



# Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH MEETING of the COUNCIL** held in the Rutland County Museum, Catmos Street, Oakham on Monday, 5th July, 2021 at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:**

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:**

Mr M Andrews	Chief Executive
Mr Phillip Horsfield	Monitoring Officer
Ms Sue Bingham	Business Support Manager
Mrs Joanna Morley	Interim Governance Manager

**ABSENT:**

Mrs J Burrows	Mrs G Waller
Mr A Walters	

## **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors J Burrows, G Waller and A Walters.

## **2 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman confirmed that his engagements had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Councillor Dale also expressed his thanks to Mr Nick Woodley for his service as a Councillor and offered his congratulations to Hamish Watson, an old Oakhamian who had been selected for the British Lions rugby squad.

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

There were no announcements from the Leader, Members of the Cabinet or the Head of Paid Service.

## **4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 8 March, 22 March, 10 May and 7 June were agreed as true records of the proceedings.

## **6 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

No petitions, deputations or questions from members of the public had been received.

## **7 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

### Question from Councillor Waller to Councillor Stephenson, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change

Live and Local, when it is fully operational, provides much needed social contact in our villages and mitigates against social isolation and low level mental health problems. It also provides an income generation opportunity for our village halls, through raffles and the sale of refreshments for example, which in turn keeps our village halls open for further social interaction opportunities. RCC currently subsidises Live and Local to the tune of £2,500 annually. The remainder of the income they need to operate coming from ticket sales and fundraising activities. At our scrutiny committee meeting to discuss the budget savings I asked if this saving could be delayed till next financial year in order for the parishes to have the opportunity to replace RCC's subsidy with a subsidy through the parish precept. Cllr Stephenson declined my request instead indicating she would negotiate replacing RCC's grant with one from The Arts Council and talk to parishes about this proposed withdrawal. I would therefore like to ask:

1. What was the outcome of Cllr Stephenson's discussion with The Arts Council?
2. What was the outcome of Cllr Stephenson's discussion with parishes?
3. If Live and Local cannot continue in Rutland because of this reduction in their income what additional low level mental health support will RCC be putting in place to fill the void?

In response to Councillor Waller, Councillor Stephenson replied:

I would like to thank Cllr. Waller for her question: it touches upon pertinent topics: culture and arts provision within the county, mental health, rural isolation and fundraising opportunities for individual parish councils, all these against the backdrop of a decreasing authority budget and one with an agreed need to balance the books which does not rely upon reserves to do so. It is also pertinent that our cabinet report tonight includes a budget paper: how we spend the public's money including key underlying principles. The portfolio holder has made clear in scrutiny meetings that simply putting off these changes for another year is not the best course of action; this needs to be consistent across the budget areas, regardless of the sums involved – the authority and community need to evolve now for the greater good of all going forward.

To add to Cllr Waller's most helpful background to the Live and Local events within the county: between 2015 and 2021 there have been 59 shows over 9 villages and 1 town; this equates to roughly 9 shows a year; 1 show per village per year. There is

sufficient budget to deliver the planned programme up until September 2021 with additional ability to deliver a further 2 shows between September 2021 and May 2022.

- 1) When the draft proposals for the budget came to scrutiny in April, I committed to arrange a meeting with Arts Council England to explore the possibility of the match funding to come from the Parishes rather than RCC. Members should note that Arts Council England works on the principle of only match funding; a model that has many benefits in terms of promoting the value of the arts by authorities but one that places rural communities such as Rutland at a disadvantage – I will not repeat the points regarding our funding formula and the impact this has on our non – statutory services as compared to our urban counterparts. In June, the Head of Service and I met with Arts Council England to discuss the proposal that the origin of the match funding should not be an issue: if our parishes can provide the funds; Arts Council England will match fund. In real terms this equates to each of the 9 parishes providing £250/show. The Arts Council England representatives were amenable to this proposal but needed to confer with colleagues regarding the direction of travel and to liaise with Live and Local. We are awaiting a response from them on the outcome of this; their next port of call was discussing with their wider team and liaising with the lead at Live and Local.
- 2) Clearly, liaison with parishes needs to be done with the full facts including a formal response from Arts Council England however, I believe the 9 parish councils and 1 town council affected are fully aware of the situation, subject to agreement at Full Council regarding the cabinet recommendations for the in – year savings proposed tonight, and so presumably will have been proactive in considering alternative methods of raising the £250 required. I will welcome an item on the Parish Forum agenda to discuss next steps and await to hear from those who set the agenda with regard to this.
- 3) In terms of mental health, we all clearly have mental health which will work on a continuum throughout our lives, just in the same way that we all have physical health. Living in a community that enables good mental health for all, has to be of key importance. The key here though is not to look at one item in isolation: we have to be holistic in our approach, principles clear with an understanding that all of us both individually and collectively contribute to delivering the ambition of good mental health for all; this does not lie solely at the feet of the authority – rather like safeguarding – mental health is everyone’s business. So, in terms of filling the 9 shows a year void: as members are aware the Future Rutland Conversation outputs are soon to be played back to the community. From this our Council will have a clear idea of what is important to our community, a community vision resulting upon which RCC can build its corporate plan ensuring that the authority plays its part in delivering this vision. This vision will also play an integral role in shaping our baseline principles for our refreshed Cultural strategy, work on which will be starting in the autumn. Therefore, I would wish to reassure Cllr Waller and colleagues that what feels uncomfortable today and requires individual parishes to determine the extent to which they value their annual show, we are at the start of developing an exciting future – one in which the community of Rutland works together to create a county that offers much to all.

There were no supplementary questions.

Question from Councillor A Brown to Councillor Razzell, Armed Forces Champion and Portfolio Holder for Planning.

It appears that the funding for the Armed Forces Covenant of £30,000 has been withdrawn. RCC will now be footing the bill from the Covid-19 grant, is this proper use of that grant, and if so what exactly will we be getting for the £30,000 and does it represent value for money when we are cutting back on so many services which affect the whole community. Should we be spending this amount on a section of the community by virtue of their job?

Councillor Razzell replied:

The budget report does identify 30K from COVID grants fund to pay for the AF Officer who has been redirected to Covid response duties. This is an appropriate use of funding as they have been utilised to assist with the shielding programme, volunteer mobilisation, vaccination centre duties and coordinating and being present at the testing centre.

The Armed Forces grant was withdrawn and Council were asked in the 21/22 budget whether they wished to fund the pressure caused by the withdrawal of grant. At that time there was unanimous agreement to fund the pressure in recognition that the work of this Officer is valued and extends beyond the armed forces community. Members may wish to revisit this, as with any area of service, in future

Cllr Andrew Brown sought clarity in the initial part of his question, which I believe has now been answered. Thereafter, he asks if the sum represents value for money and should we be spending on a section of the community “by virtue of their job”. Mr Chairman if I may, Councillors often share wisdom with us, so on this occasion, I thought it might be helpful if impart a modicum of my lived experience and understanding on military service, the service community, the Armed Forces Covenant (which is currently progressing through Government to be enshrined in law) and the opportunities for us as a Council to continue to apply for Armed Forces Covenant funding (which we have already been successful in) to help support our community.

It is of course true to say that those who serve do so with a very clear understanding of selfless commitment (perhaps referred to as “their job”). Forgoing societal norms and being ready often at just a few hours’ notice to deploy globally or nationally, this part of society do so out of a sense of duty made through personal choice. Often with family left in isolated locations, they train, deploy, redeploy, train again and in between, respond to calls from central and local government to provide Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (Covid19 refers). The majority will forfeit annual leave plans due to rapid deployment, they have no set hours of working and they spend weeks / months / years away from society and loved ones in support of the nation, local authorities and our community.

Over time and as part of “their job”, they will be asked to deliver solutions and capability far beyond their professional skills and competencies which might include disaster relief, culling livestock during national outbreaks of foot and mouth, performing life-saving interventions in response to national ambulance strikes, become overnight firefighters, driving petrol tankers and then responding in extraordinary numbers to a national and international pandemic. All of this **in addition** to what some might call “their job”. Some might suggest that they have become the nation’s 4<sup>th</sup> emergency service but on demand and on every occasion, they step up and do “their job”.

Critically though, they do not expect favour, charity or advantage.

Routinely, they ask nothing of society but in doing “their job” and anything else that is thrown at them, they become isolated from societal awareness, knowledge and wisdom and at a point during later life or crisis on the home front when serving, they stumble and become the very thing their pride and fortitude struggles most with. Over the past years, Rutland has watched with pride as our Armed Forces Officer has restored faith in service provision, prevented countless numbers of service families and veterans from becoming “looked after” and delivered low-cost sustainable support for members of AF our community who are now retired. Simply, this investment in our Armed Forces family represents pro-active solutions to families and individuals who have not grown up in usual society; because in our ask of them “doing their job”, we have created gaps in awareness, knowledge and wisdom that then requires help in the future.

From the families of those who have lost loved ones on Operations; to the service mum who (following divorce) needs help with housing and education for her children; to the retired Royal Army Veterinary Corps soldier who needs support in accessing adult education; to the retired Special Forces operative who needs a Blue Badge and to the BAME service personnel who need help with access to healthcare, we have a moral duty under the Armed Forces Covenant (which we have signed) to ensure that none of the service community experience disadvantage.

Since signing the Armed Forces Covenant, Rutland has benefitted from Covenant funding that has spanned our community (saving central resource) but the “Value” has also flowed back right across the community as veterans, serving personnel, cadets, reservists and service families have become an enduring element of our society. In sports clubs, social enterprise, volunteer organisations, health, education and housing, our service community continue to thrive, give freely of their time and add “value” to the community. It was ever thus and as we look to the future, might we perhaps take this opportunity to re-affirm our bonds with those who serve, their families and our military community and underpin our signature of the Armed Forces Covenant with a continued commitment to those “doing their job” and equally, those who did the job ... occasionally, they will need our support.

As a supplementary question Cllr A Brown asked whether, presuming that the number of armed forces personnel would be reducing, the covenant and the amount of funding would be reviewed.

Cllr Razzell confirmed that although it was likely that the number of serving personnel would reduce in real terms it would take many years before a point would be reached where the money spent on veterans and service families could be reached.

#### Question from Councillor Powell for the Leader of the Council

The budget outturn report at item 10 (66/2021 para 3.2.3) states that there have been savings of £978k on staff vacancies- some of which have been offset by costs of temporary staff. What approximate levels of staff vacancies is the council running at the moment and how can councillors be reassured that this policy, while delivering some welcome financial savings is not undermining the smooth and efficient running of services, and the morale of staff who deliver them?

In response to Councillor Powell the Leader replied:

There are various parts to this question so let me take each in turn.

The outturn report did highlight staff savings as noted. The savings arose for a variety of reasons 1) we had some vacancies which we tried to recruit to but were unsuccessful, 2) we have some vacancies which we wanted to recruit to but demands of Covid meant recruitment was delayed or deferred, 3) we had some vacancies which we successfully recruited to but the time difference between one person leaving and another starting gives a saving and 4) we did have some posts that we did not recruit to as posts were earmarked for savings which are on the agenda for approval tonight. So the £978k results from a combination of factors.

In terms of Council policy, then that is absolutely clear. We aim to recruit to the budget that Council approves. We understand that when teams are not fully staffed it can have an impact on delivery and wellbeing so I can assure Members that where there are gaps, Officers are doing what they can to close those gaps or look at alternative ways of working. Naturally, in our financial position, we have asked SMT to consider before any recruitment whether there are options to save and I can confirm this process is happening with services taking the opportunity to review how we best move forward.

Finally, we are currently actively recruiting to 19 posts

- 4 of these are new posts due to increased service pressure or re-alignment of existing roles/budgets
- 2 are maternity cover
- 4 roles within our Children's Social Care team have been held and identified for 4 Trainee Social Workers who have been supporting us for a year
- 2 senior roles are pending recruitment and currently covered by interim managers
- 7 posts are active recruitment to replace post holders who have left or about to leave.

The Council is currently working on its latest position and is committed to improving the transparency in Finance reports and will be providing an update on key staffing information as part of the financial reporting arrangements for Q1 and all future reports.

Councillor Powell was pleased to hear that the Council was actively recruiting to 19 posts.

#### Question from Councillor A Brown to Councillor Stephenson

Can the portfolio holder please explain why there is to be a proposed cut of £60,000 to the funding of Public Rights of Way? This will be detrimental to access to the countryside and the health and well-being benefits that brings to residents. This represents a 66% cut in support, will any other department be suffering such a large decrease in its funding and if not why are Public Rights of Way being targeted and cut so severely?

In response to Councillor Brown, Councillor Stephenson replied:

Thank you for your question Cllr. Brown, the sentiment behind it I am in complete agreement with: if we are to encourage people to make the most of and enjoy our countryside then maintaining and enhancing the infrastructure has to be a central

ambition. In terms of the revenue budget that you refer to in your question: hitherto this budget has been used for reactive maintenance and up - dating of existing infrastructure. Going forwards the reduction in the revenue budget will mean that the statutory obligations of this particular department will be met whilst the £60k formally sitting in revenue will be in the Integrated Transport Capital programme. A more proactive approach in terms of what we invest in will deliver more in terms of enhancing and promoting the use of our public rights of way: the LCWIP now has ring fenced funding to complete it which in turn will mean that a strong evidence base can be at the heart of well - placed capital investment. As mentioned, this capital investment will sit with Integrated Transport and schemes will come through the Highways Transport Working Group process. Likewise, the forthcoming vision resulting from the Future Rutland Conversation will assist with this evidence base: if the priority for Rutland is to enable greater and improved access to our countryside then this will be reflected in policy and the appropriate weighting given to schemes that deliver on this ambition.

In terms of the overall budget and have other departments suffered similar cuts – the detail of that is the paper you have before you tonight and will be covered by the portfolio holder for finance.

As a supplementary Councillor Brown referenced the recent meeting of the Countryside Access Forum of which he was Chair and said that members had been horrified at the level of the cuts and asked whether these would be reduced.

Councillor Stephenson referred Councillor Brown to her previous answer and restated that the budget had moved into the capital pot for integrated transport and the Council would be able to be pro-active and take an evidence based approach to identified needs.

Question from Councillor Powell to Councillor Stephenson, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change.

I note from the Scrutiny Annual Report under item 16 on the agenda today that the recommendations from the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group, together with their research and findings will now dovetail and feed into the work of the Climate Action Group and their wider remit. The Task and Finish Group reported to Growth, Infrastructure and Resources scrutiny in October 2020 and its recommendations included firstly a list of actions under each objective and secondly that progress against these actions would be reported annually to the committee. How exactly will these recommendations be monitored and recorded and when and how will progress on these actions be reported?

Councillor Stephenson replied:

Thank you for your question Cllr. Powell – it is so important that when work is undertaken that the momentum for delivery is maintained. In terms of this particular report, as you are aware there has been a commitment taken by this Council 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to declare a climate crisis and do develop a plan to deliver carbon neutrality by 2050 or is a soon as is viable. Work, therefore, has been focussed on this. I have formed a members' climate action with meetings held regularly since 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The work undertaken has been phased. The first phase is to deliver on the ambition of a Community Climate Action Network: this has resulted in a highly successful, both in terms of numbers of attendees and breadth of speakers, Climate Summit at the beginning of May; our first meeting of the Rutland Climate Action

network is due to take place this Thursday from which a community strategy will be developed and The Great Big Green week in September will be an excellent launch for events across the county. I am also delighted to note, that, due to the hard work of Cllr. Burrows, we have secured lottery funding for a Community Rutland Climate Action website. The second phase of work is the development of an RCC climate change strategy; this work will be underpinned by the baseline assessment procured with the Carbon Trust, due for completion this autumn. At this point Cllr. Powell you may be forgiven for thinking that I am not answering your question: what about biodiversity and the actions listed in the report? I have highlighted the work regarding Climate Change because this is what Full Council have committed to and so it is right that energy is being focussed on delivering on this. The good news, however, is that clearly climate change is inextricably linked to promoting biodiversity: many of the action points were focussed on community endeavour, these therefore will be reflected in the forthcoming community strategy. In terms of those actions that the report advised in terms of policy; some are already in hand: for example, the PlantLife guidance has been followed for our verge cutting this year and the emergent trees policy is being worked on as we speak. The report is a list of well – researched actions; the next step is to be clear of the underlying principles, to develop an overarching strategy that enables careful policy development to deliver. Any strategy must have a plan for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. I am looking forward to the outputs from the Future Rutland Conversation and the community driven vision for Rutland as this will enable our corporate plan to set deliverable ambitions upon which to develop this crucial piece of work.

As a supplementary Councillor Powell asked whether more specific times and dates could be supplied on when and how these actions would be reported on and implemented. In particular Councillor Powell wanted to know when all developments should be able to evidence no biodiversity loss, as recommended by the Task and Finish Group. Cllr Stephenson would liaise with Planning and the Planning Portfolio Holder to gain more information on this.

## **8 REFERRAL OF COMMITTEE DECISIONS TO THE COUNCIL**

There were no referrals of committee decisions to Council.

## **9 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS FROM CABINET MEETINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM 8 MARCH 2021 TO 5 JULY 2021**

There were no call-ins of decisions.

## **10 REPORT FROM THE CABINET**

Councillor K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, gave an introduction which covered Report No.64/2021 – Budget Savings 21/22 and Report No.66/2021 – Revenue and Capital Outturn Report. Having listened to the comments from colleagues in Scrutiny, Councillor Payne announced that they would like to withdraw the third recommendation outlined in Report No.64/2021 which asked for delegated authority to be given to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader and Portfolio Holder to spend up to £500k to allow savings projects to be accelerated. Instead requests would be made on a case by case basis rather than for a sum up front.

A vote was taken on the remaining recommendations as outlined in Report No. 64/2021 and 22 voted in favour and 1 abstention.

**RESOLVED:**

Council

1. **APPROVED** the principles (in para 2.2.2) to guide future work and decision making in respect of budget savings;
2. **APPROVED** budget savings of £598k to be applied in 21/22 and changes to funding of £613k;
3. **NOTED** the provisional position on the 20/21 outturn (para 2.6) and that the provisional underspend does not change the projected gap of £2.7m for 22/23.

A further vote was taken on the recommendations as outlined in Report No.66/2021 and there voted 22 in favour and 1 abstention.

**RESOLVED:**

Council

1. **APPROVED** the 21/22 budget adjustments for new grant income of £1.567m and planned expenditure of £1.458m as per Appendix E1.
2. **APPROVED** the setting up of one new reserve for donations received as detailed in section 3.5.3.
3. **NOTED** potential future pressures highlighted in Appendix G
4. **NOTED** changes to the capital programme as per Section 4 and Appendix F
5. **NOTED** the revised MTFP in Appendix I (which assumes that Cabinet/Council will approve decisions recommended in this report and the Budget Savings report 64/2021)
6. **NOTED** that view of the Council's s151 Officer that the positive outturn position does not change the financial challenge facing the Council and that action is needed quickly to reduce reliance on reserves.

Councillor Stephenson, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change introduced Report No.65/2021 – Highways Capital Programme: Second allocation 2021/22.

A vote was taken on the recommendation and there were 22 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

Council **RESOLVED:**

1. That the spend of the Department for Transport (DfT) for the balance of the Highways Maintenance Block funding allocation, and both the Capital Pot Hole and Incentive funds received, as well as the carried forward £106,000, to the value of £1,487,000 is used for proactive highway drainage, Bridges, Street Lighting structural survey, carriageway and footway works as per Appendix A.

## **11 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no reports from the Committees of the Council to consider.

## **12 REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMISSION / SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

There were no reports from the Scrutiny Commission or the Scrutiny Committees to consider.

## **13 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

A written report was received from Councillor G Waller regarding a recent meeting of the Carlton Hayes Mental Health Charity which would be filed with the minutes.

Councillor J Fox addressed Council regarding the upcoming inaugural Arts & Crafts Market at Gaol Street in Oakham and thanks were expressed for the support of Oakham Town Council for the project.

Councillor M Oxley addressed Council regarding the Fairtrade Steering Group which was working to renew Uppingham's Fairtrade Town status following delays due to the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Councillor R Powell addressed Council regarding her recent attendance at the National Association of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (NASACRE) conference as the Chair of the Rutland SACRE and offered to provide Members with further information outside of the meeting.

Councillor K Bool addressed Council regarding the Combined Fire Authority following its annual meeting on 16 June where he had been appointed to the Combined Authority's Employment Committee and as Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee.

Councillor E Baines addressed Council regarding recent attendance at several bodies on behalf of the Council. The Rural Community Council was working with local communities in a several different ways, including the provision of assistance for mental health issues and support in the neighbourhood planning process. The Rutland Water Partnership was considering several projects of local significance. In conclusion, having attended the Most Sparsely Populated Councils Group of the Local Government Association on behalf of the Leader, Councillor Baines reported he had attended sessions on the funding of rural Councils and highlighted examples of planning policies being utilised in South Norfolk.

## **14 APPOINTMENT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTORS - PEOPLE DIRECTORATE**

Councillor G Brown, Chair of the Employment and Appeals Committee, introduced Report 94/2021, the purpose of which was to seek Council approval for the

appointment of Mr John Morley to the post of Strategic Director of Adults and Health, and the appointment of Mrs Dawn Godfrey to the post of Strategic Director of Children and Families. Following Council's approval of the creation of the positions at the Special Meeting on 7 June 2021. Members spoke in strong support for the two candidates.

A vote was taken on the recommendations and there was a unanimous vote in favour.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council:

1. On the recommendation of the Chief Officer Appointment Committee, **APPROVES** the appointment of:  
a) Mr John Morley as Strategic Director of Adults and Health  
b) Mrs Dawn Godfrey as Strategic Director of Children and Families
2. **DELEGATES** Authority to the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution (including the Scheme of Delegation) to reflect the changes to the Senior Management Team.

## **15 BOUNDARY COMMISSION PROPOSALS**

Mr Phillip Horsfield, Monitoring Officer, introduced Report No. 96/2021, the purpose of which was to inform Council of the proposals by the Boundary Commission for the 2023 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies and set out the mechanism by which comments could be made on the proposals.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council **NOTES** the proposals from the Boundary Commission for England and the mechanism by which comments may be made on those proposals.

## **16 ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT**

Councillor P Ainsley, Chair of the Scrutiny Commission, introduced Report No 94/2021, the purpose of which was to report the work undertaken by Scrutiny for the 2020/21 municipal year. Thanks were expressed to all Members of Scrutiny and supporting officers throughout the previous year.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council **NOTES** the Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21.

## **17 THE COUNCIL PRAYER**

Councillor O Hemsley, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Constitutional Working Group (CRWG) introduced Report No. 97/2021, the purpose of which was to enable Councillors to consider the feedback from the CRWG and discuss the issue of prayers at Council.

Councillor S Harvey moved that any decision on Report No 97/2021 be deferred until results on the current census concluded, on the basis that this would give Members

up-to-date data on the faiths within Rutland, and would allow for a more informed discussion and debate, this was seconded and it was proposed that the motion be put immediately to a vote.

The motion was put to the vote and with 15 votes in favour, 7 against and 1 abstention, the motion was carried.

## **RESOLVED**

That Council **DEFER** any decision on Report No 97/2021 until the results of the census have been published.

## **18 NOTICES OF MOTION**

There were no notices of motion.

## **19 ANY URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chairman informed Members that in his opinion the cancellation of the Special Meeting of the Council scheduled for 26 July had been undertaken pre-emptively without proper consultation or his agreement, and invited Members to present their views on whether the meeting should be reinstated or rescheduled.

The Chairman and several Members expressed the view that Members had not been sufficiently consulted about the proposed meeting dates and that the Special Meeting should be reinstated for the 26 July. Reference was also made to other communications regarding a meeting date of the 28 July and concerns were raised by several Members regarding the potential impact of the various meeting dates on a recent meeting and decision of the Planning and Licensing Committee and on the potential for similar concerns at future meetings. Clarification on this matter was provided by Councillor E Baines as Chair of the Planning and Licensing Committee.

Mr Phillip Horsfield, Monitoring Officer, advised Members that although discussions had taken place regarding a potential move of the Special Meeting to 28 July this had never been formally agreed or progressed.

Concern was also expressed by several Members regarding the constitutional role of Council in determining Planning Applications referred to it by Members following a decision by the Planning and Licensing Committee, the Monitoring Officer agreed to investigate this issue and suggested this could be discussed by the Constitutional Review Working Group.

With regard to the issue of the cancelled Special Meeting, the Chief Executive advised that the cancellation of the meeting on 26 July had been firstly informed by Members concerns on attendance, which had been expressed at an informal Members briefing at which Officers understood that they had consulted all Councillors and reached a shared understanding. Secondly on the ability of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and the Ministry of Defence to provide the assurances on viability of the St Georges Barracks site in time for a 26 July meeting date whereas a later meeting date may allow these assurances to align with Council's decision on the Local Plan and finally for reasons that the Monitoring Officer would share.

The Monitoring Officer then advised Council of the pre-election period for the expected Oakham South by-election and that although essential business was permitted to continue during the pre-election period, it was conventional for sensitive or controversial decisions to not be made during this period and in particular where they were of a long-term nature or likely to constitute a significant policy change.

It was moved by Councillor Bool that an apology should be issued to the Chairman regarding the failure of communication regarding the cancellation of the 26 July meeting, this was seconded. In response, the Chief Executive confirmed he had personally apologised to the Chairman the previous week regarding the issue.

Regarding the issue raised by the Chairman of the rescheduled Special Meeting, several Members expressed the view that the meeting on 26 July should not be reinstated on the basis of the advice provided by the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer. Members asked questions about the issue of meeting attendance and another pre-election period should another by-election be called before the proposed new Special Council date in September.

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The Monitoring Officer advised that the meeting had nearly run until 9.30pm, Councillor Bool proposed that an extension to the meeting of 15 minutes be taken, this was seconded and following a vote was agreed by Council.

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It was clarified that the Chairman had the authority to determine whether the Special Meeting proceeded on 26 July or another date. However, the Monitoring Officer advised that it was appropriate for Council to determine the issue at the meeting given the Chairman had invited Members to consider the matter as an item of urgent business.

It was proposed by Councillor O Hemsley that the Local Plan Examination be considered by Council on 13 September, this was seconded. Councillor R Powell proposed that the Local Plan Examination be considered by a Special Meeting in September with an exact date to be confirmed following discussions between the Chairman and Officers. This was seconded and it was emphasised that a date should be chosen in order to maximise the availability of Members to attend the meeting. This was agreed by the mover and seconder of the original motion.

A vote was held on the motion and with 21 votes in favour and 2 against, the motion was carried.

## **RESOLVED**

That a Special Meeting of the Council be convened in September to discuss the Local Plan Examination with an exact date to be confirmed after discussions between the Chairman and officers.

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**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 9.43 pm.**

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