



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP.

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the GROWTH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham on Thursday, 14th November, 2019 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Miss G Waller (Chair)
Mrs J Fox (Vice-Chair)
Mr R Coleman
Miss M Jones
Ms K Payne
Mr N Woodley

OFFICERS	Mr S Della Rocca	Strategic Director for Resources
PRESENT:	Mr A Nix	Head of IT and CST
	Mrs J Morley	Governance Officer

IN	Mr G Brown	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for
ATTENDANCE:		Environment, Planning, Property and
		Finance

362 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr N Begy.

363 RECORD OF MEETING

The minutes of the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

364 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

365 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

366 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice from Members had been received.

367 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

368 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR A DECISION IN RELATION TO CALL IN OF A DECISION

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

369 QUARTER 2 FINANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

Report No.181/2019 was received from the Strategic Director for Resources.

Mr Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources, introduced the report the purpose of which was to inform Members of the full year forecast position at Quarter 2 for 2019/20 and to alert them to issues that may impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The estimated £55k expense of officer time incurred on Brexit related work would be charged against the Brexit fund at the end of the year. The remainder of the £105k allocated Brexit funding would be put in earmarked reserves.
- The funding originally earmarked for the Officers' Mess project had been released back into unallocated funding reserves. A feasibility study had shown that there was no business case for investment so the Council chose not to pursue this further with the MOD.
- The Oakham Enterprise Park project had been part cancelled as original costs of £2.2 million had escalated to £2.8 million and there was no business case for continuing. If the project was still viable at £2.8 million, and tenants who were prepared to pay market rates could be found, then the project would be resurrected and presented again to Cabinet for a decision.
- At a recent meeting, tenants of Oakham Enterprise Park had been asked whether they wanted to keep the prison wire that surrounded the development and they had confirmed that they did.
- The Places directorate had several vacancies at the moment and the cost of interims had placed some pressure on their budget.
- Members commented that the increase in charges for road closures had made it more difficult and expensive for charitable organisations to put on events. It was confirmed however that the charges only covered staff and overheads and that there would not be any subsidies for particular groups.
- Road closures fees for VE day celebrations next year would be charged at the normal rate.
- Councillor Brown advised Members that any parishes who were putting on an event to celebrate VE day should complete an events form, detailing the

organisers and their contact numbers, which could then be used by all of the blue light services in the event of an emergency.

- Although many business owners had complained about the level of business rates that they paid, the Council website page <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-business/business-rates> actually showed that the business rates that many high street shops paid were in fact relatively low and often discounted.
- Members queried how the new 30 minutes free parking had changed behaviours around parking. Officers confirmed that income from parking fees was still increasing.
- The Council was not allowed to profit from green waste collection. It had been proposed that the Green waste charge remained the same for 2020/21 at £35.00 as the need for inflationary pressures had been offset by an increase in subscriptions at this stage.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee **NOTED** the report.

370 MYACCOUNT

An introduction to MyAccount was given by the Strategic Director for Resources who highlighted the following points:

- The new MyAccount system would be launched in early 2020. The system had been set up in response to customer demands to access more services online and to offer a system which allowed incidents and issues to be reported straight away.
- Officers wanted to produce a system that was better than the majority of other Councils' online account systems and to do so with a much smaller in-house budget.
- Some of the benefits of the new online system included:
 - It could be accessed outside of normal office hours
 - A reference number would be given so progress could be tracked
 - Once an account was set up proactive information could be received
 - Further functionality such as integrated payments could be added
 - It had been designed to enhance the existing customer services channels

Following a screen demonstration from Andy Nix, Head of IT and CST, and further discussion, the following points were noted:

- The level of engagement by residents with the new system would be carefully monitored so that other customer service channels could be reviewed. However it was the Council's intention to always have multiple channels available as it recognised that some residents would not be able to access online services or may prefer to speak directly to someone either in person or by telephone.
- Mr Nix confirmed that the site had been laid out so that it would meet the Government's accessibility standards by September 2020. Members commented however that certain aspects, such as white font on pastel coloured icons, made it less accessible.
- Members questioned whether MyAccount would overlap with 'fix my street' for reporting potholes.

- At the moment, photos could not be uploaded on MyAccount when reporting a pothole however for other workflows, such as applying for a new bus pass, they could be.
- Officers wanted to encourage customers to register as a user but guest access was available.
- Users needed to be reminded that although they could go back and forth between pages, once they reached the final page and a reference number was created they could no longer go back to amend anything.
- Members felt that better pictures could be used for the safeguarding icons as it was not very clear what they represented.
- Greater consideration needed to be given to the language used so that it better reflected the words and language that residents would use.
- MyAccount would be embedded at the end of a website page so that the entry point would be after having read a lot of information on the subject. However, if residents already had an account they could miss some of this information so Members recommended that signposting to the particular website page should also be included.
- The Council would like to encourage people to use the online service, especially for more transactional services.
- A benefit of being registered for the site was that tailored information e.g. councillors' names, wards, bin dates etc. could be included.
- Fixed reminders had not been built in yet to the site's functionality, unless it was the same date for everyone. Members commented that reminders for blue badges and bus passes would be very useful for residents.
- For those registered on the site, tailored information included planning applications local to the resident's postcode.
- Members would like registered users to have the option of emailing their ward councillors directly through MyAccount, rather than clicking through to mod.gov.
- Response times and standards needed to be made very clear on the site and there should be close monitoring, once the system was live, of whether teams were delivering on these timeframes.
- The fact an enquiry was logged on MyAccount meant officers could build dashboards and monitor service standards.
- Members requested a MyAccount+ that could be used by Parish Councillors and Members giving them access to additional services.
- Training on the MyAccount system would be given to library staff and the front desk customer service assistants at the Council so that they could assist residents to use this portal.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee **NOTED** the demonstration of the MyAccount system.

371 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK PLAN

During discussion of the Annual Work Plan and review of the current Forward Plan the following comments were noted:

- The work of the Biodiversity Task and Finish group was on track and the group would be able to report to the Committee at their meeting on 13 February.

- Two additional meeting dates for the Committee to consider the Local Plan before it was submitted to Cabinet had been confirmed. The dates for these meetings were 19 December 2019 and 9 January 2020.
- The Committee would be updated on when to expect the Road Safety Strategy
- The Chair had received a briefing note on the provision of conservation advice and this would be sent out to all committee members.
- A report on the work being done by the Oakham Regeneration Board had been scheduled for the meeting on 9 April but this would likely be moved into the next municipal year's meetings in order that the report could contain more substantial information.
- It was confirmed that Councillor Gordon Brown was the cabinet member responsible for the delivery of the Zero Carbon activity.
- The Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Investment report would include some information on asset returns which would allow members to determine what additional information they might need.

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to meet privately to further discuss the work programme for the forthcoming meetings.

372 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No other urgent business was received.

373 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Special meeting: Thursday 19 December at 7pm.

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Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm

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