



Rutland County Council

Catmose Oakham Rutland LE15 6HP

Telephone 01572 722577 Email governance@rutland.gov.uk

Minutes of the **MEETING of the STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HP on Thursday, 17th November, 2022 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT	Councillor G Waller (Chair) Councillor P Ainsley Councillor N Begy (Vice Chair) Councillor A Brown Councillor S Lambert Councillor L Toseland	
APOLOGIES	Councillor E Baines Councillor K Bool Councillor R Wilson Peter French	Diocesan Deputy Director of Education, Dioceses of Peterborough
PORTFOLIO HOLDERS PRESENT	Councillor L Stephenson Councillor K Payne	Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Economy Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation
OFFICERS PRESENT	Mark Andrews Saverio Della Rocca Andrew Merry Jane Narey (Clerk)	Chief Executive Strategic Director Resources S151 Officer Finance Manager Scrutiny Officer

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES RECEIVED

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Councillor Wilson, Councillor Baines, Councillor Bool and Peter French.

2 RECORD OF MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on the 5th and 13th October were approved as an accurate record.

3 ACTIONS ARISING

Actions from the meeting held on the 5th October:

Action 1

Councillor Bool to arrange a meeting with the Chief Executive, the Leader and the Strategic Director of Places to discuss the best way for Highways and Transport particularly speeding to be scrutinised. Councillor Waller stated that she would discuss the Highways and Speeding Group with Councillor Bool. It was agreed that the item would be carried forward to the next meeting.

Councillor Bool was unable to continue to lead the group but would continue to be part of it. Councillor P Browne had agreed to join/lead the group as his replacement. A scoping document would be produced in the near future.

Action 2

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICE PROPOSALS Councillor Waller stated that she would speak with the relevant Portfolio Holder and officers to identify potential dates for inclusion on to the SOSC forward plan for a discussion regarding the proposed business plans.

The committee had agreed not to continue with this group at the meeting on the 5th October 2022. A report from officers would hopefully be received in January, February or March of 2023 requesting scrutiny committee's input regarding the proposed business plans prior to a final decision being made towards the end of 2023.

Action 3

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, DEVOLUTION & LEVELLING UP

- *Councillor Waller confirmed that she would contact other non-executive Councillors requesting volunteers for the evidence panel.*
- *Councillor Waller confirmed that she would contact Penny Sharp, Director of Places and Councillor Lucy Stephenson, the relevant Councillor Waller 15 Portfolio Holder to identify an agreed timetable for the work*

On the 13th October 2022, Scrutiny Committee had agreed that there would be 2 sessions held with Penny Sharp and officers to review evidence. The deadline for these sessions would be the 31st December 2022

Action 4

SEND GROUP

- *Councillor Ainsley agreed to arrange a meeting of the SEND Group (Councillors Ainsley, P Browne, R Payne, Baines and Begy) to confirm who would be the new chair and to confirm a date for an informal meeting with members of SEND Action Rutland. An update from the SEND Group would be provided at the SOSC meeting on the 17th November and feedback from the meeting with SEND Action Rutland would be given at either the December or January meeting – date to be confirmed.*
- *Councillor Ainsley agreed to meet with the Strategic Director of Children and Families to discuss improving communication and engagement with Councillors*

It was confirmed that the SEND Group was not required and had therefore been disbanded.

Actions from the meeting held on the 13th October:

Members were informed that the letter to the MP for Rutland and/or the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care as agreed at the meeting held on the 13th October

was still being drafted but that the draft letter would be sent to members for feedback before it was finalised and posted.

Action 1

NHS England to send their communication strategy to Governance for distribution with the minutes.

Action 2

NHS England to send data on the benefits of fluoridisation to Governance for distribution with the minutes.

Action 3

NHS England to send details of the NHS dentists in Rutland accepting children as patients to Governance for distribution with the minutes.

The Clerk confirmed that Actions 1 – 3 were outstanding and that she would continue to chase NHS England for the agreed information.

Action 4

Councillor Waller to invite Mike Sandys, Director of Public Health to a future meeting of the SOSC and arrange a pre-meeting for the Chair, Vice-Chair and Director to discuss the issues/questions to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting.
Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care would update members regarding public health at the meeting on the 8th December.

Action 5

Catmose Sports Leisure Contract - Penny Sharp to confirm with Governance, before the publication deadline of the next meeting, if the contract still required scrutinising.
Penny Sharp, the Strategic Director for Places had confirmed that the item would not require scrutinising.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 PETITIONS, DEPUTATIONS AND QUESTIONS

There were no petitions, deputations or questions.

6 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS

There were no questions with notice member members.

7 NOTICES OF MOTION FROM MEMBERS

There were no notices of motion from members.

8 CONSIDERATION OF ANY MATTER REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO THE CALL-IN OF A DECISION

There were no call-ins.

9 MID-YEAR FINANCE UPDATE

Cabinet had received the Mid-Year Revenue Finance Report 2022/23 (Report No. 156/2022) and the Mid-Year Capital Programme Update (Report No. 157/2022) on the 18th October 2022. Details of the reports could be found on the council's website: [Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 18/10/2022 10:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/Agenda/Document/18/10/2022/10:00)

Councillor K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation and Saverio Della Rocca, Strategic Director of Resources gave an update on the medium term financial plan. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- A presentation was received from the Strategic Director of Resources (copy attached).
- Members requested if it would be possible in future for reference reports to be included in a paginated agenda pack.
- The reasons for the increase in empty homes in Rutland were unknown but there were rules regarding charging council tax on empty homes. It was confirmed that the Council did charge council tax on empty properties where possible.
- Council tax had been raised by 3% in the financial year 2022/23. For 2023/24, Councils would be allowed to increase council tax by 5% annually without the need for a referendum.
- Core council tax discounts such as the single person discount would continue to be available as would the council's discretionary pot of £20k, which was used for supporting those in severe financial difficulties. Members were informed that any review of the council tax support scheme would require a large piece of consultation work. This could not be done in time for the next financial year 2023/24 but it was **agreed** that a review of the support scheme should be undertaken for the 2024/25 financial year.
- An estimated £400k could also be generated if the law was changed so that a premium could be charged by the council on second homes in Rutland.
- Local authorities nationally were experiencing pressure on care fees but Rutland pays a premium on the 'Cost of Care.' Rutland County Council did not deal with the quantity of service users to financially sustain care homes. Most users of care homes in Rutland were self-funders so the care homes did not rely on the users allocated to them from the Council to keep them sustainable. The Rutland care homes could therefore charge the Council a higher rate. Members were informed that a letter had been sent to the MP from Councillor Harvey, Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Care to highlight and help address this issue.
- Short-term budget savings had been identified but major projects were being collated by the Council's Leadership Team to transform the organisation in the medium term.
- Members were informed that Councils performed best when they focussed on their core activities. Other councils had tried to be creative with income generation and this had created long-term problems but the Council would always be willing to investigate possible income generation.
- It was noted that all Councillors might consider how capital might be used to help our financial position at the Member Briefing being held on the 5th December 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- a) **AGREED** that a review of the Council's council tax support scheme should be undertaken for the 2024/25 financial year.

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The Strategic Director for Resources and Andrew Merry left the meeting at 8.11p.m.

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10 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE & CORPORATE STRATEGY PROGRESS

Cabinet had received the Mid-Year Performance & Corporate Strategy Progress Report (Report No. 168/2022) on the 18th October 2022. Details of the report could be found on the council's website: <https://rutlandcounty.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s24145/Report%20No.168.2022%20-%20Performance%20Report%202022-2023.pdf>

Councillor K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation and Councillor L Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Economy gave an update on the mid-year performance and the progress made on the [Council's Corporate Strategy](#). During the discussion, the following points were noted:

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The Strategic Director for Resources returned to the meeting at 8.18 p.m.

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- Members queried the reasons for the high staff turnover levels and number of vacancies. They were informed that recruitment had been and continued to be an issue not just for Rutland but for all local authorities. Staff promotion, retirement, sickness etc had all impacted on staff turnover. Roles were re-invented, changed and transformed so that they remained sustainable and fit for purpose in the future. Local government remained a challenging area to work in as expectations were high whilst the funding made it difficult for staff to stay positive however, the work remained hugely rewarding.
- Members were informed that the COVID pandemic had caused a huge shift in the status of the local and national workforce. The option for staff to work from home had meant that staff could now work for larger authorities for more money and less responsibility than working for Rutland County Council.
- Exit interviews were offered to all leaving staff but they were not compulsory and no emerging trends or themes had been identified from those completed. It was **agreed** that the Strategic Director for Resources would discuss with Human Resources the collation of data from exit interviews.
- Apprenticeships were becoming increasingly popular and these had been discussed to encourage recruitment of staff in areas where recruitment had proved problematic.
- The new Chief Executive had introduced an improved working culture but this had not yet fully embedded in all services. All staff surveys had been thorough to identify the positive and negative within the Council. The latest staff survey had been very positive and had identified what needed to be improved.
- Members were informed that collaboration between other authorities and organisations had been tried but it had proved to be very complex especially as Rutland County Council ran such a varied model of service delivery.

- The Chief Executive requested that members sent details of specific questions to Governance (governance@rutland.gov.uk) **prior** to a meeting so that officers could investigate and provide answers during the committee meeting.
- Councillor Stephenson confirmed that she would discuss with Cabinet their attendance at the meeting of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 15th June 2023 when the end-of-year performance report would be discussed.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- a) **AGREED** that the Strategic Director for Resources would discuss with Human Resources the collation of data from staff exit interviews.

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The Chair paused the meeting for a 5-minute comfort break at 9.05 p.m.

The Strategic Director for Resources left the meeting at 9.05 p.m.

The Chair reconvened the meeting at 9.10 p.m.

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11 PORTFOLIO HOLDERS' UPDATE

A briefing was received from Councillor L Stephenson, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy, Strategy, Partnerships and Economy on the plans for economic development, levelling up and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Members were informed that devolution was in the public eye.
- Derbyshire had received a 'Level 3' agreement so would require a combined authority elected mayor.
- Rutland County Council was in dialogue with Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council for a Level 2 deal.
- Councillor Stephenson confirmed that it had been agreed by all parties that voting would be equal across all three local authorities so that Rutland County Council was not penalised because of its small geographical size and/or small population.
- Rutland County Council was connected with Lincolnshire County Council regarding a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) with Councillor Stephenson attending board meetings as the Rutland representative.
- The LEP Growth Hub for Lincolnshire (www.businesslincolnshire.com) offered support to business and to date 23 Rutland business had benefitted from this service.
- Rutland County Council and Melton Borough Council had submitted a joint bid for the second round of the Government's Levelling Up Fund with the focus on economy, connectivity and culture.
- <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/my-council/council-news/rutland-and-melton-bid-for-23m-investment-through-levelling-up-fund/>
- Councillor Stephenson stated she had sent a letter to The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations to advertise that Rutland would be an excellent pilot study for the Levelling Up Fund due to its small geographical size and small population.

- £1million in funding would be received across three years from the UK Prosperity Fund for Rutland to focus on creating towns and villages, supporting local businesses and investing in people and skills
- An investment plan for £400k funding from the Rural Prosperity Fund would be submitted in November 2022 for Rutland to focus on the visitor economy and the community accessibility with transport.
- A strong economic strategy would help build a strong community. A stakeholder event had been held and this had identified common issues among all business. These would help develop the Council's economic strategy to encourage the visitor economy, promote innovation and help build SMEs (small to medium enterprises).

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At 9.27 pm, the Chair proposed that the meeting be extended for a period of 15 minutes for the agenda to be completed. This was unanimously agreed.

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12 GROUP AND PANEL UPDATES

A. CULTURE / ASSET REVIEW

- The focus of the group would be on the museum so it was suggested that the title be changed to Museum Review.
- The first meeting of the group had been held on the 16th November.
- A very useful first meeting which included a tour of the museum.
- Members were reminded that the museum must not be reviewed on its own but as just one part of the culture/asset review.

B. CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Councillor Begy confirmed discussions had been held with Councillor Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation.
- A scoping document was being drafted and this would be circulated to members for their feedback.

C. HIGHWAYS AND SPEEDING

- Councillor Waller and Councillor P Browne were drafting a scoping document

D. HOMELESSNESS EVIDENCE PANEL

- Initial evidence gathering had been completed.
- A first draft of the report had been compiled but further work would be required.
- The draft report would be circulated to members and the Housing Options Team Manager for comment/feedback.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, DEVOLUTION & LEVELLING UP

- Councillor A Brown confirmed he had met with the Strategic Director for Places on the 4th November.
- A meeting of the group would be held on the 5th December 2022, 5.00 – 7.00 p.m.

- This would include a presentation by Metro Dynamics followed by an analysis of the proposed evidence base.
- The aim would be to identify if any evidence were missing and what required clarifying followed by an analysis of the evidence and note what key messages had been identified.

13 REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK PLAN

The Forward Plan and Annual Work Plan were discussed. During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- The Chair and Vice Chair requested an additional meeting in December to scrutinise two items due for discussion by Cabinet in January 2023 namely the Public Bus Transport Review and the Leisure Strategy and one item which had already been discussed by Cabinet, namely the Asset Review.
- It was noted that all three items contained exempt information so would need to be discussed in 'private session.'

14 ANY URGENT BUSINESS

- The Chief Executive informed members that the Council's performance framework had recently undergone an internal audit. No report had as yet been received but that it would be shared with the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee once received.

15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 8th December 2022 at 7 pm in the Council Chamber, Catmose, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HP

16 LEICESTER, LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND (LLR) INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM (ICS) PERFORMANCE DATA

- The quarterly performance data report was received from the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care System.
- The report was for information only.
- If any member had any questions regarding the report, they should send them to Governance who would collate and forward them on to Kate Allardyce, Senior Performance Manager for a response.

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The Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.38 pm.

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

No.	Ref.	Action	Person
1.	9	It was AGREED that a review of the Council's council tax support scheme should be undertaken for the 2024/25 financial year.	Strategic Director for Resources
2.	10	It was AGREED that the Strategic Director for Resources would discuss with Human Resources the collation of data from staff exit interviews.	Strategic Director for Resources

