership with West Lindsey District Council, North Kesteven District Council and Lincoln City Council.
- ii) The website was designed to work across a range of devices to include mobiles, tablets and desktop computers.
- iii) Each webpage from the current website had been re-created for the new website and had been checked for accuracy.
- iv) There was now less than 500 pages on the website.
- v) Designed to encourage use of the search bar.
- vi) 39 new online forms that were sent directly through to Customer Services.

- vii) New mapping – users could put their postcode into a search bar and find locations near them that they can go to, for example to find the location of car parks and details.
- viii) Users could view their Council bills and benefit claims via an online account. This would reduce calls made to the Council.
- ix) Users could do a self-assessment online for any Adult Social Care needs they might have. This was linked with Liquid Logic.
- x) The content management system allows rotating content, for instance the top popular pages.
- xi) Customer Services were to promote the website after launch, including advising people to use the self-service stations available at reception.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) The new website was due to go live on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017. With the Customer Service team promoting online services.
- ii) Members questioned why the navigation headings had 'My' at the beginning. Mr Nix noted that he would look into this if it takes value away.
- iii) Improvement had been made to access to planning applications. Users would be able to use the mapping tool to search for planning applications.
- iv) More development was required with regard to making payments easier, this would follow phase 2 of the project.
- v) The homepage could be programmed so that it could automatically highlight emergency out of hour's numbers on bank holidays.
- vi) Praise was given to the team behind the creation of the new website.
- vii) Mr Nix would provide a link to the new website to all Panel Members and welcomed further feedback.
- viii) The Panel requested a progress report be presented to them in October/November 2017.

## **609 INFORMATION FOR SCRUTINY POVERTY PROJECT**

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) Members asked for a list of identified organisations that could support people, which specific needs they catered to and which organisation the Council goes to first. It was noted that Ms Grinney has an up to date list.
- ii) Discussions would be had with Mrs G Curtis, Head of Lifelong Learning, regarding what schools do in terms of teaching their students about finances.
- iii) Members suggested a survey could be done by School Governors regarding teaching finance to students.
- iv) Mr Della Rocca would liaise with Heads of Service to ask them to advise Revenues and Benefits staff on any issues or signs they should look out for when processing Crisis Loans.
- v) Miss Waller noted that Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB), may not wish to disclose when a client referred to them had taken advice. She asked whether clients could be asked to give permission for this information to be disclosed so as to

enable the Council to track whether clients take up support. Mr Della Rocca would investigate whether this was possible.

- vi) It was suggested to add wording from the Final Notice letter to all reminder letters asking whether the relevant person is struggling to pay their Council Tax.
- vii) Mrs Grinney informed the Panel that residents could pay over 12 months or later in the month if they are struggling. The Council does try to be flexible.
- viii) The Council checks if mail is returned where for example residents may be posted abroad, service of delivery is assumed if sent.
- ix) Mr Della Rocca commented that the Council want more people to pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit. People were still coming in person and paying at Customer Services and the Museum. Changes would be made to all reminder letters to promote payment by Direct Debit.

## **AGREED**

The Panel **DISCUSSED** the contents of the Report.

### **610 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN**

The panel reviewed the forward plan with the following items to be added:

- Street Naming and Numbering
- Freedom of Information Annual Report

### **611 ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no other urgent business.

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

Thursday 27 April 2017 at 7.00 pm, Council Chamber

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**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.47 pm.**

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