



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, 13th February, 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Miss G Waller (Chair)
Mr N Begy
Mr R Coleman
Mrs J Fox
Mr M Oxley
Mrs K Payne
Mr N Woodley

OFFICERS	Mr S Della Rocca	Strategic Director for Resources
PRESENT:	Mrs P Sharp	Deputy Director for Places
	Mr A Nix	Head of IT and Customer Services
	Mr J Johnson	Service Manager for Development
	Mr M Loran	Senior Environmental Services Manager
	Mrs J Morley	Governance Officer

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr O Hemsley Leader and Portfolio Holder for Rutland One Public Estate & Growth, Tourism & Economic Development, Communications and Resources (other than finance)

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

532 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones, and Councillor Stephenson, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Highways, Transportation and Road Safety. Councillor Oxley was in attendance for Councillor Jones.

533 RECORD OF MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 November 2019, 14 November 2019, 19 December 2019 and 16 January 2020, copies of which had been previously circulated, were confirmed.

534 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

535 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

No petitions, deputations or questions had been received.

536 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

No questions with notice had been received from Members.

537 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

No notices of motion had been received from Members.

538 CONSIDERATION 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 Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of a decision in accordance with procedure Rule 206.

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In order to accommodate officer and Member time constraints, the Chair and the Committee agreed to hear the agenda items in a different order. Item 9, the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group report was heard first, followed by item 11, the update on MyAccount and Fix My Street.

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The Chair welcomed Penny Sharp, the newly appointed Deputy Director for Places to her first RCC Scrutiny committee meeting.

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539 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Report No.31/2020 was received from the Strategic Director for Places.

Mr Justin Johnson, Development Manager, introduced the report the purpose of which was to update Members on the proposed changes to the Planning Enforcement Policy which was 6 years old and due for revision.

During the discussion the following points were noted:

- Councillor Oxley remarked that many developers exceeded their planning conditions but that there was not a process to pick this up during the build and instead the Council was alerted by residents, often long after the build had finished. Hearing too late on in the process meant that it often cost more money to correct it than it would have done had it been identified earlier on.
- Councillor G Brown informed Members that the Parish Council Forum had done a piece of work on how to identify when planning conditions had not been observed. Ketton and Barrowden parishes had become particularly concerned and suggested

that once the building was underway, the building inspector could make regular visits to check compliance with planning conditions, in addition to building regulations. This suggestion and approach got support from over 9000 local councils and was submitted formally through NALC (National Association of Local Councils) to the Secretary of State. A negative response was received from the then Minister, Kit Malthouse, which resulted in an appeal being lodged. A response from the new Minister for Housing was due soon.

- In the past, the building inspector had been part of the planning team and so often fed in any issues that he spotted in the course of his work. Now, as was the case with most councils, not all building control was handled by the Council and RCC did not have a dedicated officer to check on compliance.
- Councillor Waller commended officers on the revised policy and felt that it was much more user friendly than the previous one.
- On the suggestion of Members, Mr Johnson, the Development Manager, would change the recommendation to Cabinet to reflect that although the policy would be reviewed as a matter of course every five years, if any major national changes that needed to be taken into consideration arose then the review would be sooner.
- The Policy had links to Government pages which had much more guidance on the harm assessment criteria.
- It was not always possible to be completely black and white on when to take enforcement action and instead a professional planning judgement had to be made.

RESOLVED

The Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee reviewed and made comment on the updated Planning Enforcement Policy before it was presented to Cabinet for approval at their meeting on 17 March 2020.

540 DRAFT REPORT OF THE BIODIVERSITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Fox, Chairman of the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group gave a verbal update on the Group's work to date.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The Group had reviewed the LLR Biodiversity Action Plan but had found that it was far too wordy and complex for the average reader.
- The group's focus was on producing recommendations under specific headings that would form the basis of a Biodiversity Strategy.
- Although this 'draft' strategy would be supplemented with data from officers and hyperlinks to further information given, the Group envisaged that it would remain a very clear, user friendly document.
- The Biodiversity Strategy was one element of the overarching Environmental Strategy. Any other task and finish groups to look at different strands of this would need to be proposed by the scrutiny committee and its terms of reference approved by Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group would present the final report detailing the work process and final recommendations of the Group, at the next meeting of the

Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 9 April, before being presented to Cabinet

541 CORPORATE PLAN

Mr Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources and Mrs Sharpe, Deputy Director for Places identified areas of the Corporate Plan for future input by the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- A series of principles for the new Customer Services Strategy would be brought before the committee at some point for discussion. The website needed to be reviewed as part of wider work on Customer Services. There was a debate to be had on what the purpose of the website was, how it needed to work and how resources would be organised to deliver it. The Council did not have a centralised website team and with the pages the website already had there was not enough resource to maintain it.
- The Council needed to look at the operational model and decide for example whether it was a good use of front line officers (e.g. social workers) time to be driving the contents of their page or was this in fact detrimental to the job in hand.
- The Executive had agreed with officers that the Council would take a digital first approach.
- Scrutiny could add real value to the outline scoping work for the Economic Development Plan which would complement the Local Plan and the 50 year vision.
- The Chair stated that she would have a conversation with Councillor Stephenson, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure on how scrutiny could input to the discussion on the RCC cultural offer, looking at the commerciality of ventures and projects and whether they could be made to break even or even as loss leaders, they were important to maintain.

RESOLVED:

1. That a series of principles for the new Customer Services Strategy would be brought before the Committee in June for it to discuss and agree.
2. That an agenda item on the Economic Development Plan be brought to the September meeting of the Committee.

542 UPDATE ON DIRECTORATE'S PROJECTS: MYACCOUNT AND FIX MY STREET

Mr Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources gave verbal updates on the progress of the My Account and Fix My Street projects.

During discussion the following points were noted:

MyAccount:

- The feedback from the Committee from the discussion on MyAccount that was had at the meeting in November had been invaluable. One of the key points that

officers had taken onboard was about the navigation of the site and numerous changes had now been made to make it much more accessible. Councillor Woodley who had identified some of the initial issues with the system had had a preview of the revised site and was confident that it now worked well and would be the success that the Council wanted it to be.

- User testing of the site had been done with different user groups but although there had been dialogue with the Rutland Access Group, testers had not been available to provide feedback.
- Alongside improved navigation, improvements to the site following the scrutiny meeting included the use of more user-friendly language, a change of colour contrasts to make it more accessible, and work on the guest versus user log-in.
- Officers intended that the MyAccount service would be ready to go live by the end of March.
- The launch would be a 'learning launch' with feedback welcome from the public. Functionality could be improved once further customer needs and wants had been identified.
- Webchat would be available for people to ask questions and this would also be assessed to help grow functionality of the site.
- Before MyAccount went live, a video would be released to explain how it worked. Members would have sight of this before the launch in order to advise their residents.
- MyAccount would be beneficial to residents, as they could access the service in their own time, and beneficial to the Council from a cost perspective.
- The service would be advertised widely and library staff would be trained on the system. The extent to which existing channels for services would remain open would be a matter for discussion.

FixMyStreet

- Members had agreed that the discussion on FixMyStreet would be on the IT element of it and not about how the service was managed. Performance would be covered at future meetings if required. Customers' queries logged on FixMyStreet had been reviewed to see how they had been distributed and answered.
- Work had been ongoing to make sure the initial call got through and updates had been given within the Confirm system.
- Reports generated from the initial reporting page and the Confirm system were being compared to see where there were anomalies and discrepancies.
- Ideally, updates that came in for parking issues would be sent directly to the person who provided the call rather than them having to log back into FixMyStreet to check progress.
- Responses on the system need to be more customer focused and not quite so stark.
- Councillor Coleman commented that the definitions of 'open', 'fixed' and 'closed' for reports needed to be made clear on the website.

RESOLVED:

That a full update on both the IT aspect of FixMyStreet and operationally how the service was performing, be brought to the September meeting of the Committee.

543 QUARTER 3 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

Report No.28/2020 was received from the Strategic Director for Resources.

The purpose of the report was to inform Cabinet and all Members of the full year forecast position as at Quarter 3 and to highlight issues that might impact on the medium Term Financial Plan to enable them to maintain sound financial management of the Council's operations.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- The report summarised where the Council was at the end of Quarter 3 which broadly speaking was in the same position as of the end of Quarter 2.
- Spending on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport had increased.
- Budget carry forwards no longer needed had been released and these had offset the increased spending.
- The over spend on waste management was due to price fluctuations in the market. The Council had an arrangement with the recycling contractors whereby if the price or cost of recycling went up or down the pain or the gain was shared with them. Councillor G Brown, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environment, Property and Finance referred Members to the website <https://recycle.com/> which monitored prices, and gave an example of paper prices which last year were £10 a tonne but this year were *minus* £20 a tonne.
- The increase in the number of planning applications and the income generated from them meant that there had been an under spend for development control.
- Mr Della Rocca, the Section 151 officer would report back to the Committee on why £50k, funded from CIL monies, was being used to facilitate children being accepted in to an oversubscribed school instead of using the places available in schools that were undersubscribed.

RESOLVED:

The Committee **NOTED** the 2019/20 estimated revenue and capital outturn positions as at Quarter 3

544 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

Report No.30/2020 was received from the Chief Executive.

Mr Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources, introduced the report the purpose of which was to provide the Cabinet and all Members with strategic oversight of the Council's performance for 2019/20 in delivering the Corporate Plan's aims and objectives. The monitoring information reported on progress and highlighted any key challenges.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- Although it was pleasing to see lots of 'green' indicators on the chart Councillor Begy asked whether this in fact meant that the targets were not stretching enough.
- Members commented that they were unable to see a 'direction of travel' and it would be useful to see performance over a number of years in order to see if the

Council was getting better or worse. The Chair stated that on behalf of the scrutiny committee she would make this recommendation to Cabinet.

- In response to Members' queries on why all of the road targets had been exactly met, Mrs Sharp, Deputy Director for Places stated that she would come back to Members with a full response on how they had been measured.
- Customer service was measured as poor against target but this was subjective as although less calls were being answered this may be because the customers that were being dealt with received an excellent standard of service that required more time.
- The target date of March 2021 for the development of the St George's Barracks Business Zone was given a 'green' rating as although the service personnel would not have left by then, the business zone sat 'outside of the wire' and therefore work on this could begin before then.
- The target for jobs was 20000 over 20 years. The success of the Kings Centre and its job creation had clearly shown that there was a demand for business space and the discussion to be had going forward was on the type of employment wanted, where it needed to be and whether external funding could be found to develop it rather than solely using Council funds.

RESOLVED:

The Committee **NOTED** the overall position in relation to performance so far during 2019/20 and the actions being taken to address areas of underperformance.

545 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

A vote to determine whether the public and press be excluded from the meeting was taken and unanimously agreed.

546 UPDATE ON STAMFORD NORTH PROPOSAL

Mr Gordon Brown, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning, Property and Finance gave a verbal update on the Stamford North proposal.

The minutes for this item are exempt.

547 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Items for the work plan had been discussed under the Corporate Plan agenda item and therefore no further discussion was had.

548 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

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

549 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee would be held on Thursday 9 April 2020 at 7pm.

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Chairman closed the meeting at 21.21.

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