

19-12-19 SCRUTINY – Local Plan - Deputation by Vic Pheasant, Empingham resident

VFM and TRANSPARENCY

All Public Servants, employed or elected, have a duty seek VFM and to regularly review progress to ensure VFM is achieved.

The role of SCRUTINY is a crucial check and balance for the effective delivery of RCC services.

The SGB proposal, with MOD as the developer is not viable without another Government Department's HIF funds to pump prime the development.

Why not simply give MOD the funds and negate their need to make money from this site ?

Since signing the MOU with the MOD in 2017 RCC *seem* to have pursued only this one option to the exclusion of all others including continuing with Rutland's tried and tested policy of balanced development in two towns and villages in this "rural" county.

Is there a significant risk of unintended consequences to the whole county, and region of poor, or hurriedly thought through proposals ?

We appreciate that RCC may have been constrained in issuing its lengthy (450 pages) report late on Friday afternoon for consideration and assessment in week (less for the public) by the Scrutiny Panel.

But it is not the best advert for open government and transparency. The election may also affect Government priorities.

So why rush this through at this stage ?

Has RCC 's self-imposed deadlines to get something done resulted in failure to communicate effectively with the entire community ?

We trust therefore that in considering these papers the Scrutiny Committee will comment on whether RCC records clearly demonstrate that the requirements to achieve VFM and transparency have been met.

HIF FUNDS and THE LOCAL PLAN

The need for certain information being commercial in confidence is appreciated. But it does mean the public cannot know the finance RCC sought from HIF and for which essential infrastructure improvements, or the planned timing for those improvements.

We therefore trust the Scrutiny Committee will fully consider the risks to RCC in accepting the HIF funds on the terms and conditions offered. The Panel's questions/points might include :-

whether they have been afforded all the necessary papers and sufficient time to examine them,

in the event of underspending on one improvement would savings be available to fund other infrastructure improvements :-

(a) included in the RCC bid and /or

(b) not included in that bid ?

whether the HIF funds can be increased to meet overspends, eg on improving the electricity supply, and whether there is any risk that RCC would be expected to meet those costs ?

whether HIF funds are only for “essential” infrastructure improvements and not for example to provide a new primary school when the current Edith Weston School is seriously underutilised, is on a large site and capable of expansion ?

RCC has heralded and publicised the initiative of the MOU with the MOD. The extent of material in the public domain would leave the contracted consultants with little doubt as to RCC preferred course of action.

Did this influence the consultants reports ?

TO REASSURE THE PUBLIC the Scrutiny Panel should also check that there is an audit trail demonstrating that RCC properly applied the public procurement requirements for purchasing the services of consultants including
the selection of bidders,
their professional competence and experience,
any previous association with RCC, RCC’s partners, or the proposed developments,
that all relevant information was included with the invitation to bid,
that any further information sought by any bidder was provided to all bidders at the same time, and
that any discussions with the consultants were duly recorded by RCC.

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