



# AGENDA

**NOTE: In the case of non-members, this agenda is for information only**

- Committee** - **POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 2**
- Date & Time** - WEDNESDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2007 AT 10.00 AM
- Venue** - NORFOLK ROOM, THE CONFERENCE SUITE, ELIZABETH HOUSE, DEREHAM

**Members of the Committee requiring further information, or with specific questions, are asked to raise these with the appropriate officer at least two working days before the meeting. If the information requested is available, this will be provided, and reported to Committee.**

**Panel 2 Members:**

Mr C.R. Jordan (Chairman)	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J. Ball	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs L.H. Monument (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Claire Bowes	Mr D.G. Mortimer
Mr M.J. Griffin	

**PERSONS ATTENDING THE MEETING ARE REQUESTED TO TURN OFF MOBILE TELEPHONES**

Committee Services  
Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,  
Dereham Norfolk, NR19 1EE

Date: Monday, 11 June 2007

**PART A**

**ITEMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

	<u>Page(s)</u> <u>herewith</u>
1. <b><u>MINUTES</u></b> To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2007.	1 - 7
2. <b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b> To receive apologies for absence.	
3. <b><u>URGENT BUSINESS</u></b> To note the Chairman proposes to accept any item as urgent business, pursuant to Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.	
4. <b><u>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</u></b> Members are asked at this stage to declare any interests that they may have in any of the following items on the agenda. The Members' Code of Conduct requires that declarations include the nature of the interest and whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest.	
5. <b><u>NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING</u></b> To note the names of any non-members wishing to address the meeting.	
6. <b><u>TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN BRECKLAND</u></b> Report of the Operations Manager – Cabinet.	8 - 41
7. <b><u>REVIEW OF THE BRECKLAND COUNCIL WEBSITE</u></b> Report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executive.	42 - 48
8. <b><u>WORK PROGRAMME</u></b> Members are asked to consider any additional items or topics for inclusion on the future Work Programme.	49
9. <b><u>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</u></b> To agree dates for future meetings.	

# PROTOCOL

## The Working Style of the Policy Development & Review Panels

This document sets out the roles of Members and Officers, and the general principles to be adopted by the Policy Development & Review Panels (PD&RP) overseeing the Panel's mode of operation.

### **Member Leadership**

Members of the Panel will undertake scrutiny topics as directed by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (O&SC) and will recognise that best practice identifies scrutiny as a Member-led activity. The Panel will expect Cabinet members, to take responsibility for answering their questions about topics which primarily relate to the Council's activities.

### **A Constructive Atmosphere**

Meetings of the Panel will be constructive and not judgmental. Panel recognises and accepts that effective scrutiny is best achieved through challenging and constructive enquiry. People giving evidence at Panel should be given due respect and not made to feel under attack.

### **Independence**

Members of the PD&RP will not be subject to whipping arrangements by the party groups.

### **Respect and Trust**

Meetings will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and trust.

### **Consensus**

Members of the Panel will work together and, while recognising political allegiances, will attempt to achieve consensus and agreed recommendations. There will be recognition that the Panel has a primary duty to scrutinise on behalf of the community.

### **Openness and Transparency**

The PD&RP's business will be open and transparent, except where there are sound reasons for protecting confidentiality. The minutes of the Panel's meetings will explain the discussion and debate so that they can be understood by an outside reader.

### **Impartial and Independent Officer Advice**

Officers who advise and support the Panel will give impartial and independent advice, as officers support all members of the Council.

### **Regular Review**

There will be regular reviews of how the scrutiny process is working, and a willingness to change if it is not working effectively.

### **Programming and Planning**

The Panel will have a programme of work assigned by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission. The Panel will be able to suggest additional topics for review through the O&SC for approval in the work programme. Before each topic is commenced, the O&SC will agree the scope of the exercise, what information they will need initially, and which members, officers and external witnesses they wish to see.

### **Managing Time**

The Panel will aim to conclude the business of each meeting in reasonable time. The order of business will be arranged as far as possible to minimise the demands on the time of witnesses. Where possible, members should give advance notice of specific questions being provided at the time of the meeting to save items being deferred.

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 2**

**Held on Friday, 13 April 2007 at 9.30am**  
**In the Council Chamber, King's House, King Street, Thetford**

**PRESENT:**

Joel, Mr. A. P (Chairman)	Matthews, Mrs. S. M.
Bambridge, Mr. S.G.	Monument, Mrs. L. H
Carrick, Mr. J. F.	Mortimer, Mr. D.G.
Jordan, Mr. C.R.	Paines, Mrs. T.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Broughton, Mr. M.	- Scrutiny Officer
Collison, Mr. J.	- Web Officer
Jibril, Mr. M.	- ICT Project Manager
Kerry, Miss. M.	- Senior Policy Officer
McGrath, Mr. S.	- Principal Committee Officer

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Ambrose, Mr. K.	- Ambrose Associates Consultancy Limited
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**Action by**

**18/07 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**19/07 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

An apology for absence was received from The Earl Cathcart.

**20/07 LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP INCLUSION STRATEGY – PROGRESS REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

Members gave consideration to the report from the Senior Policy Officer on the work being undertaken to develop a Social Inclusion Strategy for the Local Strategic Partnership for Breckland.

The Senior Policy Officer reminded Members that in January 2007, the Council had appointed Ambrose Associates Consultancy Limited to develop a Social Inclusion Strategy for the Local Strategic Partnership. Breckland Council was leading on this project, which should be completed by the end of Summer 2007. It was vital that the proposed Strategy was relevant to, and “owned” by, the many local groups and agencies involved in working for the excluder.

The project's aim was to produce a five year Social Inclusion Strategy to define how the Local Strategic Partnership would tackle the reasons why disadvantaged groups and individuals were excluded and to enable the

Action by

Local Strategic Partnership to work in partnership to reduce the efforts of social exclusion and social disadvantage.

The project's objectives are:-

- To produce an effective Strategy that sets the context for ensuring that all Breckland residents are empowered to participate in society on equal terms;
- To produce clear high level outcomes for the delivery of the strategy;
- To recognise each LSP's partner's role in the production and adoption of the Strategy;
- To consult local representative groups, agencies and individuals as specified by the primary contact.

Members then welcomed Mr Kevin Ambrose from Ambrose Associates Consultancy Limited who had been invited to the meeting to report on progress and answer any questions the panel had with regard to the development of the strategy.

Mr Ambrose informed Members that he was currently building up a picture of social exclusion in Breckland by engaging with the community. This was enabling him to identify the principle stakeholders and key stages in the process. A project plan was currently being devised, incorporating the meeting schedule of the main decision makers within the Local Strategic Partnership. With regard to the development of a Consultation Strategy, work was continuing to decide who needed to be involved and a timetable for the consultation was being finalised. Arrangements would then need to be made for monitoring progress on the delivery of the action plan.

With regard to engaging with community groups, a survey of the main local organisations had now been completed. Meetings had also been held with the people actively working with the excluded. Three workshops were also due to be held in Dereham, Swaffham and Thetford shortly to engage with groups and individuals involved in this work.

Mr Ambrose explained that the first draft of the Strategy and Action Plan would be produced by early May 2007. The key findings would then be circulated to key consultees with a view to the Strategy and comments being considered by the Local Strategic Partnership and Breckland Council committees during May to June 2007. The final version of the Strategy and Action Plan would then be re-circulated for consideration in July 2007.

The issues to be addressed by the Strategy are:-

- Nature of exclusion in Breckland;
- Gaps in current provision;
- Identifying responsibilities for plugging in gaps;
- Role of Local Strategic Partnership;

Action by

- Identification of main actions required (with timescale and responsibilities determined);
- “Handing over the baton” from the Consultant to the Local Strategic Partnership.

During discussion of the presentation and report, Members made the following comments:-

- There is as much deprivation in villages as in other areas – *Mr Ambrose acknowledged this and explained that the Rural Community Council had recently undertaken a piece of work to prove this issue. Although the headline figures identify concentrations of deprivation in urban areas such as Thetford, there are a similar number of cases in rural areas but these are dispersed. He confirmed that this would be shown and actioned in the Strategy.*
- A Member reported that some organisations dealing with excluded people might receive a funding cut from Norfolk County Council due to budget cuts. Concern was expressed at this possibility when social exclusion was an increasing trend in the community. – *Mr Ambrose reported that funding for voluntary groups was a key issue as well as the lack of volunteers. He explained that he was trying to get information on the amount of public money being spent on social exclusion. However, this funding was being spent on dealing with the implications of social exclusion rather than tackling the causes of the problem. It was hoped that the Social Inclusion Strategy could get a debate going on the causes of social exclusion as that would be a major success. Members were informed that the Primary Care Trust was also cutting funding to voluntary groups as part of its budget cut process. This should be undertaken against targets rather than cutting funding indiscriminately. Mr Ambrose reminded Members that all the budget holders were members of the Local Strategic Partnership and a discussion at that body might be useful as it would help them consider the implications of their decisions on any cuts they propose.*
- The lack of transport in both urban and rural areas is a major problem. In addition, poverty, unemployment and poor housing also exacerbate the problem. – *Mr Ambrose explained that the key was to provide services to people which they could access in their locality.*
- Some concern was expressed that the various meetings and workshops which were being held to consider the Social Inclusion Strategy were not engaging with the people who were having problems. In addition, some people had chosen to exclude themselves and do not wish to be involved with general society. – *The Senior Policy Officer explained that the workshops were being widely publicised, including in the local media, but she did acknowledge that socially excluded people were hard to reach. In addition, some of them were suspicious of public bodies so these people were being approached through third party voluntary organisations to encourage them to attend and also identify the reasons why they were excluded. Finally, the agencies who work*

Action by

*with socially excluded people were also being asked to provide feedback on what those individuals were saying to them so that this could be incorporated into the Strategy.*

- A Member expressed concern that he was not confident that the issues of rural deprivation were being dealt with. He explained that there were children in many villages in Breckland which had no playgroup, second rate schools, lack of local youth clubs, older people who cannot go out shopping, lack of buses, single parents and lack of night life. Although some issues in towns were being dealt with, maybe not adequately enough, the rural areas were being left behind. – *Mr Ambrose explained that all the organisations dealing with the social exclusion had been contacted and their input requested. He reminded Members that the Strategy was the start of the process and that rural deprivation would be a key thing throughout it. He acknowledged that there was a need to provide more buses and transport in rural areas and this could be discussed between the main agencies involved. Discussions had been held with the transportation department at Norfolk County Council about rural transport and, in particular, how these can be made more effective (e.g. community car scheme). With regard to this scheme, the lack of volunteers and funding were key issues. The scheme might encourage more volunteers if the payments were more lucrative to the drivers as they currently only cover the cost of petrol.*
- Members expressed concern that the language barrier, educational attainment and public sector bureaucracy could also be a problem which makes people socially excluded. Although this could be very costly to overcome, services needed to be made available to people speaking different languages otherwise they would become socially excluded by default.
- A Member commented that it was essential that the action plan be monitored to ensure that it was being delivered.
- A Member queried whether funding would be available to deliver the action plan as it was likely to require significant resources. – *The Senior Policy Officer replied that all the projects in the action plan would be submitted through the project management software which would identify the resources required to deliver them. None of the projects would be included within the action plan without the necessary resources being available to deliver them. Whilst Breckland Council might be a lead agency, the project would be owned by the Local Strategic Partnership and that body would be required to deliver them.*

It was then

**RESOLVED** that the progress on developing the Local Strategic Partnership Social Inclusion Strategy be noted.

21/07 **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL WEBSITE AND INTRANET (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

Members gave consideration to the report from the ICT Manager on the external assessment of the Council's website by Socitm "Better

Action by

Connected". The ICT Project Member reminded Members that the Council's website had been subject to a major revamp at the end of 2006. At Breckland Council, the operation and development responsibilities were distributed between:-

- ICT Service – for technical construction;
- Communications – for overall development direction;
- Individual Services – for content.

Each month, the authority's website is subjected to independent scrutiny by a company called Sitemorse. This specialist company provides a monthly assessment of public sector websites. Their approach was to make an automated assessment using a special computer programme that submits the website to a series of technical appraisals. This approach develops a score which is used as a means of ranking each local authority.

In addition, since 1999, the Society of Information Technology Management (Socitm) had conducted an annual survey of all local authority websites. Their results are published each March in a report called "Better Connected". This document had recently been published and an initial summary of that document and its assessment of Breckland Council's website was contained in the appendix to the report.

The ICT Project Manager then took Members through the scores and rankings allocated to the Breckland Council website from Sitemorse and Better Connected, as detailed in the report, and explained that the main areas for improvement were the content on the website and by making it more interactive. It was proposed that the web editors group discuss these reports and produce an action plan which would prioritise the areas for improvement.

During consideration of the report, Members made the following comments:-

- The overall appearance of the website is very good.
- Sometimes, the content can be difficult to find. In particular, it is extremely difficult to find information about planning applications and that is one area which requires improvement. In addition, the web editors should bear in mind the information which the public wants to access rather than the information they wish to make available.
- A Member enquired how close the Council was with regard to making the website more interactive – *The ICT project Manager explained that this work would be completed within the next few months. Although he was reluctant to place a date on it, due to changing work commitments, the Council site should be transactional by late summer 2007. He explained that the purpose of making the website more transactional was that the public could be empowered more to utilise the Council services at their own convenience rather than in office hours when staff are available. In any event, the more queries which could be handled through the website would obviously reduce the number of calls*

*into the office thereby allowing the back office staff to concentrate on other work rather than answering telephone calls.*

- A Member expressed concern that there appeared to have been little progress on updating content since the launch of the website last year. Breckland Council has prided itself over the years on being an innovative authority. It therefore appeared obvious that a significant amount of work needed to be undertaken on the website to improve the content and also the accessibility of the information. It was also suggested that a new section on “frequently asked questions” be added to the homepage and that this list be adjusted according to the information being requested through the website and the customer contact centre.
- A Member enquired why the web editors were not updating the content on the website – *the ICT Project Manager informed Members that the web editor role was not built into the web editors job descriptions and, in some services, other work commitments are taking a priority.*
- A Member commented that South Norfolk Council had the best website in the country, according to the inspection, and enquired whether Breckland Council was discussing areas of best practice with them – *the ICT Project Manager confirmed that a representative from the communications team had met with officers from South Norfolk Council and had brought back a number of areas of best practice which would be shared with the web editors at their meeting shortly.*

**Action by**

Mike Tuck/  
Mutairu  
Jibril

**RESOLVED**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the proposal for development of an improvement plan be endorsed and this improvement plan be considered at the next meeting of this panel.
3. That the ICT Manager be asked to discuss the possibility of incorporating the role of web editor in the job descriptions of the members of staff concerned with the Operational Management Team and report back to a future meeting of this Panel.

Mutairu  
Jibril

Mike Tuck

**22/07 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Members gave consideration to the proposed work programme and meeting schedule for Policy Development and Review Panel 2, as detailed in the report.

At the request of the Scrutiny Officer, it was agreed to remove the item on Community Partnerships from the future Work Programme.

**23/07 VOTE OF THANKS (ADDITIONAL ITEM)**

The Chairman concluded the meeting by asking that the Panel's thanks and appreciation be recorded in the minutes to Earl Cathcart, John Carrick and Thelma Paine who were standing down from the Council after numerous years' service. All three Members were then wished the very best for the future.

**24/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

It was agreed that officers should determine the next meeting date for Policy Development and Review Panel 2 bearing in mind the Work Programme and the need to fit into the Council's committee meeting schedule.

Action by

Mark  
Broughton

The meeting closed at 11.10 am.

CHAIRMAN

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW PANEL (2) – 20 JUNE 2007**

**REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS MANAGER (CABINET)**

**(Author: Mitch Kerry, Corporate Policy Manager)**

**TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN BRECKLAND**

**Summary:** Members are asked to comment on the consultant's report, which will form the basis of the proposed LSP Social Inclusion Strategy.

**1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The aim of the Community Plan for Breckland is "to improve the quality of life for all people living and working in, and visiting Breckland".
- 1.2 The Breckland Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) wishes to adopt a Social Inclusion Strategy aimed at helping those who are least able to enjoy the quality of life that others living and working in Breckland can expect.

**2. KEY DECISION**

- 2.1 This is not a key decision.

**3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

- 3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:
  - A safe and healthy environment
  - A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities
  - A prosperous place to live and work

**4. THE DRAFT STRATEGY**

- 4.1 As a key stakeholder in the LSP, Breckland Council is asked to consider the attached consultant's report on developing a Social Inclusion Strategy and action plan. The LSP will consider and agree the main priorities (such as the overall vision, the strategic objectives and the main priorities for action) for tackling social exclusion.
- 4.2 The report paints a picture of social exclusion in the district – what it means to be deprived and isolated in a generally prosperous rural area. The report also puts forward proposals for a strategic approach, aimed at enabling all organisations in the area to build on existing initiatives; address gaps in provision and overcome barriers to effective action.

**5. OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

- 5.1 To comment on the report.
- 5.2 Not to comment on the report.

**6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 6.1 The Council is a key stakeholder in the Breckland LSP and, as such, its views are important in developing the proposed Social Inclusion Strategy.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

7.1 The Panel is asked to consider and comment on:

- (a) the general approach to developing the Strategy and its associated action plan;
- (b) the analysis of the nature of social exclusion in Breckland; and
- (c) the analysis of the context within which the Strategy is being developed;

*Appendices: "Towards a strategy for social inclusion in Breckland", report by Kevin Ambrose, May 2007*

Where appropriate, this report has taken account of the need for compliance with

- The Council's Equal Opportunities Policies and Gender Equality Scheme
- Section 17, Crime & Disorder Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Section 40, Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

# ***Towards a strategy for social inclusion in Breckland***



**Kevin Ambrose**

**May 2007**

# Towards a strategy for social inclusion in Breckland

## *For the Breckland Local Strategic Partnership*

The aim of the Community Plan for Breckland is “**To improve the quality of life for all people living and working in, and visiting Breckland**”.

The Breckland Local Strategic Partnership wishes to adopt a social inclusion strategy and action plan aimed at helping those who are least able to enjoy the quality of life that others living and working in the Breckland area can expect.

### **Purpose of this report**

Before the actual strategy can be finalised, it is important that the main partners in the LSP consider and agree the main priorities (such as the overall vision, the strategic objectives and the main priorities for action) for tackling social exclusion. This report is intended to stimulate debate with the aim of reaching a consensus within the partnership.

The report paints a picture of social exclusion in the area - what it means to be deprived and isolated in a generally prosperous rural area. The report also puts forward proposals for a strategic approach, aimed at enabling all organisations in the area to build on existing initiatives; address gaps in provision and overcome barriers to effective action

Following that debate, a strategy will be developed from the findings of this report together with the decisions made on its recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

LSP partners are asked to consider and comment on:

1. The general approach to developing the Strategy and its associated Action Plan – see “[How was this strategy developed?](#)”
2. The analysis of the nature of social exclusion in Breckland – see “[How does social exclusion affect people in Breckland?](#)”
3. The analysis of the context within which the strategy is being developed – see “[How does the strategy relate to other regional, county and local strategies?](#)”

Partners are also asked to consider, modify as necessary and agree:

4. The overall **aim** of the proposed Breckland Social Inclusion Strategy – see [What should be the overall vision and aim of the Breckland Social Inclusion Strategy?](#)
5. The **strategic objectives** for the Strategy – see [Defining objectives of the Social Inclusion Strategy](#)
6. The suggested Action Plan (including arrangements for monitoring progress and regularly reviewing social exclusion in the area). See [Implementation & delivery – the Action Plan](#)

(For those reading an electronic version of this report, the chapters listed above can be quickly viewed by clicking on the hyperlink. Hyperlinks have also been inserted at key points in the report to enable readers to return quickly to the Contents page.)

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## How was this strategy developed?

The strategy has been based on an analysis of what social exclusion looks like in the Breckland area. This has been achieved through:

- Analysing the data on deprivation in the area (from sources such as the 2001 Census, National Statistics, the Labour Force Survey, Regional Observatories and the index of Deprivation). In particular, the March 2007 study “*Deprivation in Norfolk*” published by the Norfolk Rural Community Council has provided much valuable information on deprivation in the remoter parts of the area as well as in towns such as Thetford.
- A review of the extensive literature on social exclusion. This includes studies produced by government departments and agencies (e.g. *Rural Communities Commission*), research trusts (e.g. *Joseph Rowntree, Carnegie*), charities (*Save the Children, Family Welfare Association*), as well as local bodies (*councils, area partnerships, health trusts*). An index of documents consulted can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.
- Interviews with, and surveys of, people who have direct experience of working with the socially excluded of the area.

The findings from this initial work were then tested at a series of workshops held around the district, allowing further analysis of the scale of the problem and a discussion on ideas for tackling them.

## Why should we be concerned with social exclusion?

Social exclusion can be devastating for individuals’ lives and their children’s life chances. It also inflicts huge costs on the economy and society at large – and of course places considerable demands on the statutory and voluntary agencies serving the community.

The generally accepted definition of social inclusion is *Social exclusion is a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health, poverty and family breakdown. Social exclusion is principally about income but it is about more than material poverty. It is about prospects, networks and life chances.*

The East of England Observatories Social Exclusion Partnership (OSEP) has suggested a simplified version of this *Social exclusion is not being as much a part of the community as you wish to be. (It is) strongly related to - but not identical to - poverty and low income.*

The negative consequences of exclusion inflict huge costs on the economy and society. The costs for families and young people alone have been estimated as follows:

- Anti-social behaviour costs £3.4billion a year
- The additional costs of being not in education, employment or training at age 16–18: £8.1 billion
- The annual cost of school exclusion: £406 million
- If care leavers had the same rates of going into education, employment and training as their peers it would save £100 million annually
- If one in ten young offenders received effective early intervention, it would save around £100 million a year

(Source: Cabinet Office - *Families at Risk Review*)

These costs add up to £12.3 billion a year (which translated to Breckland, on a per capita basis, means approximately £25 million annually). This estimate does not include the additional costs to the health service. Although these figures are rough

estimates, they provide an indication of the huge cost to this country of allowing children to repeat the failures of their parents.

## The social and economic character of Breckland

Breckland is one of the largest rural districts in England and one of the most sparsely populated. About 50% of the population live in the 5 market towns – Attleborough, Dereham, Thetford, Swaffham and Watton - and the other 50% is spread across 107 rural parishes, some with a population of less than 100.

In common with other rural areas, the Breckland area has seen a decline in many of services and facilities once enjoyed by smaller settlements, such as churches, local schools, shops (including post offices), pubs, bus & rail services.

Transport and access to services is inevitably, in a rural area, a key issue – especially for those in the smaller villages without the ready availability of a car. Large parts of the district are not served by regular public transport and the only means of travel open to many is a taxi, volunteer driven community car or (for young school leavers) Kickstart provided moped.

As a rural area, agriculture and the processing of food and other agricultural products have dominated the local economy. This work is often low-paid, low skilled and heavily reliant on seasonal workers and on migrant labour. Significant numbers of people from Portugal have recently been supplemented by workers from eastern Europe (notably Poland, Lithuania and Hungary).

The relatively low pay earned by residents in the district (compared with the Eastern Region and Great Britain) is shown below:

Hourly pay	Breckland	Eastern	Great Britain
Full-time workers	£8.78	£11.69	£11.26
- Male full-time workers	£9.29	£12.54	£11.91
- Female full-time workers	£8.05	£10.38	£10.28

Source: ONS/Nomis May 2007 (from annual survey of hours and earnings)

The Norfolk area has a long tradition of being on the routes of travellers, for whom farms provided a source of employment. A number of sites, both permanent and short stay, are provided and there are a number of other licensed and unauthorised sites.

## How does social exclusion affect people in Breckland?

*“Much of the deprivation (in the East of England area) is “hidden” – hence targeting geographically distinct areas ... is not very productive”* (East of England - Observatories Social Exclusion Partnership)

*“Surveys find residents in smaller communities the most supported and neighbourly. Yet tensions may exist between locals and incomers, age groups and haves and have-nots. The poor are less likely to share this sense of community.”* (Brian Wilson, Commission for Rural Communities March 2007)

Social exclusion affects the vulnerable, deprived and isolated in different ways. This section identifies different groups and puts forward the evidence from research and from the experience of field workers on how the excluded are affected.

From the research and feedback from consultations on this strategy, the particular groups who experience the worst effects of social exclusion are:

1. Families at risk
2. Disaffected young people
3. Long term unemployed
4. Isolated older people
5. People with long term health problems or disabilities

6. Migrant workers
7. Travellers & Gypsies

The next section examines each of these groups in turn to describe how social exclusion affects them.

### **1. Families at risk**

*“The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.” (Overview of child well-being in rich countries UNICEF - 2007)*

Research, and the experience of local agencies, highlight that one family could be dealing with many problems at the same time. Skills are poor, aspiration low and there could be additional problems. One of the parents may be in the criminal justice system and there could be problems with mental health, domestic violence or broken relationships. This can trigger a variety of effects including anti-social behaviour.

Exposure to parent-based risk factors can be devastating for children’s life chances: This has been described as the ‘cycle of disadvantage’ - deprivation in one generation is likely to pass down to the next.

Among the specific characteristics of families encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

#### **Poor health**

Health inequalities associated with low income or deprivation can be found in all aspects of health, from infant death to the risk of mental ill health. Adults in the poorest fifth of the income distribution are twice as likely to be at risk of developing a mental illness as those on average incomes (*source: Joseph Rowntree Trust*).

Poverty and deprivation have a profound impact on the health, development and educational outcomes of children. An estimated 15.6% of children in the East of England live in poverty – that is 168,000 children. In Breckland, 14% of children live in income deprived families (*Source: Index of Deprivation 2004*).

Lifestyle choices affecting long-term health outcomes are particularly important in children. Data (*source: NHS Eastern Region Public Health Observatory*) show that in the East of England:

- 1 in 10 children aged 11-15 years are smokers, and over 1 in 4 live in households where someone smokes.
- One in 4 children aged 13-15 drank alcohol in the previous week.
- Less than 1 in 10 achieve the recommended 5-A-Day fruit and vegetable intake.

#### **Low skills & qualifications**

60% of children in the lowest reading attainment group at age 10 had parents with low literacy scores. (*Source: Families at Risk Review*)

Parents and children of particular groups – notably Gypsies and Travellers – are particularly susceptible to these multiple indicators of risk. Ofsted has described Traveller pupils as the group most at risk in the English education system, estimating that up to 12,000 secondary-aged teenagers from Traveller families are not enrolled at a school. For those who do attend, the picture is not much better. According to the Department for Education and Skills, at least half of all Traveller children drop out of school between key stage 1 and 4.

**Crime & domestic violence**

63% of boys whose fathers go to prison are eventually convicted themselves.

Children who experience parental conflict and domestic violence are more likely to be delinquent and to commit violence and property offences. (Source: Families at Risk Review).

**Low pay among single parents**

50% of lone parents are in low income (60% or less of the average household income) compared with 20% of couples with children, according to the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

The much-publicised report by UNICEF (quoted above) found that on most measures of children’s well being, the United Kingdom came last or near-bottom in all comparisons with 20 other rich countries. The factors taken into account included: material well being, family & peer relationships and behaviours & risks.

Little data has been uncovered regarding the number of families at risk in Breckland. Sure Start Thetford – a local inter-agency initiative to deliver better outcomes for children and families – reports that it works with around 200 families per month. There are no readily available figures for the remaining parts of Breckland.

**2. Disaffected young people**

There is a significant group of young people who are not achieving their potential to enjoy a good quality of life. Four facets of this demand particular attention: low expectations by young people & their families & peers; low levels of skills & qualifications; health & well-being and relative immobility (due to lack of access to transport).

Among the specific characteristics of disaffected young people encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

**Low expectations & ambitions**

Low expectations and ambitions are reported by organisations working with the young. Among the indicators of this in Breckland (and particularly Thetford) are low academic achievements (lower than regional or national levels of attainment in GCSEs.):

	<i>Level 2 (5 or more grades A*-C)</i>	<i>Level 1 (5 or more grades A*-G)</i>	<i>Average total point score per pupil</i>
<b>Breckland average</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>(Thetford average)</b>	27%	89%	258
<b>Norfolk Average</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>353</b>
<b>England Average</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>365</b>

In a recent study carried out by Northampton University and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), just 7% of the 44 Traveller children they tracked through secondary school achieved five or more A\*-C GCSEs

**Low skills & qualifications**

These results are also reflected in the qualifications of the workforce in the area with fewer people possessing higher vocational qualifications and proportionately more with no qualifications at all:

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**Qualifications of Working Age Population**

Qualification Level	Breckland	Eastern Region	GB
<b>NVQ 3 and above</b>	30.9 %	42.4 %	44.4 %
<b>No Qualifications</b>	18.2 %	13.2 %	14.3 %

Source: ONS/Nomis – Annual Population Survey Jan – Dec 2005

The lower a person's qualifications, the more likely they are to be low paid. National research in 2006 by the New Policy Institute/Joseph Rowntree Trust shows that half of those with no qualifications earn less than £6.50 per hour.

It would appear that, as the local economy is dominated by low wage/low skill employment, few employers invest much in the development of their workforces. Enhancing workforce skills is one of the five strategic objectives of the *LSP's Economic Prosperity Strategy*.

There is a (slightly) higher proportion of Job Seekers Allowance claimants in Breckland in the 18 – 24 year age group compared with rest of Eastern England or Britain.

**JSA claimants by age and duration (March 2007)**

Age of claimant	Breckland		Eastern	Great Britain
18-24	475	31.8%	29.7%	30.3%

Source: ONS claimant count - age

**Health**

In the UNICEF study on the well-being of children in 21 economically advanced countries, the UK takes bottom place "by a considerable distance" for the number of young people who smoke, abuse drink and drugs, engage in risky sex and become pregnant at an early age.

Teenage motherhood is eight times as common amongst those from manual social backgrounds as for those from professional backgrounds (*Joseph Rowntree Trust*). A number of local organisations surveyed attributed this to low expectations of work by teenage girls and cyclical factors (a high proportion of teenage mothers are themselves the children of teenage mothers). Although figures nationally and locally are showing a downward trend, this is still seen as a significant aspect of social exclusion in the Breckland area.

**Transport & access**

Lack of readily available transport is a key factor affecting young people's access to employment & training as well as social & recreational activities. "Transport limitations deny true educational choice. Those that can afford to bridge the public transport gap do so. Those who can't, don't" (*Kickstart Norfolk – "Getting to grips with social exclusion in Breckland" 2005*).

Improving transport & infrastructure is another of the LSP's *Economic Prosperity Strategy's* five strategic objectives.

**3. Long term unemployed**

Although unemployment rates in Breckland are low compared with the region or nationally, those that are affected face many of the characteristics of multiple deprivation. Many will feature in other categories identified in this report (e.g. Disaffected young people, People with long term health problems or disabilities). Part-time and seasonal working, linked to low pay, increase the numbers affected and these are characteristic of the local economy dominated as it is by agricultural and food manufacturing. Closures of major employers (e.g. Tulip with a loss of 400 jobs) create local hot-spots of unemployment and the risk of associated problems of deprivation.

Among the specific characteristics of the long term unemployed encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

**Crime & anti-social behaviour**

There is a demonstrable link between unemployment and crime, with about 65% of offenders not in a job when they are sentenced to unpaid work

**Transport & access**

As with young people, lack of readily available transport is a key factor affecting the unemployed's access to jobs & training.

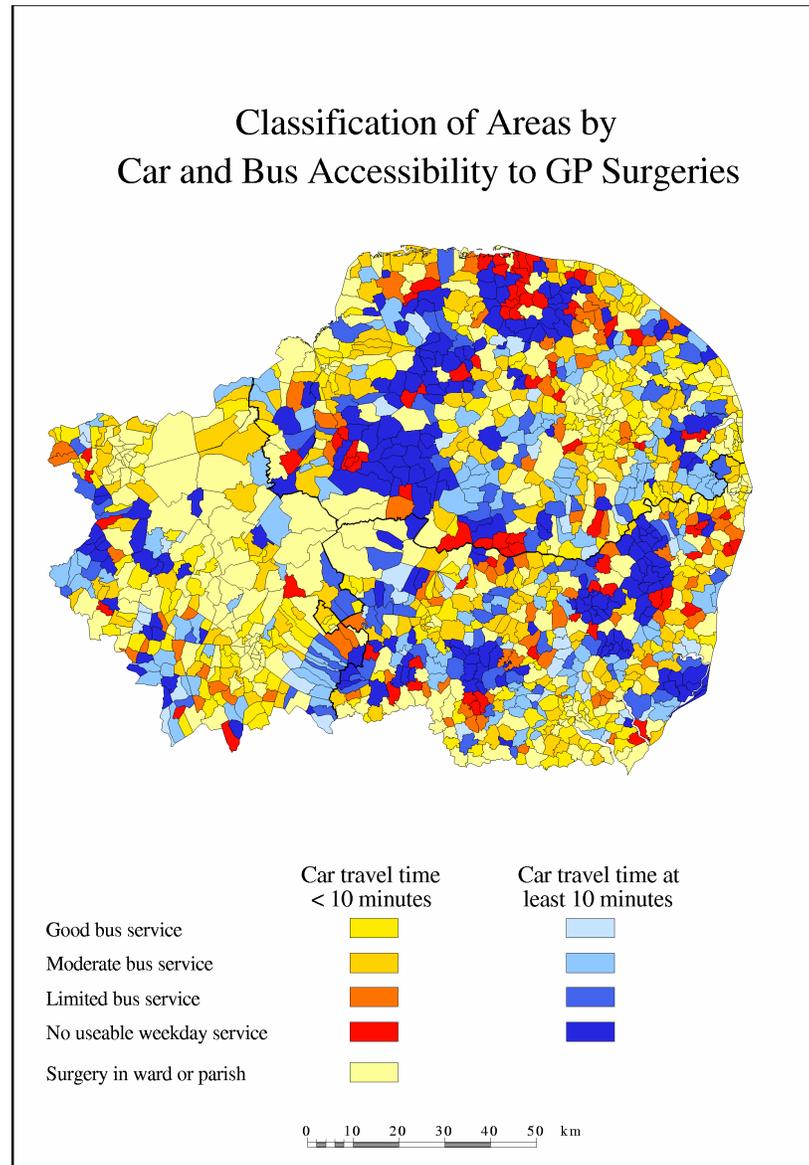
**4. Isolated older people**

In Breckland, 12% of the population over 60 live in households that are income deprived (*Source: Index of Deprivation 2004*). More than half of all older people experiencing income deprivation live **outside** the larger settlements in Norfolk (*source: Norfolk Rural Community Council/OCSI report on Deprivation in Rural Norfolk*). The problems of social isolation and help with daily living, mainly centred on older, single women: 60% live alone; 60% have a limiting longstanding illness and 60% do not have a car (*source East Region Public Health Observatory*).

Among the specific characteristics of isolated older people encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

**Health & housing**

There are issues in terms of the distance to health services in rural areas. The western and northern parts of Breckland represent the largest area of inaccessibility in the whole of the eastern region of England. The Eastern Region Public Health Observatory has graphically illustrated this:



Source: *Accessibility of Primary Health Care Services in East Anglia, University of East Anglia (2000)*

In Norfolk, house prices are highest - and least affordable - in smaller and mid-sized settlements (*source: Deprivation in Rural Norfolk*). “Key elements (of a cohesive rural community) will be a mix of housing, meeting local needs for affordable homes, and places for residents to socialise” (*Source: Brian Wilson, Commission for Rural Communities March 2007*)

#### **Transport & access to services**

Many older people will not have access to a car – or are no longer able to run a car as they become increasing frail or lose a partner who was the driver for the household. Nearly 10,000 households in the smallest towns in Norfolk have no access to a car or van (*source: Deprivation in Rural Norfolk*). The lack of public transport or other forms of transport increases their isolation from employment, health services, shops, social and recreational activities. Increasing isolation can have devastating effects on physical and mental health.

According to data gathered at least 5 years ago by the Countryside Agency (quoted by *Eastern Region Public Health Observatory*) 10 - 20% of parishes in Breckland lacked a local shop – this may well have deteriorated since.

#### **5. People with long term health problems or disabilities**

The Norfolk PCT population has the best health in the East of England, and its health is generally improving. However, there are significant inequalities between the least- and most-deprived fifths of the population, particularly in male life expectancy, smoking-related deaths and circulatory disease deaths. These gaps appear to be increasing. The lowest life expectancy is generally found in the most deprived urban areas of Norwich, **Thetford** and King's Lynn. (*Eastern Region Public Health Observatory*)

People with disabilities or poor health face similar problems to the isolated (see previous section). In addition, although willing to work, many find barriers to their employment which are often surmountable with good will and support. Another key characteristic of this group is low pay:

##### **Low pay**

At 30%, the poverty rate for disabled adults is twice that for non-disabled adults, a difference markedly higher than a decade ago. The main reason for this high poverty rate is the high levels of worklessness (*source: Joseph Rowntree Trust*).

#### **6. Migrant workers**

Migrant workers range from seasonal workers to those who move with their families with the intention of settling permanently. Agricultural work and the food processing industry attract a significant proportion of migrant workers. According to the *Norfolk Rural Community Council/OCSI report on Deprivation in Rural Norfolk*, "migrant workers and travelers are more likely to live in rural areas", away from the main urban centres.

Data on the numbers of migrant workers in Breckland, their jobs, length of stay in the area and homes, is limited. The Workers Registration Scheme (which applies only to those from the new E.C. accession countries of eastern Europe) shows that about 2,500 workers registered in the Breckland area between May 2004 and September 2006 (*Source: Worker Registration Scheme Initial Approvals (East of England) Norfolk CC March 2007*). How many of these have subsequently returned to their home country is not known. The majority of migrant workers who arrived since January 2004 were single and 'explorers' of a new migrant community within the EC - the majority migrated to the UK to earn more money and to improve their English (*Source: A Profile of Migrant Workers in the Breckland Area (Anglia Polytechnic University/Keystone Development Trust July 2005)*).

These figures do not include the significant numbers in the area from Portugal.

Among the specific characteristics of migrant workers encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

##### **Health & housing**

Migrant workers in rural areas face challenges relating to health, housing, employment, training and education. They can also be particularly vulnerable due to their lack of knowledge and awareness of their rights, benefits and entitlements and the associated rules and procedures. (*Source: Commission for Rural Communities Statement on integration & cohesion in rural areas*). See also *Employment & low pay* below. It is difficult to assess how far their lives are dominated by the agencies (and perhaps gangmasters) that arrange for them to come

over to the area. There is some evidence that power is wielded through control of passports and accommodation.

### **Education & skills**

Migrant workers range from the highly educated and skilled to those with no formal education. Evidence shows that they make a large contribution to the rural economy, often filling posts where there is no suitable local labour (*EEDA estimates revenue gain in the East of England from migrant labour as £360m*).

Language barriers are a problem in increasingly diverse rural communities. (*Source: Carnegie Trust's Commission for Rural Community Development*). The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's interim report highlights an inability to speak English as a critical issue and that learning English is a bridge across which to address some of the barriers to integration and cohesion. Migrant workers in rural areas may have additional difficulties in accessing English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses in terms of distance and time and modes of transport. The Audit Commission (*in the Crossing Borders report*) argues that the better migrant workers are able to speak English, the less likely they are to be exploited and the better they will know their rights and entitlements.

### **Employment & low pay**

The Commission for Rural Communities reported (*Migrant Workers in Rural Areas, January 2007*) that "many migrant workers recognise that their jobs are often arduous, relatively poorly paid and do not reflect their skills. They have less leverage to negotiate their hours with employers due to their status and situation. For some, employers or gangmasters provide accommodation. Rent is generally subtracted from their wages. If workers lose their jobs, they become homeless too."

## **7. Travellers & Gypsies**

Gypsies and Travellers face disadvantage and deprivation in many walks of life. In Norfolk, a count by local authorities in January 2005, revealed a total of 352 Gypsy caravans, of which 16 were in Breckland. The county figure includes 247 on authorised sites and 105 on unauthorised sites. Council owned sites are almost permanently at capacity. (*Source: A Strategy for Gypsies & Travellers in Norfolk, 2005-8, South Norfolk DC for all Norfolk authorities*).

Among the specific characteristics of travellers encountering deprivation and social exclusion are:

### **Health**

Gypsies and Travellers "have the poorest life chances of any ethnic group today". The health of Gypsies and Travellers is generally much worse than for other groups. Life expectancy is ten years lower than the national average, and infant mortality higher. Research has also found that Gypsy and Traveller mothers are 20 times more likely than other mothers to have experienced the death of a child. (*source: Commission for Rural Communities Statement on integration & cohesion in rural areas*).

### **Education & skills**

Gypsy and Traveller children often have poor levels of educational attainment. Less than a quarter of Gypsy children achieved five GCSEs at A\* to C grades in 2003, compared to a national average of just over half (*source: Commission for Rural Communities Statement*). Education can be interrupted due to travel, and enrolment of children at schools

declines over the years in secondary education. There are also low levels of adult literacy and skills.

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## What is being done to help?

The research and consultations on the strategy produced many examples of good practice in meeting the needs of the most deprived - either serving specific excluded groups or particular areas within Breckland. However, the picture that emerged for the whole of Breckland was of fragmented provision. Surestart Thetford provides a model approach of an integrated, cross-profession, inter-agency service for a specific group (families with under 5 year olds) in a relatively small part of Breckland. Active partners include the Primary Care Trust, Connexions, Norfolk County Council Children & Family Services, as well as Breckland Council, the Police, Keystone Development Trust, Thetford Excellence Partnership among others.

There are a number of other inter-agency initiatives – including the valuable work undertaken by the five Area Partnerships based in the main towns.

However, the picture generally in Breckland is unclear. Comprehensive information on the range of services and activities aimed at helping the socially excluded is hard to come by. The value of compiling and maintaining such a resource – both for practitioners and for excluded people themselves - is self-evident and is included in the action plan.

## How does the strategy relate to other regional, county and local strategies?

Research for this has included a review of other strategies aimed at improving the well-being of the area. In particular, strategic context has been defined from:

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
EERA	<b>East of England Regional Social Strategy</b>
Norfolk CSP	<b>Norfolk Ambition</b>
Breckland LSP	<b>Community Plan for Breckland</b>

The key elements of these three strategies are set out in more detail in tabular form below

### **Regional Social Strategy**

Given the nature of social exclusion in Breckland described above, the East of England Regional Assembly's Social Strategy provides a very clear regional focus for tackling the problem locally. The key objectives of that strategy, together with a selection of the most relevant actions, are set out in the table below:

<b>SO</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Detail- relevant to Breckland</b>	<b>Lead organisation</b>
1.	<b>To tackle poverty and reduce income inequalities</b>	1. Encourage local authorities to use their new community leadership powers to promote the development of local policies and initiatives to tackle social exclusion	EERA
		2. Supporting people into employment through training and other initiatives	Jobcentre Plus
		3. Increase take-up of welfare benefits by supporting the provision of information and advice, including legal help	CABs + accredited advice providers
2.	<b>To promote access to work, tackle low pay and improve conditions of work</b>	Reduce % of low paid workers in region through regional action	EERA

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SO	Strategic Objective	Detail- relevant to Breckland	Lead organisation
3.	<b>To improve the life chances of children from disadvantaged families and support vulnerable young people in the transition to adulthood</b>	1. Co-ordinate cross-government approach to children and young people's issues in response to the Green Paper, Every Child Matters (ECM)	GO-East
		2. Support the development of early years programmes and interventions based on regional good practice e.g. Sure Start	Regional Sure Start team/GO-East
		3. Supporting schools in signing up to and achieving the National Healthy Schools Standard in all schools with 20% free school meals (501 schools)	Local Healthy Schools Partnerships
		9. Develop a plan for the active involvement of children and young people in the wider regional agenda using 'Hear by Right' standards	EERA/East of England Youth Parliament
4.	<b>Improving the life chances of adults through learning and skills development</b>	1. Deliver a range of literacy, language and numeracy programmes across the region, as identified in the FRESA and local Learning and Skills Councils' literacy and numeracy delivery plans	Learning & Skills Council
		4. Develop awareness and training for frontline staff to enable them to identify adults with literacy, language and numeracy needs and offer guidance on provision	Learning & Skills Council/Regional Teacher Training project
5.	<b>To promote active ageing and reduce social exclusion of older people</b>	1. Establish a regional forum to promote active ageing as a mechanism for reducing the risk of social exclusion of older people	Age Concern
6.	<b>To support the development of sustainable communities</b>	1. Support delivery of affordable housing and other priorities relating to social inclusion identified in the Regional Housing Strategy,	Regional Housing Board
		2. Commission research into the housing needs of: migrant workers in the region	EERA
		3. To actively promote the development of strategic networks of greenspace that benefit physical and mental well-being, particularly in areas of deprivation, by providing for more contact with nature for all	English Nature
		7. Develop a coordinated, cross- Government approach to tackling health inequalities	GO-East
7.	<b>To improve access to services, especially for disadvantaged groups</b>	1. Promote policies aimed at providing opportunities for the closer location of homes, jobs and services and better accessibility through public transport, cycling and walking within the Regional Transport Strategy	EERA
		4. Support local authorities in assessing the impact on social inclusion of Local Transport Plans	EEDA
8.	<b>To develop social networks, community assets, and promote community cohesion</b>	1. Review and develop research on social capital	EEDA + Observatories Social Exclusion Partnership
		2. Develop a framework for increasing community participation within multiagency partnerships	COVER
		4. Promote local COMPACTS - more effective partnership working between Statutory and Voluntary/Community sector	COVER + GO-East

The strategy contains proposals for all the groups identified as excluded in Breckland – with the exception of Gypsies and travellers. However, this gap is bridged by the *Strategy for Travellers & Gypsies in Norfolk 2005-8*.

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### County strategic context

The Norfolk County Strategic Partnership’s strategy (“Norfolk Ambition”) together with the Local Area Agreement (refreshed for 2007-9) provides the countywide context of the strategy.

The Vision for Norfolk Ambition is that Norfolk will be recognised as a county:

- Where all individuals have the opportunity to achieve a good quality of life
- Where people enjoy healthy lifestyles and have equitable access to high standards of health and social care
- Where people in communities feel safe
- With excellent educational attainment and opportunities for learning at all stages throughout life
- Where individuals from all backgrounds can play an active part in community life

The Local Area Agreement delivery plan (“Refreshed Targets 2007-09”) sets out a range of specific outcomes (with indicators) that are of relevance to tackling social exclusion in Breckland: The following table identifies these (with indicators):

#### Key outcomes proposed in Norfolk Local Area Agreement (2007-9)

<i>LAA Block</i>	<i>Outcome desired</i>		<i>Indicator</i>
Children & young people	Being healthy	1.1.1	Improved mental health well-being
		1.1.2	Healthier, more active children & young people
		1.1.3	Reduction in rates of teenage pregnancy
	Staying safe	1.2.3	Reduction in number of looked after children
	Improved educational attainment	1.3.1	Pupils achieving KS2 Level4+ in English & Maths
		1.3.2	
		1.3.4	Pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs (A*-C)
		1.3.5	Days missed from secondary schools
		1.3.6	Looked after children achieving KS2 L4 & KS3 L5
	Achieving economic well being	1.5.1	16 year olds staying on in learning
Healthier communities & older people	Improve health & reduce health inequalities		All indicators are focused on specific areas - fails to take into account that most of the deprived live outside worst SOAs
	Enable older people to live at home & lead independent & fulfilling lives	2.6.5	Increased benefit take up
		2.6.6	Increased opportunities for older people to be active (in learning, recreational & volunteering)
Safer & stronger communities	Fewer young people engaged in criminal activities	3.6.1	Reduced number of first time entrants to youth justice system

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<b>LAA Block</b>	<b>Outcome desired</b>		<b>Indicator</b>
	Empower local people to have a greater voice, influence & role in public service	3.7.2	People feeling that the area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
		3.7.3	Increase recruitment & retention levels of volunteers
	Reducing domestic violence	3.8.2	Decreased incidence of domestic violence incidents
	Improved housing provision	3.14.4	Affordable housing units delivered
Economic development & enterprise	Improved aspirations & skills to meet economic needs	4.2.1	Reduce no. of young people <b>not</b> in education, employment, & training
		4.2.3	Reduced number of adults with no NVQ Level 2 qualification
	Reduce deprivation & social exclusion	4.3.1	Reduce households with less than £10,000 annual income
		4.3.4	Improve access to services by public transport for those without car
		4.3.5	Increased passenger journeys on demand responsive transport services
		4.3.7	Increased number of lone parents able to move into work
		4.3.8	Increased numbers of people on incapacity benefit able to move into work

In terms of addressing social exclusion, there are several notable omissions from the countywide Local Area Agreement. These include:

- **Travellers & Gypsies** - for whom there is no reference to needs such as education and permanent housing sites. (Again, the *Strategy for Travellers & Gypsies in Norfolk 2005-8* should be considered in the next LAA review)
- **Migrant workers** – for whom there are no measures to address language needs and cultural integration
- **Health** – the issue of health inequalities is narrowly targeted at the worst super output areas thereby missing many in isolated communities whose numbers are not large enough to appear in aggregated data. Also no references to tackling mental health concerns (notably of young adults)

These omissions should be raised as part of the Breckland Social Inclusion Strategy input into the county LAA and Norfolk Ambition.

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**Breckland strategic context**

This Social Inclusion Strategy is one of three strategies flowing from the Breckland Local Strategic Partnership’s Community Plan. The priorities of that Plan that are of particular relevance are:

<b>Theme</b>	<b>This means...</b>
<b>Learning</b> To encourage lifelong learning opportunities for everyone living and working in the district	We want to offer a good variety of learning opportunities for local residents and get more people to take advantage of this. We want everyone to have the chance to increase their skills and improve their work opportunities. We want to encourage people to learn and achieve relevant qualifications and we especially want to make sure everyone has a good standard of language, literacy and numeracy skills.
<b>Health</b> To improve the overall health and well-being of Breckland residents	We want to get more people out and about increasing their activity levels. We want to offer more opportunities to exercise and make workplaces healthier. We also want to give people better information on health issues so that they are more aware. We especially want to improve the health of high-risk groups who are more likely to suffer from health problems.
<b>Housing</b> To develop a range of affordable, decent housing options to meet a range of needs	We want to increase the number of affordable homes in our district. We also want to improve the quality of our housing and reduce overcrowding. We want to tackle homelessness, improve facilities and create more opportunities for people to be able to live independently.
<b>Culture</b> To provide cultural and leisure opportunities that improve the lives and well being of all our residents and visitors	We want to encourage more people to take part in the arts and enjoy local sports and leisure facilities. We will improve the range of activities on offer and make sure everyone is aware of what’s going on and how they can get involved. We will also support our communities in celebrating local traditions and different cultures.
<b>Transport</b> To reduce the need for travel and improve transport choices	We want to reduce congestion on our roads. We want to look at safer and healthier ways to travel and try to encourage these. We will try to reduce pollution and improve alternative ways for people to get to work and use other services.

This is consistent with the emerging themes and priorities of the social inclusion strategy. Perhaps the one aspect that requires strengthening is in the Transport section where there is a need to address the lack of access to employment opportunities, services and social activities for those without use of a car (including young & older people and those who are mobility impaired).

Other significant strategies providing useful insights in the development of this social inclusion strategy include:

<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Strategy</b>
Norfolk Strategic Partnership	Economic Regeneration Strategy
Breckland Council	(draft) Local Development Framework
Breckland LSP	Economic Prosperity Strategy
Breckland LSP	Cultural Strategy
South Norfolk DC for Norfolk local authorities	A Strategy for Gypsies & Travellers in Norfolk 2005 - 8

In turn, the findings and priorities developed through this strategy concerning social exclusion should impact on future reviews of the strategies identified above.

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## What can the Local Strategic Partnership do?

This Social Inclusion Strategy is intended to:

- Make a positive contribution towards the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local population, by addressing factors which contribute to social exclusion
- Reduce inequalities of opportunity and poverty within the district; and
- Increase tolerance of difference and celebration of diversity

To enable us to develop a strategy that is owned, and signed up to, by all the partners, this paper has been produced to stimulate debate among partner agencies about the overall aim (or vision) for the strategy as well as its strategic objectives.

The resulting strategy will be structured as shown:

<b>Overall Aim or Vision for the strategy</b>	What are we ultimately striving to achieve in tackling social exclusion?
<b>Strategic objectives</b>	What are the main objectives we want to achieve
<b>Priorities for action</b>	Essential activities to achieve the above strategic objectives
<b>Implementation &amp; delivery</b>	The Action Plan on what will be achieved, by when & by whom

Much of the strategy will incorporate material from this paper. However, it is important that partners in the Breckland Local Strategic Partnership have a shared sense of ownership of the priorities identified in the Social Inclusion Strategy and feel able to sign up to it.

## What should be the overall vision and aim of the Breckland Social Inclusion Strategy?

The partnership may wish to build on the overall aim of the LSP's Community Plan ("To improve the quality of life for all people living and working in and visiting Breckland"). This suggests that improving the quality of life for all means a particular focus on the most disadvantaged – those who by reason of low income, lack of skills or abilities are unable to enjoy (or aspire to) a quality of life that most of us take for granted.

The following statement is put forward for consideration by partners as representing the overall purpose of the strategy: **"This strategy aims to create a Breckland where everyone can lead a healthy independent life, in decent homes, fulfilling employment and active recreation without being denied (due to cost or ignorance) access to the services which enable them to enjoy these benefits."**

## Defining the objectives of the Social Inclusion Strategy

Building on this overall aim, we need to consider what, specifically, the Local Strategic Partnership could add to the efforts already being undertaken by the many agencies already involved in tackling social exclusion.

From the research and the consultations undertaken in preparing this report, a number of gaps in the current arrangements have emerged. These gaps suggest a clear role for the partnership in providing:

- Leadership
- Coordination
- Facilitating information exchange
- Providing an arena in which the impact of decisions of individual partners on the work of other partners can be considered

It is suggested that the strategic objectives for the social inclusion strategy build on this:

**SO1 - Provide leadership in tackling social exclusion in Breckland**

Strong leadership is needed from elected members, board members and senior managers of the partner organisations if the objectives and proposals of this strategy are to be attained. Leaders must make the effort to understand the impact of social exclusion locally and ensure that the partnership is always focused on the needs of the most deprived and excluded in the community.

The active involvement (at senior level) from partner organisations needs to be seen as well as felt by all those involved in tackling social exclusion in the area.

**SO2 - Improve information & raise awareness of available support**

It has become evident during the research and consultations leading up to this report that more needs to be done to build up “big picture” of services and facilities for the various vulnerable groups identified as most at risk of exclusion. Much is being done but it is fragmented. Some services are localised (for example based on area partnerships) whilst others are limited to specific groups (e.g. community car schemes which tend to be for health related visits only – and are perceived to be only for older people).

This requires a central facility in which information about services and activities aimed at helping the excluded is collected and disseminated to all organisations working with the excluded. The information will require to be constantly updated so this is not a short-term project. This is an activity that can be led by any of the organisations within the LSP – but it must be seen to be an inter-agency initiative to which all members of the LSP (public, private & voluntary sector) contribute.

**SO3 - Improve joint working and inter-agency communication**

“Joined up thinking” has become a cliché in recent times – but is nevertheless vital if we are to tackle successfully the range of problems faced by the deprived. Most of the issues highlighted earlier in this report do not fit neatly into the domain of a single profession or organisation. Managers and professionals who are ‘specialists’ need to develop their roles so as to build links between the socially excluded and the partner organisations in the LSP. They must also contribute their expertise to provide a more joined up approach to tackling the problems of deprivation, isolation and vulnerability.

Many such initiatives are already in existence such as the Sure Start Thetford Children’s Centre and further such centres are in the pipeline. Given the emphasis placed here on tackling the symptoms of exclusion early, through support to families at risk, this must be a central plank of the strategy.

However, the boundaries and area structures of the countywide bodies seem to pay no heed to the geographical boundaries of other partner agencies and few coincide neatly with the Breckland area. There are similar issues in the voluntary sector with Breckland served by two “umbrella” voluntary services councils. Other vital services have a wider remit than just Breckland. This may create conflict where priorities do not coincide, representation on boards and committees can be diluted, and support for local initiatives may suffer.

Although this should not, with good will, prevent effective inter-agency working, it does increase the need for good communications and networking from those organisations whose boundaries do not coincide with that of Breckland.

This places a particular emphasis on the role of the LSP as the one forum for Breckland on which all agencies involved in tackling exclusion are represented. However, the LSP lacks its own organisation structure. If aims of this strategy are to be achieved, further thought needs to be given to the resource required to promote and maintain effective interagency working across the whole district on social inclusion. In particular, how will the LSP resource:

- the oversight of this strategy & associated action plan (including monitoring arrangements and periodic progress reports)
- the collating & disseminating of information relevant to tackling social exclusion (including the services & facilities database see SO2 above)
- Providing a local focus for local voluntary and community initiatives & promotions (including recruiting volunteers see SO5 below)
- Promoting occasional events to maintain the momentum of this strategy (particularly with the many bodies who have enthusiastically involved themselves in its preparation)

***SO4 - Involve those to whom this strategy is aimed***

The socially excluded (and those working with or caring for them) need to be actively involved in the policy process. This means providing accessible information, listening to people's experience, investing in strengthening local voices and developing new ways of engaging people. This may mean changing the ways councils, health trusts, and other partner organisations do business.

Ways to involve excluded groups include: cooption of representatives onto boards of governance, the use of focus groups, periodic workshops including the excluded, visits to the places where excluded groups feel comfortable (rather than institutional offices). The value of Youth Councils for involving the young and developing citizenship is particularly recommended.

***SO5 - Release and support the potential for local action***

It is neither feasible nor desirable that responsibility for tackling exclusions is seen as just the responsibility of statutory bodies or even the established voluntary/third sector. Indeed, it is often the case that the excluded (such as young people, migrant workers or travellers) are highly suspicious of formal agencies – fearing that engagement will be to their disadvantage. This is where trusted bodies (such as churches, local youth workers, and other intermediaries) have an important role to play.

To be successful, we need to address two issues:

1. To involve all organisations that work with and have the trust of excluded groups such as young people, migrant workers and travellers. This could be the responsibility of the same person or body taking on the role of creating and maintaining the database of local services.
2. To increase the level of volunteering. The declining numbers of volunteers limits much of the vital work undertaken by voluntary groups in proving advice, counselling and transport for the isolated and vulnerable. This is a major community development issue, which warrants further examination (and almost certainly investment).

**SO6 – Improve access to services**

The lack of access to transport (whether car or public transport) has been a recurring theme in this (and other) strategies & plans. However, transport is merely a means to an end – the end being ready access to those basic services which we need to enjoy a good quality of life. So the main challenge here is to explore creative ways of making good the undoubted loss of many key services (shops, pubs, post offices, banks, clinics, continuing education etc.). Most villages and hamlets still have public buildings – many of which are under-used. These offer opportunities for providing such services (even if on a temporary or periodic basis). The Commission for Rural Communities highlight examples of post offices provided in pubs, shops and village halls. Fenland Council have launched a programme of “Golden Fairs” for the over 60s, where a “road show” travels around remoter villages with services including police and fire services, Age Concern, the CAB, Alzheimer’s Society, St John Ambulance, energy advice, benefits information and sport. A key objective of this strategy, therefore, could be to deliver services **to** the isolated rather than require them to have to travel to such provision.

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### Implementation & delivery – the Action Plan

This Action Plan is not intended to supplant the planned activities set out in related strategies and plans of other partnerships or organisations concerned with tackling social exclusion.. Nor is it appropriate to get involved in detailed operational matters. Rather, this Action Plan sets out to put in place arrangements to ensure the Local Strategic Partnership can obtain the “big picture” of action to improve social inclusion in the Breckland area.

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO1 - Provide leadership in tackling social exclusion in Breckland	1. All LSP partner bodies to endorse the Social Inclusion Vision, aims and objectives	LSP Board		July 2007
	2. Ensure that all relevant statutory bodies not represented on the board of the LSP are involved in this initiative (perhaps by establishing a Social Inclusion Panel)	LSP	Organisations such as Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, the faith communities (especially the Anglican & Roman Catholic Dioceses) potentially play a key role in contributing to meeting the objectives of this strategy.	Report on governance arrangements on social inclusion to be submitted to LSP by Autumn 2007
	3. Each partner to present the Social Inclusion Strategy to their respective boards for consideration and endorsement	LSP Board members		By December 2007
	4. The LSP to sponsor regular high profile events to demonstrate publicly what, collectively, the partners are doing to tackle exclusion	Breckland Council	Other LSP partners	

*Towards a strategy for social inclusion in Breckland*

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO2 - Improve information & raise awareness of available support for the excluded	1. The LSP to commission a database of services and activities provided by all agencies (public, private, and voluntary sector) serving Breckland & disseminate to all agencies	LSP		Winter 2007-8
	2. The LSP to commission a review of the information needs of front line workers involved in meeting the needs of the excluded	LSP		Spring 2008

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<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO3 - Improve joint working and inter-agency communication	1. Ensure that regional, county and other district strategies & policies are updated to include outcomes from this analysis of social exclusion in Breckland	Breckland Council / LSP	Norfolk PCT, Norfolk CC, EERA, NCSP	Oct. 2007
	2. Each "funding" authority (county, district, parish councils, health authorities etc.) to review arrangements for funding agencies on which they rely to deliver services, to ensure medium term stability & planning and facilitate greater community & voluntary activity	Norfolk CC, Norfolk PCT, Breckland Council, Town & Parish Councils	EEDA	Winter 2007-8
	3. Organise joint training programme for statutory & voluntary sector, on specific issues & initiatives for tackling exclusion	LSP	NNVS/WNCVA	

*Towards a strategy for social inclusion in Breckland*

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
	4. Each LSP partner organisation to submit an annual report on their activities in furthering the aims, objectives and proposals of this Social Inclusion Strategy (see <b>Specific Actions</b> below)	Each LSP partner agency	LSP coordinator to organise and coordinate	Annually - July

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO4 - Involve those to whom this strategy is aimed	1. Develop a programme of events ("Golden Fairs", on-site meetings with travellers, migrant workers, young people) involving and engaging with the excluded	LSP	All LSP partners	
	2. Establish Youth Councils for each of the 5 Breckland towns	Norfolk CC Youth		By summer 2008
	3. Arrange an annual workshop for everyone involved in working with the excluded to review progress (building on the recent workshops held for this strategy).			Summer 2008 (and annually thereafter)

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<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO5 - Releasing potential for local action	1, NNVS & WNCVA to promote a joint initiative aimed to encourage volunteers into services targeted at the socially excluded (youth activities, teaching ESOL, community cars etc.)	NNVS & WNCVA	Town & Parish Councils, Diocesan and interdenominational bodies. (This initiative will need to be linked to the funding review see SO" – no.3)	Spring 2008
	2. LSP to create a central point of reference (post?) to coordinate the various pan-agency initiatives mentioned above (Information gathering, focus for voluntary sector initiatives, overview of strategy & its review)	LSP		Autumn 2007

<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Other bodies involved</b>	<b>When?</b>
SO6 - Improve access to services	1. LSP to commission an overview report (based on the Breckland Village Appraisals) to establish where villages are lacking basic local services	Breckland Council Community Development Team		Spring 2008
	2. LSP to commission a programme of travelling "fairs" to deliver services, advice & social activities to the remoter rural settlements.	Breckland Council Community Development Team	(To follow the overview report SO6 – no. 1)	Autumn 2008

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## Specific actions to be delivered by individual LSP members

The Social Inclusion Strategy is intended to provide the Local Strategic Partnership, collectively, a shared sense of direction in tackling the problems associated with social exclusion in the area. For this reason, the Action Plan has not set out in detail specific actions that are the responsibility of individual partner members. However, it is important not to lose sight of key initiatives (most of which already feature in existing programmes). These include:

<b>Target socially excluded group</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Lead agencies</b>
All socially excluded groups	Increased provision of affordable homes	Housing Corporation, Breckland Council, Peddars Way & other RSLs, housing developers.
Families at risk	Roll out programme of inter-agency children's centres and extended schools so that all families have access to such centres	Norfolk CC, Norfolk PCT
Disaffected young people	Provision of attractive opportunities for education, training and fulfilling employment	Learning & Skills Council, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Norfolk CC,
	Provide local facility for young people to socialise informally	Town & parish councils, Norfolk CC (Youth Service)
Long term unemployed	Increase skills levels to increase employment opportunities	Learning & Skills Council, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, Norfolk CC,
Isolated older people	Increase provision of services (inc. advice, benefits & clinics) in villages	Norfolk CC, Norfolk PCT, Breckland Council
People with long term health problems or disabilities	Increase provision of services (inc. advice, benefits & clinics) in villages	Norfolk CC, Norfolk PCT, Breckland Council, & employment agencies (LSC, Jobcentre Plus )
Migrant workers	Increase provision for teaching English as a second language and provide cultural induction courses on rights & responsibilities of citizens in the UK)	Learning & Skills Council, Norfolk CC, Area Partnerships
Travellers & Gypsies	Provide required permanent & short stay sites	Breckland Council, Norfolk CC

This list is by no means exhaustive but provides an illustration of the type of initiatives which are likely to have a significant impact in achieving the aims and objectives of this strategy.

## Assessing outcomes

Many LSP partner agencies will have developed their own indicators for reducing inequalities and measuring social inclusion. In addition, existing strategies and plans (such as the Norfolk LAA, q.v.) include a range of good indicators that can also be used. The following list is put forward for consideration to ensure that key outcomes of this strategy for the range of excluded groups can be measured:

<b>Target Group</b>	<b>Possible indicators</b>
Families at risk	% of families known to agencies participating in local initiatives (e.g. Children's Centres)
	Decline in numbers of reported domestic violence cases
	Decline in % of children of those convicted of imprisonable offences who also enter criminal justice system
	Increased % of children of parents with no qualifications achieving 5 GCSEs (A* – C)
	% of parents using children's centres acquiring additional skills as a result of interventions & support.
Disaffected young people	Decline in numbers not in education, employment or training (NEET)
	Continued decline in teenage pregnancy rate
	Rise in % of teenagers involved in organised youth activities (survey of local sports, cultural & recreational clubs)
	Youth Councils established in all 5 Breckland towns
Long term unemployed	Decline in numbers on benefits for over 6 months
Isolated older people	Increased % reporting they are able to access range of services
People with long term health problems or disabilities	Decline in % not in employment
	Increased % of registered disabled able to access services (e.g. through motorability etc. schemes)
Migrant workers	Decline in
	Decline in numbers falling into criminal justice system
Travellers & Gypsies	Number of permanent & temporary places on authorised sites in line with Breckland LDF
	Rise in % of traveller children achieving 5 or more GCSEs Grades A* - C

## End piece

I would like to conclude this paper with my deepest thanks to the over 100 people who through meetings, workshops and other contacts have contributed to its development. My apologies that, due to lack of space & time, I may not have done full justice to their many valued contributions.

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## Appendix 1 - Strategies, plans & research relating to Social Inclusion reviewed in preparation for the strategy

### *Listed by national, regional, county-wide or local significance*

#### National

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Affordable Rural Housing – Final Report	Affordable Rural Housing Commission	May 2006
2.	Area Profiles (data on Breckland & Norfolk)	Audit Commission	2006- 7
3.	Crossing Borders	Audit Commission	Jan 2007
4.	Partnership in Public Service – Action Plan for Third Sector involvement	Cabinet Office	Dec 2006
5.	Families At-Risk – Background on families with multiple disadvantage	Cabinet Office	March 2007
6.	Reaching Out –an Action Plan on Social Exclusion	Cabinet Office – Social Exclusion Task Force	Sept 2006
7.	Poverty – the facts	Child Poverty Action Group	2006
8.	Rural Advocates Report 2006	Commission for Rural Communities	Oct 2006
9.	State of the Countryside 2006	Commission for Rural Communities	2006
10.	Rural Disadvantage – Reviewing the Evidence	Commission for Rural Communities	Oct 2006
11.	Alternative ways to provide post office services	Commission for Rural Communities	Jan 2007
12.	Migrant workers in rural areas	Commission for Rural Communities	Jan 2007
13.	Should I Stay or Should I Go? Youth Issues	Commission for Rural Communities/IPPR	Aug 2006
14.	Social Exclusion of Older People	Communities & Local Government	June 2006
15.	Local Strategic Partnerships – Shaping their future	Communities & Local Government	Oct 2006
16.	Rural Services Review	Dept for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	July 2006
17.	Social Exclusion & Provision of Public Transport	Department of Transport	June 2000
18.	Rural Strategy	Dept for Environment Food & Rural Affairs	July 2004
19.	Child Poverty Strategy	Dept of Work & Pensions	Mar 2007
20.	UK National Action Plan on Social Inclusion 2003-5	Dept of Work & Pensions	2003
21.	Social Inclusion – an analysis	Development Trusts Association	Oct 2006
22.	Young people, pregnancy & social exclusion	EPPI/Institute of Education	March 2006
23.	Councillors Guide to Neighbourhood Renewal & Social Exclusion	Improvement & Development Agency	2005
24.	The Poverty Site	Joseph Rowntree Trust	Undated

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25.	Monitoring poverty & social exclusion in the UK 2006	Joseph Rowntree Trust	Dec 2006
26.	A national strategy for social inclusion	New Policy Institute	Undated
27.	The Poverty Premium – How poor households pay more	Save the Children/Family Welfare Association	Mar 2007
28.	Transport & Social Exclusion	Social Exclusion Unit	Feb 2003
29.	Improving Services, Improving Lives	Social Exclusion Unit	Oct 2005
30.	Overview of child well-being in rich countries	UNICEF	2007

**Regional**

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Migrant Workers in the East of England	East of England Development Agency	2005
2.	Social Exclusion in the East of England	East of England Observatory	2006
3.	Regional Health Strategy	East of England Regional Assembly – Public Health Group	May 2006
4.	Regional Social Strategy	East of England Regional Assembly	March 2004
5.	Healthy Futures: A regional health strategy for the East of England (Progress Report)	EERA/East of England Public Health Group	Jan 2007

**Norfolk County-wide**

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Norfolk Ambition	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership	2005
2.	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership Community Strategy & Action Plan	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership	
3.	Norfolk LAA	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership	Refresh 2007
4.	Norfolk Regeneration Strategy – Needs Analysis	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership/Bucknall Austin	Feb 2006
5.	Getting to grips with social exclusion	Kickstart	Feb 2005
6.	Deprivation in Rural Norfolk	OCSI/Norfolk Rural Community Council/NliC	Dec 2006
7.	Deprivation in Norfolk	Norfolk County Council	May 2005
8.	A Strategy for Gypsies & Travellers in Norfolk 2005 - 8	South Norfolk DC for Norfolk local authorities	

**Breckland-wide**

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Breckland Area Profile	Breckland Council	2005
2.	Breckland Community Plan	Breckland LSP	2005
3.	Breckland Economic Prosperity Strategy	Breckland LSP	2006
4.	Labour Market Profile - Breckland	National Statistics – Nomis	Mar 2007
5.	Area Profile – Breckland	Audit Commission	Mar 2007
6.	Breckland Homelessness Strategy Review 2006	Breckland Council	2006
7.	Development Choices (Local Development Framework strategy)	Breckland Council	March 2007
8.	Shaping the future of Breckland (LDF)	Breckland Council	Oct 2005

**Local areas within Breckland**

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	Keystone Profile v2	Keystone Development Trust	2005
2.	The Portuguese & Migrant Workers Project – report on situation in Wayland & Watton area	Wayland Partnership	
3.	Profile of migrant workers in Breckland	Keystone Development Trust	July 2005
4.	Sure Start Thetford Annual Report 05/06	SureStart	2006
5.	Thetford Full Service Extended School	Thetford Excellence Partnership	
6.	Action Plan 2004	Attleborough Area Partnership	2004

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## Appendix 2 – Organisations involved in consultations on social exclusion

### **Organisations responding to survey on social exclusion:**

Iceni Partnership  
 Keystone Development Trust  
 KickStart  
 NACRO  
 Norfolk & Waveney Mental Health Partnership  
 Norfolk Age Concern  
 Wayland Partnership  
 Wellspring Family Centre  
 West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action

### **Organisations represented at the social exclusion workshops:**

Anglia Revenues Partnership	KickStart, Norfolk	Norfolk Fire & Rescue (Risk - Watton & Swaffham)
Barnham Action Group	Living Word Christian Fellowship	Norfolk Primary Care Trust
Breckland Council - Economic Development Officer	NACRO	Norfolk Rural Support Network
Breckland Council - Elected Member - Thetford	Norfolk & Waveney Mental Health Partnership	Norwich and Norfolk Voluntary Services
Breckland Council - Executive Member - Community Engagement	Norfolk Constabulary	SureStart - Thetford
Breckland Council - Housing Advisory Officer	Norfolk County Council - Adult Social Services	Swaffham Access Group
Breckland Council - Planning Policy	Norfolk County Council - Gypsy & Traveller Liaison	Swaffham Town Council
Breckland Council - Policy	Norfolk County Council - Social Services	Thetford Excellence Partnership - Extended Schools Co-ordinator
Breckland LSP Coordinator	Norfolk County Council - Transport Programme Manager	Thetford Town Council
Christians across Thetford	Norfolk County Council - Traveller Education Service - Access & Attendance Officer,	Wayland Chamber of Trade/ Brecks Council of the Norfolk Chamber
Dereham Area Partnership	Norfolk County Council - Traveller Education Service - Advisory Teacher,	Wayland Community High School
Dereham Baptist Church	Norfolk County Council - Youth Services (Dereham)	Wayland Community Radio
Dereham Citizens Advice Bureau	Norfolk County Council - Youth Services (Thetford)	Weeting 21
Garden Science Trust	Norfolk Elders Advocacy Alliance (NEAA) at Age Concern Norfolk	Wellspring Family Church & Centre
Iceni Partnership	Norfolk Fire & Rescue (Arson Reduction - Thetford)	West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action
Keystone Development Trust	Norfolk Fire & Rescue (Risk - Dereham)	

**People interviewed during research into social exclusion in Breckland:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Karin Porter	Area Manager	Connexions Norfolk
Tracy Jessop	Transport Coordinator	Norfolk County Council
Peter Daniel	Traveller & Gypsy Liaison	Norfolk County Council
Joanne Rust (Phone)	Early years, childcare & extended schools service	Norfolk County Council
Consultation Forum – “Involving and engaging young people and parents/carers” (Consultations & Community Relations)		Norfolk County Council
Sheila Childerhouse	Chair	Norfolk PCT (+ EEDA, Breckland Council & Weeting 21)
Geoffrey Leigh	Manager	Norfolk Rural Community Council
Rev Michael Butler (Phone)	Chairman	Norfolk Rural Support Group
Linda Rogers	Development Manager	Norwich & Norfolk Voluntary Services
Rev. Mark Hackeson (Phone)	Bishop’s Secretary	RC Diocese of East Anglia
Mitch Kerry	Policy Officer	Breckland Council
Peter Dinsmore	Equalities Officer	Breckland Council
Laura Apps-Green & Tony Needham	Community Development	Breckland Council
Paul Cason	Housing Strategy	Breckland Council
David Spencer	Planning Policy	Breckland Council
Mark Finch	Chief Accountant	Breckland Council
Tracey Baxter	Anti-Social Behaviour Section	Breckland Crime & Disorder Partnership
Rob Walker	Development Officer	Breckland Local Strategic Partnership
Sheila Mathias	Director	Garden Science Trust (& formerly NNVS)
Martin Seymour & Kirsty Webber-Walton	Breckland Health Promotion	Norfolk PCT
Lindsey Abel	Manager	Attleborough Partnership
George Hayes & Linda Whitely	Chief Executive & New Communities project lead	Dereham Area Partnership
Dennis Tallon	Partnership Manager	Iceni Partnership, Swaffham
Neil Stott	Chief Executive	Keystone Development Trust, Thetford
Ariane Hoppler	Dereham Youth Team	Norfolk CC Youth Service
Fr Michael Johnson (Phone)	RC Parish Priest	Our Lady of Pity church, Swaffham
Nikki Findlay	Senior Community Worker	Thetford SureStart
Jan Godfrey	Chair of Trustees	Wayland Partnership, Watton
Keith Johnson	Swaffham manager	West Norfolk Vol & Community Action

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**BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW PANEL 2: 20 JUNE 2007**

**REPORT OF THE OPERATIONS MANAGER – PEOPLE FIRST**

(Author: Mark Broughton, Scrutiny Officer)

**REVIEW OF THE BRECKLAND COUNCIL WEBSITE**

Summary

This report details the evidence gathering sessions undertaken by the Panel as part of the Review and presents appropriate recommendations.

**1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Council, in conjunction with its website partners Amaze, undertook a major revamp of the Council's website at the end of 2005. Having identified a number of initial teething problems with the new system early in 2006, it was agreed by the OSC to schedule a through review of the website towards the end of 2006.

1.2 At its meeting on 23 November 2006, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission agreed that a Review of the Council Website be undertaken by Policy Development & Review Panel 2.

1.3 The Panel met on the 15 January 2007 to undertake a practical examination and appraisal of the website and again on 13 April 2007 to consider documentary evidence relating to the website's performance and effectiveness and how this compared with other local authorities.

**2. KEY DECISION**

2.1 This is not a key decision.

**3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

3.1 The matters raised in this report fall within the following Council priorities:

- A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities

**4. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL WEBSITE**

4.1 The Panel's Review is attached at Appendix 1.

**5. OPTIONS AVAILABLE**

5.1 To agree the recommendations

5.2 To not agree the recommendations and offer alternative recommendations.

## **6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 Overview & Scrutiny best practice recognises the primacy of well evidenced approaches in leading to effective and robust scrutiny, where lessons for improvement can be learned to ensure that improvement takes place to the benefit of the Council as an organisation.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 To agree the recommendations contained in the accompanying report.

Where appropriate this report has taken account of the need for compliance with:

The Council's Equal Opportunities Policies and Gender Equality Scheme

S.17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Human Rights Act 1998

S.40, Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT & REVIEW PANEL 2**  
**REVIEW OF THE BRECKLAND COUNCIL WEBSITE**

**MAY 2007**

**1 Introduction**

1.1 The Council undertook a major overhaul of its website, in conjunction with its partners Amaze, at the end of 2005.

1.2 Aware of shortcomings in terms of performance and accessibility, the Overview & Scrutiny Commission agreed in early 2006 to place a review of the website on its work programme, deferred for a period of time in order to enable tweaks to be made to iron out the initial teething problems.

1.3 In November 2006, the OSC agreed a scoping document for the review (shown at Appendix 1) and charged Policy Development & Review Panel 2 to undertake the Review and report back to the OSC with recommendations as appropriate in spring/summer 2007.

**2. Context**

2.1 The development of digital communications networks over the last decade has impacted significantly on both private and public organisations and how they interface with their customers and residents. The mass spread of internet availability in both private homes as well as publicly in libraries and internet cafes has firmly established websites as an increasingly important portal for information exchange.

2.2 Local authorities increasingly need to make use of these new forms of communication to engage with residents and stakeholders. The terms of reference for the review were to: thoroughly examine all aspects of the Breckland Council website, including the accuracy of information, ease of access and efficiency of navigation, use of jargon and attractiveness (content, layout and use of graphics). The anticipated outcome from the review was to ensure an optimised website in all respects.

**3. Practicalities**

3.1 The Panel had a session accessing the website to fully appraise its usability on 15 January 2007. The Council's Web Officer and ICT Manager were in attendance at this session.

3.2 It was apparent that the ability to successfully search for committee documents such as agenda and minutes was significantly constrained, with extremely long download times and difficulty in using the search engine. The Web Officer reported an error on the system however irrespective of this it was felt that the search facility for retrieval of committee documents was very poor. It was noted that a new application to manage committee documents

would be up and running shortly, which should result in much improved operation.

3.3 The layout of the homepage was not very clear or user friendly. It was felt that there was too much information on the homepage, the font was too small and the wording in the right hand columns sounded contrived and badly written.

3.4 It was considered that the website would benefit by having links from the homepage for all the service areas, e.g. Planning. A member gave an example of a website he had used that had adopted a “four click” approach whereby the website guaranteed anything a user wanted to find on the site in just four clicks of the mouse. This was recognised as good practice and would be beneficial if applied to the Council website.

3.5 The specific area of Planning was examined and it was felt that any information on this area was very hard to find. It was suggested that once a Development Control agenda was on the website the user should be able to click on the planning application number which would link directly, for example, to the application form, any letters from objectors and a map of the area. This information was held by the Planning Department and if it was made available on the website it would make the website much more comprehensive.

3.6 The “What’s New” on the intranet had nothing new listed and the “Latest News” was out of date. It was considered that as soon as something was out of date it should be removed, to ensure that the site remained fresh. Information on the “What’s New” and “Latest News” should link, where applicable, to website which would give residents more information on the subject.

3.7 The Panel thought that it would be beneficial to have a direct link to the Eastern Daily Press Events Page.

3.8 Concerns were raised at the slow download times of images and so suggested that they be limited in size in order to ensure a quick download time. An image was accessed of a Best Value Performance Indicator report which took five minutes to download and froze the system. It was felt that from the point of view of residents that this would lead to frustration with use of the system.

3.9 It was thought important that safeguards be put in place to ensure accuracy of information, having noted a few typographical errors on certain viewed pages.

#### **4. Documentary Evidence**

4.1 Two sources of documentary evidence rating the website were considered by the Panel at their meeting on 13 April 2007. Witnesses attending this meeting were the Council’s ICT Project Manager and Web Officer. The first

was Sitemorse, which is a mechanistic approach that can measure the technical veracity of the web site. The second was “Better Connected” by Socitm, which uses an approach of adopting a “mystery shopper” and follows a script of questions and topics to be explored.

4.2 The latest assessment by Sitemorse was conducted on 5 March 2007 and showed that Breckland Council achieved a score of 6.53 and a nationwide ranking of 116<sup>th</sup>. Within the context of Norfolk local authorities, Breckland sits mid placed, with Great Yarmouth Borough Council placed 49<sup>th</sup>, North Norfolk DC placed 40<sup>th</sup> and South Norfolk DC in 2<sup>nd</sup>. Breckland’s scoring assessment represented an improvement from autumn 2006 when a score of only 2.91 was achieved.

4.3 The scoring is based on five different criteria – function, accessibility, code quality, performance and E-GMS Metadata. Breckland scored 5/10 on the first two criteria, and 8/10, 9/10 and 10/10 on the others respectively.

4.4 The “Better Connected” report provides detailed descriptions of the assessment methods used, also identifying examples of good and poor practice. This publication doesn’t arrange local authorities into a ranking but instead classifies them as Standard, Transactional or Excellent. The ICT Project Manager explained that the natural aspiration is for authorities to improve by migrating from Standard to Transactional and on to Excellent status. Assessments are undertaken annually in November with the report being published in the following March.

4.5 Members agreed that the overall appearance of the website is very good. However it was noted that on occasions certain content is hard to locate, and in particular it was difficult to find information about planning applications. Members also recognised that the web editors consider which information the public actually require rather than the information which they actually make available.

4.6 Acknowledging that the Council was aiming for an interactive website, members were interested to know how this was progressing. In response the ICT Project Manager explained that this work would be completed in the next few months and indicated that the Council’s site should be transactional by late summer 2007. In making the website more transactional, it was hoped that the public would be empowered more to utilise the Council’s services at their own convenience rather than necessarily in office hours. The more queries handled through the website would be expected to reduce the number of calls into the office thereby leading to better use of back office resources.

4.7 Members expressed concern that there appeared to have been little progress on updating the content since the revamped website was launched in early 2006. A significant amount of work needed to be undertaken on the website to improve the content and accessibility of information. It was felt that a new section of “frequently asked questions” should be added to the homepage and that this list be updated in response to the information being requested through both the website and the customer contact centre.

4.8 The issue of updating by web editors was also highlighted. The ICT Project Manager informed the Panel that the web editor role was not built into the web editors' job descriptions and in some services, other work commitments had taken priority. Some designated editors had a very limited role whereas others had several dozen pages to keep up to date.

4.9 The Socitm report had shown that neighbouring South Norfolk Council had the best website in the entire country and the Panel enquired whether Breckland was in discussion with South Norfolk to develop best practice. The ICT Project Manager confirmed that a representative from the communications team had met with officers from South Norfolk bringing back best practice ideas which would be shared with web editors in due course.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1 The layout of the home page be reconsidered to ensure that it was not overburdened with information whilst at the same time it is user friendly and clear for users.

5.2 The website should adopt a "four click" approach to ensure that information can be found quickly and easily.

5.3 Information on the planning process should be bolstered on the website enabling the public to access pending planning applications and associated maps and forms etc.

5.4 A link is established with the Eastern Daily Press Events Page and action be taken to ensure that news items on the website are removed promptly once they are now longer current.

5.5 Images are limited in size to obviate long download times, especially for dial-up users.

5.6 A link to "Frequently Asked Questions" is installed on the home page and this be updated on a regular basis to ensure freshness.

5.7 The role of web editors needs to be defined and clarified, in relation to their general work commitments and job descriptions should be updated accordingly to take account of the role of web editors as this has such an impact on the site content being kept up to date.

5.8 The Council continue to work with external organisations in order to ensure best practice is followed to ensure that the design and operational usefulness of the website is maximised.

5.9 The Panel be charged with assessing the website improvement plan at regular intervals through 2007 and beyond as necessary.

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

### **Review of the Council Website**

**Terms of Reference:**

To thoroughly examine all aspects of the Breckland Council website, including the accuracy of information, ease of access (i.e. layout) and efficiency of navigation, use of jargon and attractiveness (content, layout and use of graphics).

**Methodology:**

A small working group comprising 3 or 4 members and the Scrutiny Officer holding one or more meetings. Or delegate to Panel as appropriate. A practical (hands on) assessment of the website is required so members should be engaged and comfortable with using internet/websites.

**Timetable:**

To bring a report to the OSC in spring/summer 2007 with recommendations as appropriate.

**Witnesses:**

Breckland Officers – ICT Manager, Web Officer, Internal Communications Officer, Marketing & Communications Manager.

**Documentation:**

Relevant technical data (including specifications) decided as appropriate to the review.

**Outcomes:**

An optimised website and intranet in all respects.

**Policy Development & Review Panel 2**

**Work Programme and Meeting Schedule**

Topic/Item	Lead Officer(s)	20 Jun 2007 Dereham	19 July 2007 tbc	4 Sep 2007 tbc
Social Inclusion Strategy (LSP)	Mitch Kerry	Draft		
Police/Community Support Funding	Rob Walker			
Review: S17 Crime and Disorder Act	Gill Tavender Grahame Green			
Work Plans of the Sports/Arts Development Officers	Keith Stevens			
Member Development and Training	Stephen McGrath Ian Vargeson			
Review of Council Website and Intranet	Mark Broughton			
Review of Car Parking	David Green			

Note

The Review of CCTV (ESS Contract) previously scheduled for this Panel on 20 June will now be scheduled for the Overview & Scrutiny Commission at their meeting on 5 July.