



Rutland County Council

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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, 7th November, 2019 at 7.30 pm

Present: Miss G Waller (Chair)
Mr N Begy
Mrs J Fox
Miss M Jones
Mrs K Payne
Mr N Woodley

Apologies: Mr R Coleman

Officers: Mr Horsfield - Monitoring Officer & Deputy Director Corporate Governance
Mrs Powley – Governance Manager

227 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jones who was substituted by Councillor Oxley, Councillor Coleman and Councillor Razzell.

An apology was also received from Councillor G Brown, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Environment, Planning, Property, and Finance.

228 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

229 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that a deputation had been received in accordance with the procedure rules set out in the Constitution.

The Monitoring Officer noted that an additional late deputation had been received and as an exception to the rules, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the Leader of the Council, the deputation would be heard, without further questioning.

Ms Sue Walling addressed the Committee.

“For the first time since 2008, the Cabinet has chosen not to consult the public on the Corporate Plan - we understand they are not obliged to do so.

However - in the Local Government Association's NEW Guide to engagement, the importance of building trust, by working with communities and consulting is highlighted.

And I quote - "By bringing people in on decision- making, Councils can get decisions right, manage expectations and improve relationships with residents."

Given there has been no consultation with the public, we are seeking reassurance from Scrutiny that the work that has been done to date on the Corporate Plan accurately reflects our county's priorities.

The Corporate Plan must be an accurate working document - one that every Councillor has a stake in and importantly feels confident that it truly reflects the needs and aspirations of our residents.

The Cabinet will have used evidential reports from the portfolio holders and the Strategic Management Team to inform their decisions - but have OUR front line professionals also been consulted.

Our Police, our GPs, the mental health teams, MOD, tourism boards, local businesses, youth leaders, head teachers, our parish and county councillors and the Town Councils of Oakham and Uppingham – there is a long list of people in Rutland that have their fingers on the pulse on a daily basis and their views are imperative.

Our concern is whether Scrutiny are fully satisfied that the cabinet have drawn their conclusion for both the priorities and subsequent actions from a current and broad evidence base to determine this Council's role in the future success of Rutland.

Our major markets towns of Oakham and Uppingham have major influences on both tourism and employment and deserve sufficient consideration.

Lastly given the position we find ourselves in with the Corporate Plan it is vital that we voice our concerns now on the proposed 50 Year Vision within Strategic Aim 1.1

This Corporate Plan features some 68 objectives (each listed by a bullet point). Out of these 68 there are two objectives which the plan states will be agreed or approved by Cabinet and those relate specifically to the plans for our 50 year vision.

This makes it difficult not to conclude that the outcome of the Vision will be heavily influenced by Cabinet's Vision for Rutland, rather than a People's Vision, if, from the outset the Cabinet agree the process and approve the draft.

We trust that both the process to achieve the Vision, the draft plan itself and the consultation is one that will reflect the considered opinions of the experts in our community and the professional expertise that we have within our Councillors before it goes to the public for consideration.

I appreciate the time that Scrutiny will no doubt give to our valid concerns. Thank you".

No further questions were raised by Members.

Mr Camp read out his deputation:

“My name is Richard Camp. I am Vice-Chairman of Manton Parish Council and last year played a key role in setting up Manton Action Group, a group of about 60 local residents who are concerned about the proposed re-development of St George’s Barracks.

I greatly respect County Councillors for the fact that they commit so much of their time to the service of the County, often under difficult circumstances, and for pretty minimal financial reward. But I do worry about governance here. The Corporate Plan, now being subjected to scrutiny, has been rushed through, adopted by Cabinet recently, without involvement of the community, and initially scheduled for adoption by the full Council in four days’ time, on 11th November (although this full Council meeting has at the last minute been cancelled due to election purdah).

The Corporate Plan is projected to cover the next five years, but it seems more like a one-year than a five-year plan, and is of course more of a vision than a clearly structured plan. Many targets are due to be attained in the next 1-3 months. For example, the Leader and Chief Executive actually appear to be responsible for agreeing a definition of ‘affordable’ housing by 31st October this year (as indicated in Priority Theme 1.3 on page 14 of the Corporate Plan). The present Scrutiny Committee should, I recommend, ask the Leader and/or Chief Executive Officer, who are listed as responsible for this priority, to clarify exactly what the expected cost of an ‘affordable’ home is. Empingham residents, for example, have recently welcomed a nice, new development, but the affordable homes apparently started at £235,000, which is way beyond the means of households with an income of under £50,000 per year. And the Corporate Plan indicates that, of the 160 new homes planned for each year, 30% will be affordable, that is around 50 affordable homes per year in Rutland. This Scrutiny Committee should require the Leader and Chief Executive Officer to clarify exactly how this is likely to succeed.

Near its beginning the Corporate Plan states that the Council wants to cherish and sustain the characteristics that make Rutland special, and then gives the first such characteristic as the fact that Rutland is ‘rural and sparsely populated.’ And then one sees in the Corporate Plan the ongoing strategy to deliver 2,315 homes at St George’s Barracks to produce a town near Rutland Water that in population terms is larger than Uppingham. We should all know of the unprecedented opposition to the initially proposed St George’s masterplan following Local Plan consultation last year. Now, I think, is the time for the Cabinet and Executive to work more seriously with residents to contain what so many of us believe is utterly unreasonable development. It is unfortunate that the Corporate Plan has gone so far as to suggest the 2315 St George’s housing development ahead of any formal planning acceptance. It would be good governance for ‘appropriate development’ at St George’s to be mentioned in the Corporate Plan, but for the 2,315 number to be removed, considering also that there is no reference in the Plan to the enormous 7000 home development proposed at Woolfox.

As time is limited I shall stop, having made these few points which I know are of great concern to many people of Rutland”.

The Chair explained that she would not allow questions of the deputation as it had been allowed with exception.

230 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

There were none.

231 CORPORATE PLAN

The Chair of the Committee noted that the recommendation of the report was for the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of the Rutland County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and make recommendations to Council on the 11th November 2019.

It was noted that due to the entering the pre-election period, the Council meeting on the 11th November 2019 had been cancelled.

In response to questions asked, the Leader of the Council, in the absence of the Deputy Leader, explained that a number of the targets included in the Corporate Plan had already been met but noted that they were awaiting additional information from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government following the consultation on the New national model for shared ownership.

Members of the Committee raised concerns about the following:

1. Would there be revised targets set in light of any revision from Government and the election?
2. The number of houses for St Georges had been stipulated in the Corporate Plan, prior to the completion of the Planning process
3. Could the delivery of the number of new homes for development at St George's be problematic and considered as fettering?

The Leader of the Council explained that the draft Corporate Plan had been shared with Members in August 2019 and a number of opportunities had been provided for Members to have an input. He stated that consideration could be given to revising the number of houses developed at St George's.

In response to questions asked, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Highways & Transportation & Road Safety explained that they would lobby for an upgrade to the A1 from Peterborough to Blythe as there was a significant need to improve the infrastructure in the County for both residents and tourists.

The Leader confirmed that a considerable amount of funding had been put into improving Broadband and by 2024 fiber broadband would be accessible in all villages.

Members of the Committee raised the following points:

- a) Can the provision of affordable homes be extended, not just to young families but to single people and elder people?
- b) Rather than having a specific number of houses for the St George's development, would it be more beneficial to refer to it as a 'large' number so that the Cabinet are not bound by specific numbers and thus more likely to meet their target?

The Chair noted that she had submitted a number of questions to Cabinet and due to the late submission they had not been answered. However, she commented that the answers to her questions would be appended to the minutes of this meeting,

The Committee agreed that the recommendations should be revised to reflect the cancelation of the Council meeting on the 11th November 2019 (due to the pre-election period) and read: "A future meeting of the Council"

The Committee agreed that an additional recommendation should be that the targets in the Corporate Plan be reviewed alongside the Corporate performance report be reviewed annually.

RESOLVED:

That the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Rutland County Council Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and recommends to a future Council meeting that the targets in the Corporate Plan be reviewed alongside the Corporate performance report be reviewed on an annual basis.

That when the Corporate Plan is submitted to Council, the current achievements are inside the targets.

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Chairman closed the meeting at 8.17pm

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