



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the COUNCIL** held via Zoom on Monday, 12th October, 2020 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Mr E Baines	Mr N Begy
Mr O Hemsley	Mr G Brown
Mr R Coleman	Mrs L Stephenson
Mr A Walters	Mr D Wilby
Mr P Ainsley	Mr D Blanksby
Mr A Brown	Ms J Burrows
Mrs J Fox	Miss M Jones
Mr A Lowe	Ms A MacCartney
Mr M Oxley	Mrs K Payne
Mrs R Powell	Mr I Razzell
Miss G Waller	Mrs S Webb
Mr N Woodley	

APOLOGIES:

Mr K Bool	Mr J Dale
Mr W Cross	Mrs S Harvey

OFFICERS

PRESENT:

Interim Chief Executive
Monitoring Officer
Interim Strategic Director for Places
Director of Adult Services and Health
Governance Manager

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harvey, Cross, Bool and Dale.

2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman that on the 9th October 2020 the East Midlands Women of the Year awards were presented and asked Council to note and recognise the achievements specifically Uppingham who for the third year running has had successful candidates; The Deputy Mayor Liz Clarke got the award for Business Woman of the year and Cllr Stephenson got the Best Market Town Leader of the year.

The Chairman invited Councillor Razzell to address Council who proceeded to update Members on the Remembrance Day arrangements. He reported that they were in the advanced stage of preparations and thanked the various branches of the Royal British Legion for their assistance. Due to the circumstances, the event would much smaller than normal but would be duly reverent for the occasion.

3 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE CABINET OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman invited the Interim Chief Executive to address Council.

Mr Andrews explained that the current seven day Covid rate was one hundred and forty-three. It was reported that there had been a spike in the number of cases nationally due to a substantial number of previously unrecorded cases being included in the figures. Mr Andrews reported that the Prime minister had announced a new three tier system to deal with Covid with Rutland being in the first tier of restrictions.

The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to address Council.

The Leader commented on the rise in the number of Covid cases noting that it was everybody's duty to take responsibility for their actions. He thanks residents of Rutland for their continued work in minimising infections rates.

Councillor Stephenson reported that a review of the Highways Transport Working Group (HTWG) was to be undertaken. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in December 2020. Parish and Town Councils could continue to submit their highway concerns which would be logged in date order until the review was completed.

Councillor Walters explained that there had been an article in local press suggesting that Rutland Memorial Hospital was to close. Councillor Walters explained that this may have caused some alarm to residents and advised Council that the CCG had met with the Council to examine how Health care could be provided in Rutland in order to protect and enhance services whichever building that may be in.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 14th September were confirmed as a true record.

6 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were none.

7 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

The Chairman noted that a question had been submitted by Councillor MacCartney as set out below:

“Could the portfolio holder please give us an update on the latest situation in the negotiations with the MOD et al., regarding the terms and conditions of the HIF grant. Also the latest developments in terms of who will bear responsibility for what, and finally, an update on the costs involved as I imagine that these have changed / progressed since we last had sight of them in December. This may require entering private council session at the exclusion of the public, and if so I am happy to propose this”.

In response, Councillor G Brown, as the relevant Cabinet member responded as below:

“As Councillors will recall, we were provided with a set of outline conditions which were discussed by Council in January. It was agreed at that meeting that when the details on the terms and conditions were ready, they would be brought back to Council following a recommendation from Cabinet.

Since that time progress has been slow. Earlier in the year outline agreement was reached between RCC, DIO and HE that there should be a tripartite agreement which would identify the respective parties responsibilities, however it was not until late July that Homes England produced their standard template agreement which did not deal adequately with a tripartite arrangement.

Subsequent discussions have resulted currently in a broad understanding between the parties that all three parties will agree to the Homes England template, suitably modified, and that there will be a separate agreement between DIO and RCC which will layout each parties responsibilities. Personally this was not the process which I would have preferred but Homes England are insisting on both DIO and RCC generally following their template, called the General Distribution Agreement.

The three sets of lawyers and officers are just starting to discuss the principles which are incorporated in the General Distribution Agreement. This currently runs o over 80 pages and I suspect will be over 100 pages by the time that we are finished.

In addition, the first draft of that document between DIO and RCC called the Allocation Agreement was produced by our legal team just last week and I understand that the DIO plan to review it with their legal team during this week. It is a slow process.

From my experience of completing legal agreements, these take time, first to resolve the principles which is where we are at now, before you can get down to the detail and then the final dotting the “l”s and crossing the ”t”s.

Homes England are keen to see completion of the documentation at the earliest possible date but both the officers and myself have made it clear the final agreement must be right for Rutland in terms of the risks to which we might be exposed, the delivery mechanisms which DIO will be putting forward and that we need an appropriate timescale to take it through Cabinet and Council.

With regard to your reference to costs I am not sure which costs you are referring to and if you can clarify that for me I can provide written response”

In response to a supplementary question asked by Councillor MacCartney, Councillor G Brown explained that the process had already taken a year and it was anticipated that it would be completed and shared with Councillors by the end of the year.

8 REFERRAL OF COMMITTEE DECISIONS TO THE COUNCIL

There were none.

9 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS FROM CABINET MEETINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM 14TH SEPTEMBER TO THE 12TH OCTOBER 2020

There were none.

10 REPORT FROM THE CABINET

Council received Report No.123/2020 and noted the Key Decision taken at its meetings held on 15th September 2020.

11 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

There were none.

12 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMISSION / SCRUTINY PANELS

There were none.

13 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chairman reported that Councillor Bool had emailed members his update on the Fire Authority and appended to the minutes.

The Chairman invited Councillors Waller and Oxley to update Council.

Councillor Waller explained that she and the Leader had attended East Midland Council AGM on Friday 9th October and the notes taken by Councillor Waller had been circulated

On the 23rd September, Councillor Waller and Councillor Harvey had attended the LLR Health Scrutiny Committee. A Covid update had been delivered by the Director of Public Health. It was further noted that a NHS11 First, a national initiative, to allow patients to be triaged over the phone had been launched but was very much in its infancy. It was considered that the approach would reduce people contact and the number of hospital admissions.

Councillor Oxley explained that the Fair Trade Foundation were would be placing emphasis on the internet in order to promote their cause and increasing their presence on all forms of social media.

14 NOTICES OF MOTION

There were none.

15 POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

Councillor Hemsley proposed the report which sought Councils approval of the changes to the make-up of the political groupings of the Council. He explained that the Group Leaders had met and discussed the report and proposed that following the resignation from the Conservative Group, Councillor Blanksby be removed from the Planning and Licensing Committee and the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Woodley would be appointed to the Planning and Licensing Committee and Councillor Oxley would be appointed to the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the Independent Group were entitled to an additional Committee place.

Councillor Razzell seconded the report.

Members discussed the report and voted for the recommendations.

Upon a recorded vote there voted in favour:

Councillors Ainsley, Baines, Begy, A Brown, G Brown, Burrows, Coleman, Fox, Hemsley, Jones, Lowe, MacCartney, Oxley, Payne, Powell, Stephenson, Waller, Walters, Webb, Wilby and Woodley.

Councillor Blanksby abstained:

RESOLVED:

- i) That Councillor Blanksby be removed from the Planning and Licensing Committee and the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- ii) Councillor Woodley be appointed to the Planning and Licensing Committee and Councillor Oxley be appointed to the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee

16 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE: WHITE PAPER

Councillor G Brown introduced Report no: 124/2020 and noted that Council were being asked to debate and comment on the Planning White Paper to inform the response of Cabinet.

Councillor G Brown commented that there was a distinct lack of detail and substance to the proposal to the paper, the origin of which was formed as a research document of a think tank. He reported that no practising Town Planners were on the panel during preparation of the report. Thanks was given to the officers involved in drafting the comprehensive response.

Councillor Hemsley seconded the report.

Councillor Jones thanked officers for the response and noted that the drafted response raised many questions. She expressed concern about S106 and CIL monies being used for general funding and commented that community engagement would be greatly diminished and digitising information would not encourage people to get involved. On the matter of Climate change she suggested that the response only made parting reference to it and considered the response to be an opportunity to address environmental issues including carbon reduction. She stated that the current planning process ensures that housing developments were in suitable and sustainable places and reported that Rutland need houses but we there was a need for houses where there were employment opportunities.

Councillor A Brown said considered the white paper to be ill-conceived and ill- thought out. In contrast, he stated that the drafted response was well written and addressed some of the anomalies in the paper. He believed that the proposal on the white paper would take away involvement and scrutiny at a local level and would further erode the powers of local authorities with local communities having less involvement in local planning applications. He considered there to be distinct lack of clarity and detail in the report and suggested that it would only benefit housing developers, suggesting that it could be perceived to be a developers' charter.

Councillor Ainsley commented that the white paper was complex document and explained that he believed that Rutland need to develop so that young people have tenure to live and remain in Rutland. Reform of planning system was long overdue as there was a lack of affordable housing and housing for young people. He commented that a consolidated levy should not be incurred at expense of individual. He concurred that there was a need for the planning system to be streamlined and noted that there were some positive aspects of the document and he supported the thrust of it. However, he noted that there were numerous questions outstanding and there was not enough detail. He thanked the Planning Policy team for writing the robust response.

Councillor Razzell commented that the document had taken large amount of time from officers and thanked them for their detailed response. He suggested that the document needed to be written for the user and not the owner and those making a planning application would be hindered and not helped. He commented that the delivery of the white paper had been a sprint to the door which lacked detail and clarity.

Councillor Waller stated that with regards to planning policy, one size did not fit all. The attempt contained within the white paper to simplifying the planning process should be

applauded. However, simplifying it through IT would benefit developers but not those living with bad broadband or questionable IT skills and would exclude a lot of people. Areas identified for Growth, Renewal or Protected would in some instances overlap with the potential of designating areas at street level. She commented that without detail and answers to questions it was difficult to comment. Councillor Waller further questioned what a sustainable development would mean to Rutland in comparison to other counties and raised concerns about the number of affordable homes being built in any new developments.

Councillor Oxley stressed that the paper proposed to drive the development of 300,000 homes being built. He stated that this would disproportionately impact rural areas due to the availability of land to build; there was less space and land for development in existing urban areas. He echoed the comment made by Councillor A Brown that it could be perceived to be a developers charter. He further questioned whether travellers' sites had been properly considered in the paper

Councillor Woodley commented that the potential cost incurred should the white paper be approved were not emphasised enough and noted that there could be a substantial economic impact if the Local Plan had to be redrafted as a result of the white paper. Such changes would put a considerable impact the Council's capital and additional funding would be needed from government should such changes be necessary.

Councillor Powell thanked officers for their excellent response and expressed her concerns about the lack of evidence contained within the white paper. The Planning system needed an overhaul but there was a lack of solid evidence and detail. Councillor Powell requested that the response be strengthened on environmental issues and mention should be made to the impact on agriculture particularly with regards to the rural landscape.

Councillor MacCartney addressed the lack of detail in the white paper and commented that it was very poorly thought through. She suggested it could allow developers to exploit loopholes to avoid providing affordable housing and noted that the Planning Committee would be powerless in preventing distasteful and sweeping developments.

Councillor Waller urged the Leadership to take every opportunity to lobby against the proposal. Designing housing of the future needed to have more focus on affordable housing and asked that Cabinet work with other Councils to lobby against this.

Councillor A Brown commented that moving towards a digital age could be problematic and the transitional time, effort and cost could be significant.

Councillor Hemsley explained that he and Cabinet had been working with the MP for Rutland and with the Unitary Council Network and other rural councils in lobbying against the white paper.

Councillor Baines stated that he echoed a lot of the concerns already raised. He commented he would be interested to know if there was nothing included to protect the Rutland Water. He considered it to be a top down report which preached localism but practised centralism

Councillor G Brown thanked all members for their contribution in the discussion and agreed that the officers' response was excellent. He commented that he would circulate the link to the Parliamentary debate to all Councillors and noted that one of the select committees had proposed to open an enquiry into the white paper.

Climate change – comments are very weak and we will be making more of this following the comments. Total lack of clarity and details on hearings being held. He explained that Rutland Council would be very robust in the response to this especially with support from the local MP arguing against.

Councillor Baines proposed from the Chair that Council commends the officers' response to Cabinet and ask that Cabinet take notice of the Council debate at their meeting on the 27th October 2020

Councillor G Brown seconded the proposal.

There voted in favour:

Councillor Ainsley, Baines, Begy, Blanksby, A Brown, G Brown, Burrows, Coleman, Fox, Hemsley, Jones, Lowe, MacCartney, Oxley, Payne, Powell, Razzell, Stephenson, Waller, Walters, Webb, Wilby and Woodley.

There were no votes against and no abstentions:

RESOLVED:

That Council commends the officers' response to Cabinet and ask that Cabinet take notice of the Council debate at their meeting on the 27th October 2020.

17 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

There was none.

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The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.29pm

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