



Rutland County Council

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Minutes of the **MEETING of the GROWTH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held via Zoom on Thursday, 18th November, 2021 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor J Fox (Chair)
Councillor M Oxley (Vice Chair)
Councillor P Ainsley
Councillor N Begy
Councillor G Brown
Councillor G Waller

ABSENT

Councillor M Jones

**PORTFOLIO
HOLDERS
PRESENT**

Councillor O Hemsley	Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy, Partnerships, Economy and Infrastructure
Councillor L Stephenson	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities, Environment and Climate Change
Councillor K Payne	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Quality, Governance and Performance

**OFFICERS
PRESENT:**

Saverio Della Rocca	Strategic Director Resources S151 Officer
Penny Sharp	Strategic Director of Places
Jane Narey	Scrutiny Officer
Andrew Merry	Finance Manager

**IN
ATTENDANCE:**

Councillor R Powell

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Councillor Fox welcomed everyone to the meeting. No apologies were received but the Clerk confirmed that Councillor Jones was not in attendance.

2 RECORD OF MEETING

Councillor J Fox confirmed that there were two sets of minutes for the committee to approve. The first was for the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 16th September and the second was for the Special Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 7th October. The latter comprised of public and private minutes due to the exempt information discussed in the meeting.

Councillor Waller requested a change to the minutes from the meeting held on the 16th September. She requested that the penultimate bullet point under agenda item 8 be changed as it was incorrect. The Clerk confirmed that the minutes would be amended and brought back to the next meeting for Committee approval.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th October 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

4 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

There were no petitions, deputations or questions

5 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions with notice from members

6 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

There were no notices of motion from members

7 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR A DECISION IN RELATION TO CALL IN OF A DECISION

There were no items of call-in

8 MID-YEAR REVENUE FINANCE UPDATE

Report No. 146/2021 was received from Councillor K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Councillors thanked Saverio Della Rocca, Strategic Director for Resources, Andrew Merry, Finance Manager and the finance team for all their hard work in producing all the clear, financial reports received for discussion.
- The budget gap was previously identified as £2.7m. Following a lot of hard work, this had been reduced to an estimated £250k. A lot less than had been previously forecast.
- Councillor Waller asked if this year's success in cost cutting could be replicated in the years to come as budgets continued to be cut. Councillor Payne stated that future budget savings could not be promised but that Council would continue to work hard to identify cost savings. However, there would be hard decisions to be made in the future.
- Councillor Ainsley enquired if discussions had been held externally with other Local Authorities regarding cost savings. Councillor Payne confirmed that the Council discussed options with other Councils all the time. Councillor Payne also confirmed that she was in discussions with the Chief Executive and the Leader regarding working with other Unitary authorities to discuss ideas and joint working.

- Councillor Ainsley enquired about Jules House. Councillor Payne confirmed that a property asset review was being undertaken. The report would be due in late January 2022 and this would identify any proposals for the use of Jules House.
- Councillor Payne informed the committee that all Portfolio Holders were committed to reducing current costs and costs in the future.
- Councillor Oxley enquired about projects, community allocations and the sharing of costs. Councillor Hemsley confirmed that he was in discussion with Uppingham Town Council regarding the funding of the toilets in Uppingham but was awaiting the results of the property asset review before making any decisions.
- Councillor Brown queried the 9% increase in residual waste tonnage in 2021/22, the 72% increase in wood non-domestic waste and the extra £160k in costs (page 26). Penny Sharp, Strategic Director – Places reported that the waste increases were related to the Covid lockdown as people had stayed at home with increased DIY and online shopping.
- Councillor Brown also queried what discussions had been held with central government regarding funding. Councillor Payne confirmed that a meeting would be arranged with Neil O'Brien MP for Harborough and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to discuss funding.
- Councillor Hemsley informed attendees that discussions had been held with the Unitary Councils Network regarding raising the profile of small and unitary councils and that he had also attended the Rural Services Network AGM. Councillor Payne confirmed that she would produce a plan of all work/discussion to be undertaken regarding funding.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the revenue forecast at the end of September per para 3.3
- b) **NOTED** the changes to the approved budget as per para 3.1 and Appendix A
- c) **NOTED** that the projected deficit for 22/23 was estimated to be £580k which was less than the £1m target set by Council in February 2021
- d) **NOTED** that the revenue budget outlook beyond 22/23 remained challenging with the financial gap estimated between £1.7 - £2.8m.

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Councillor Stephenson left the meeting at 7.40 p.m.

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9 MID-YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report No. 147/2021 was received from Councillor K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Councillor Payne confirmed that the capital budget stood at £28.291 billion with a £10.3m underspend.
- The underspend related to investment projects that would be funded from borrowing so this allocation could not be redistributed.
- Projects were extensively managed and only two projects out of the current sixty-three were running over budget. These were the Brightways Move and the

Changing Places at Active Rutland Hub, with a total overspend of £10.7k. Funding for the overspend had been found and had been approved by Council.

- Councillor Oxley referred to Item 3.6 (page 90) regarding Oakham Town Centre and that the project and money (£85k) were on hold until further notice. Councillor Payne confirmed that no requests for funding had been received and Saverio Della Rocca reported that 'For Oakham' [an independent group] had been established by the Council to look at possible projects but no business cases had been received from them. Councillor Fox reported that she would inform 'For Oakham' of the available funding and it was agreed that Councillor Fox would arrange for an update report from For Oakham to be presented at the next GIR Scrutiny meeting regarding possible projects.
- Councillor Waller stated that the overspend on the two projects should have been foreseen.
- Saverio Della Rocca confirmed that the £85k was not s106 money but highways maintenance money and would be re-allocated back to the highways maintenance budget if not spent.
- Councillor Ainsley enquired if the £85k could be spent repairing the footpaths in Oakham High Street.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the capital 2021/22 forecast as at the end of September (paragraph 3.3).
- b) **NOTED** the changes to the 2021/22 capital programme as at the end of September (paragraph 3.2)
- c) **NOTED** the 2021/22 unallocated capital funding as at the end of September (Section 4)
- d) **NOTED** that Cabinet/Council had approved the total of £10.7k revenue contribution to capital for the works relating to the Brightways move and the Changing Place project at Active Rutland Hub (Paragraphs 3.5.22 to 3.5.27)
- e) **AGREED** that Councillor Fox would arrange for an update report from For Oakham to be presented at the next GIR Scrutiny meeting regarding funding for possible projects.

10 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

Report No. 148/2021 was presented by Penny Sharp, Strategic Director – Places. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Penny Sharp gave apologies from Councillor Razzell, who could not attend the meeting.
- The report addressed infrastructure costings across the Council.
- The rejection of the Local Plan had resulted in the need to review the Council's infrastructure priorities and develop a new infrastructure delivery plan.
- Councillor Oxley stated that point 4.9 in Appendix 1 showed the need for Oakham to have a neighbourhood plan. Councillor Hemsley confirmed that a neighbourhood plan for Oakham had been discussed by Cabinet and Penny Sharp informed attendees that the withdrawal of the Local Plan had resulted in the neighbourhood plan for Oakham and Barleythorpe to be paused by the Planning Inspector.
- Penny Sharp also confirmed that the Oakham Hopper had been previously funded by financial savings but future funding of the service would be discussed with Oakham Town Council.

- Councillor Waller queried the phrase ‘placemaking benefits’ as stated in box 6 on the flow chart in Appendix 1 (page 123) and Penny Sharp confirmed that it meant all of the infrastructure services required e.g.GP surgeries, schools, waste collection etc.
- Councillor Brown noted that a report was being prepared on the ‘interim trajectory of development and CIL income’ as stated in item 2.23 (page 99) and queried the timescale for this report and if it would be circulated to the Growth, Infrastructure and Resources Scrutiny Committee. He also queried what would happen if the report identified any actions to be taken. Penny Sharp stated that the report was expected at the end of January 2022 and yes, it would be circulated to Scrutiny as per the normal governance process and that any actions would be referred to Cabinet.
- Penny Sharp also stated that no s106 money had been allocated in 2021 unless it had been necessary.
- Councillor Powell queried if good examples and case studies of the use of s106 could be advertised on the Council’s website.
- Penny Sharp confirmed that such things as electric charging points and cycle routes could be funded by CIL money.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- a) **NOTED** the report
- b) **COMMENTED** on the draft Infrastructure Funding Statement as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

11 BIODIVERSITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP: FINAL REPORT

Report No. 145/2021 was received from Councillor June Fox, Chair of the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

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Councillor Stephenson re-joined the meeting at 8.33 p.m.

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- Councillor Stephenson confirmed that the recommendations from the report had been included into the Community Action Plan and that they would be included in overarching environmental strategy for the county.
- Councillor Waller requested that the advisory group for the local plan included the planning related recommendations into the local plan and Penny Sharp confirmed this.
- Councillor Stephenson confirmed that the report had been annotated and highlighted where each action would sit.
- Councillor Stephenson confirmed she would include the recommendations and actions from the Task and Finish Group into the Community Action Plan and that implementation plans at a local level would be sent presently.

RESOLVED

That the Committee:

- a) **CONSIDERED** and commented on the work of the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group and the proposals for a Biodiversity Strategy as appended to the report (Appendix A)
- b) **RECOMMENDED** the findings of the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group report to Cabinet.
- c) **AGREED** that the Biodiversity Task and Finish Group was formerly closed and that Councillor Stephenson would produce a one-page report for final approval of the recommendations by Cabinet.

12 REVIEW OF FORWARD PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK PLAN

It was agreed that the following items should be added to the work plan:

- a) For Oakham: Update Report
- b) The Interim Trajectory of Development and CIL Income
- c) Property Asset Review
- d) Grounds Maintenance: Update
- e) Waste & Leisure Contracts

13 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None

14 DATE AND PREVIEW OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 27th January 2022 at 7 p.m.

This would be a statutory meeting to scrutinize the budget.

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Chairman closed the meeting at 8.54 pm.
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