

**Deputation:** Gareth Jones - 1 Tyler Close, Edith Weston, Oakham, Rutland, LE158EX.  
Julie Gray - 59 Weston Road, Edith Weston, LE158HQ

**This deputation is about governance, decision making and scrutiny capability related to the Spatial Strategy and HIF.**

Out of every crisis and policy failure comes intense scrutiny. The Council is currently in an 'incipient' crisis and has itself identified the strategic risks of medium-term funding and loss of confidence. It is widely perceived that the Council has failed to listen to Rutland residents over the local plan house number requirements and the extent of St George's Barracks development. This is likely to lead to crisis of confidence in the Council, and it's leaders at some stage, if the current trajectory is followed.

**Lack of time for scrutiny.** It seems that there is a 'democracy deficit' in that, for example, major issues like the Spatial Strategy and HIF papers are produced only days before scrutiny meetings, leaving little time for them to be properly considered. If this is deliberate, it is devious and not transparent, if it is not deliberate, then it is extremely poor practice and highly inconsiderate given some of the issues will impact Rutland for the next century.

Proper time must be allowed for scrutiny to be effective. Sufficient time for reflection and the right level of evidence review must be provided, and for major issues competent scheduling and programme management are needed. The current scheduling is not fit for purpose.

**Transparency deficit.** In addition, to extremely rushed document access, there is the issue of transparency. There is something fundamentally wrong when we, the residents of Rutland, have to complain or submit Freedom of Information requests for basic documents.

Having to fight for access to the MoD and Rutland County Council MOU is an example. Also documents such as the HIF submission and detail of where our public money is to be allocated is not transparent in anyway at this time.

It appears that non of the HIF funding documents are in the public domain and the Assurance Framework that comes with the HIF is not available. Also depending on what you decide in Item 6 – we will not even be able to hear about it.

The grounds for refusal of a freedom of information request has been given as commercial sensitivity. You can redact the numbers, but everything else should be able to be seen by the public, it will not impact contracting. In fact, in item 6 - tonight you can still redact the numbers, and we can hear what the executive is planning.

**Programming and risk.** Apparently, there is no master phased or staged programme document for decision and scrutiny, which is essential to break up risks in different

phases. If you have these documents they should be made available publicly. If you don't have them you need a coherent staged plan to manage risk and allow proper time for scrutiny as risk are different in different phases.

**Not being pushed.** Let me be clear, it appears that the executive is rushing you and is less than transparent either by design or by lack of planning competence. If you do not have sufficient time, skills or determination in your role, you will continue to erode the public's confidence in the Council. This will push your 'lack of confidence' risk higher up the risk matrix, until it will become a hazard. We rely on you.

**Confidence starting point.** You should also realise you are starting at a low point for confidence. Village communities having been presented with a sewn-up deal on the MOD/RCC MOU and garden village, which Rutland does not need. The voting public do not like to be dictated to and particularly by non-elected officials. The national mood of distrust of elected bodies and civil servants is your starting point. Democracy has changed with information access. Transparency is essential to effective scrutiny. In Northampton decision making weakness led to the appointment of Independent Commissioners. We do not want a scrutiny failure here.

**So what.** So, in summary, these issues give rise to extremely serious concerns over the way decision-making, risk management and scrutiny are taking place within our Council. Failure to address these issues and have effective culture and mechanisms in place, will lead to further loss of confidence. You are relying on you fix these issues.

**Your answers.** We, therefore, suggest that the Committee note our serious concerns and review the issues we have raised, and that the Principles of Good Scrutiny are applied. For the scrutiny committee, we would like YOU to have answers:

- How does the Committee feel that it is equipped to meet the principles as defined in the Centre for Public Scrutiny – The Good Scrutiny Guide?
- What information or disclosure do you need to be able to make a judgement on our behalf, as to whether the matter before you is sound, and is being considered in a timely (i.e. not rushed or 'pushed through') manner? If you are being rushed will you push back?
- What 'tests' will the Scrutiny Committee devise and apply in order to evaluate the work on HIF risks, assurance framework, scenarios for financial risk and liabilities for accepting the £29 million of public HIF money? *(for example: is the housing number need proven, on what evidence? What do the public think? What has consultation proven? Do you have enough information on risks and possible consequences? What are the success criteria, programme and timing, the suitability of project management objectives? Are the right leadership and skill level of those appointed in place?).*
- Lastly and most importantly, if the cultural conditions for effective scrutiny are not in place, will you do what is right and give us confidence by fixing it, or will you resign from the Committee?

Thank you.