

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

**Held on Thursday, 1 April 2010 at 10.30 am in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr S. Askew	Mr R. Kemp
Mr G.P. Balaam	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J. Ball	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr K. Martin
Mr P.D. Claussen	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mrs K. Millbank
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr D.G. Mortimer
Mr M. Fanthorpe	Mr D.S. Myers
Lady Fisher	Mr J.W. Nunn
Mr P.S. Francis	Mrs P. Quadling
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mr J.D. Rogers (Chairman)
Mr R.F. Goreham	Mr S. J. F. Rogers
Councillor E. Gould	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mrs T. Hewett	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr P.J. Hewett	Mr I. Sherwood
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr N.C. Wilkin
Mr C.R. Jordan	

In Attendance

Dominic Chessum	- Marketing & Communications Officer
Jonathan Collison	- Web Officer
Sheila Cresswell	- Committee Officer
Phil Daines	- Development Services Manager (Capita Symonds for Breckland Council)
Grahame Green	- Community Safety Officer
Trevor Holden	- Chief Executive
Stephen McGrath	- Member Services Manager
Robert Walker	- Sustainable Communities Manager

33/10 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34/10 PRESENTATION ON THE PROPOSED NEW COUNCIL WEBSITE (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Mr S. Askew introduced this item, explaining that the proposed new Council website project had already been approved by Cabinet. However, as this was a key and forward-facing initiative, it was felt important to keep the Council fully updated.

The Marketing and Communications Officer (MCO) then gave a presentation covering the proposed new website and social media links. Key points included:

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- An increased general expectation that comprehensive information, as well as bill payment, document submission etc, could be accessed, and dealt with, via websites.
- A growing audience in terms of web access, with the government aiming to have at least 90% of the population on line by 2015.
- Potentially very large savings by comparison with face-to-face consultations (which in rural Councils cost about £13.00 on each occasion, against a rate of £0.27 for most web contacts).
- Once up and running, if 3,000 people could be diverted from face-to-face dealings to using the full potential of the website, then about £40,000 could be saved – and the project would have paid for itself.
- It was important, therefore, for the Council to have an up-to-date, reliable and user-friendly website.
- An acknowledgement that the Council's current website was deemed confusing – not least as it had evolved to meet various, often out-dated, government guidelines.

The Cabinet had therefore recommended that the website be redeveloped from scratch. The project team were in the last stages of appointing a web developer and were working to a tight timetable. They had also undertaken some research via surveys issued with Council Tax bills and in Breckland Voice, with over 370 responses having been received over 3 weeks.

The new website would involve a 'data cleanse' to ensure that all information was current and reflected the new governance structure. Some new software would also be purchased to increase accessibility – e.g. for those needing specialist versions of text.

The proposed basic design was shown to Members. The MCO drew attention to various features, including:

- A new box system to highlight key information on each page.
- A primary 'picture' box on the front landing page, where an image could be changed from a topical or general Breckland view, to a space which could be utilised for urgent information (e.g. in consultation with the Emergency Planning Team).
- The site would enable comprehensive searches using key internal links, but it would also have links to key social networking sites (see below).
- In terms of governance, every department would have two team members responsible for maintaining their team's page(s) and, alongside running maintenance, there would

be an annual update procedure.

- The Marketing & Communications team would be responsible for checking each page before it went 'live'.

The MCO then spoke about various forms of social media, which were also growing in importance as powerful tools. They were an alternative means of communication, enabling speedy two-way dialogue. The Council could therefore engage directly with members of the community, by answering queries/responding to requests, but also by gathering information from specialists, local communities etc., as appropriate.

Some examples were shown to illustrate the potential of this, and how current local and national MPs, as well as Councillors and many others, were already using social media.

Other points the MCO made included:

- There was potential for suitable consultation and cooperation with local businesses and community groups, etc, as well as the opportunity for individual Councillors to be trained so that they could personally engage with social media if they wanted to.
- This could be used as a tool for staff too, in terms of useful means of sharing key knowledge and helping with research.
- It was clear that from the numerous social network platforms available, that the Council would need to whittle these down to some key and relevant ones which would best suit its needs.
- Following on from this, given the nature, speed and scope of social media applications, it would be impractical for content to be monitored manually. The Council would therefore need to develop suitable governance and monitoring policies. To this end, it was proposed to employ a specialist social media monitoring tool. The one in mind was currently used by many industries and other government institutions.
- Funding (about £35,000) had already been set aside in the budget for redevelopment of the current website. It was proposed that this project be led by the Marketing & Communications team, using internal expertise (including IT support), as far as possible.
- The proposal was for the external consultant to be selected soon, followed by development of an overall governance structure and individual departmental pages, along with relevant data cleansing, research and testing etc. The aim was to launch the new website by the end of August 2010.
- As the community was to be the focus of the new website, customer satisfaction was acknowledged to be of key importance. It was therefore proposed that there should be a public 'test panel' to give feedback on pages as they were

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developed. This panel would then be contacted again immediately prior to the system going live.

Members spoke in favour of the proposals, which were largely felt to be positive and forward-thinking. However, a few points and concerns were raised, as follows.

- **Possible misuse of the website in the lead-up to future elections: would adequate safeguards be in place to monitor content with respect to political messages, etc.?**

The Chief Executive responded to this concern by saying that in terms of social networking, comments made by others were outside the Council's control. With regard to the website, he acknowledged that, as with many new systems, there would no doubt be a need to tweak and monitor as the site evolved.

However, he stressed that the basic principles of 'purdah' in the immediate approach to any election would remain in force at the Council.

- **The possibility of the Council raising money by allowing adverts on some of its pages. As a government website, it could be viewed as a premium site, thereby offering real potential for earning income.**

The MCO acknowledged that this was something which could be considered – along similar lines to the advertising allowed in Breckland Voice. The Web Officer added that there was no technical problem with incorporating advertisement banners on the Council's website.

- **Some parts of Breckland still had poor reception and/or some users did not have access to Broadband.**

The MCO confirmed that whilst reception was out of the Council's hands, the website could be adapted to enable users to create their own versions, which could be simplified to just enable text - thus reducing the download time/space required.

- **Another Member was concerned that many, especially from the older generation, might feel less confident about using the website and prefer face-to-face contact, or to speak directly over the telephone.**

It was agreed that the new site should be as user-friendly and clear as possible, drawing on relevant examples from other sites in terms of layout, tools available to help maximise use, etc. However, other forms of contact would, of course, remain available.

35/10 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr G. Bambridge, Councillor C. Bowes, Mr A. Byrne, Mrs M. Chapman-Allen, Mr S. Chapman-Allen, Mr R. Childerhouse, Mr R. Duffield, Mr J. Gretton,

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Mr J. Labouchere, Mr T. Lamb, Mrs L Monument, Mr B. Rose, Mr M. Spencer, Mrs P. Spencer, Mrs A. Steward, Mrs L. Turner and Mr D. Williams.

Mr M. Stokes and Ms. M. O'Mahony also sent their apologies.

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36/10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Lady K. Fisher Personal & Prejudicial interest in Minute No. 29/10 of the Development Control Committee meeting held on 15 February 2010. Also in any discussion of the Thetford Growth Point under Minute No. 24/10 of the Audit Committee meeting held on 12 March 2010 in relation to funding for the REV programme.

37/10 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Engagements List – Chairman
25th February, 2010 to 31st March, 2010

Date	Event	Host
2 nd March, 2010	The launch of The Benjamin Foundation's new visual identity	The Benjamin Foundation
2 nd March, 2010	The Army for Today presentation	The Army Presentation Team
4 th March, 2010	Launch of Cadet 150 and presentation of Lord Lieutenant's Certificates Reserve Forces and & Cadets Association	Lord Lieutenant of Norwich, Richard Jewson Esq. JP
4 th March, 2010	Civic Reception to official launch Big C's 30 th Anniversary Campaign: 30 for 30	The Lord Mayor of Norwich, Councillor Evelyn Collishaw
5 th March, 2010	Civic Reception	Mayor of Attleborough – Councillor Vera Dale
7 th March, 2010	Justice Service	High Sheriff of Norfolk, Robert Carter DL
19 th March, 2010	St. Winnold's Breakfast and Parade	Mayor of Downham Market, Councillor John Doyle

20 th March, 2010	Thetford Library's 40 th Birthday Celebrations	Norfolk County Council – Thetford Library
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The Chairman highlighted the Justice Service, and the Thetford Library celebrations as events he had particularly enjoyed.

38/10 CABINET MINUTES - 2 MARCH 2010 (AGENDA ITEM 6)

- (a) Wayland Community Radio: Allocation of Breckland Council's Area Based Grant (Minute No. 16/10)

Mr K. Gilbert (Ward representative) expressed his gratitude that this grant had been awarded, saying that he felt it to be a very worthwhile cause. The station could be heard much further afield than just Watton and its immediately surrounding areas, including Swaffham, East Harling and even Bury St. Edmunds. He added that the station was very keen to attract speakers to publicise and talk about various local issues.

Another Member concurred, saying that much of the equipment had been purchased very cheaply and because anyone could use the facilities, there was a positive, educational aspect to this project.

- (b) Constitution Update (Minute No. 17/10)

RESOLVED that the recommendation for the amendments to the Constitution contained in Appendix A of the Cabinet report be adopted, subject to paragraph E1 being amended to replace the terms "his" and "him" with "his/her", with the consequent changes to Standing Orders standing adjourned to the next ordinary meeting of Council (in accordance with Standing Order 54).

Sheila
Cresswell

- (c) Governance and Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 3 (Minute No. 21/10)

A Member drew attention to the paragraph commencing "Capita performance rated high...". He felt that several people were very concerned about Capita's performance and wondered therefore if this was a matter which would soon be brought before the Overview & Scrutiny Commission for review.

The Chief Executive explained that there were some issues with one part of the Performance Indicators, which Capita were addressing. The expectation was, therefore, that there would be significant improvements in this area.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the variations to the Capital programme as shown on page 7 of the Governance and Performance report, be approved;

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- (b) the new 2009/10 budget of £6,899,569 be agreed; and
- (c) the virements and supplementary virements as listed on page 8 of the Governance and Performance report be approved.
- (d) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 March 2010 be adopted.

39/10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 18 MARCH 2010
(AGENDA ITEM 7)

A Member made a general comment that the meeting had been particularly good, adding that he felt the Overview & Scrutiny Commission was dealing with issues in greater depth and undertaking the 'critical friend' role, as it was designed to.

- (a) Review of Contaminated Land Strategy (Minute No. 24/10)

A Member expressed his agreement with the Chairman's view, expressed in the Minutes, as to why contamination could not be dealt with as a standard item on all planning applications, and be part of any conditions imposed.

The Development Services Manager explained that unless there was previous knowledge of a contamination issue at a specific location, it was considered inappropriate for every applicant to be required to undertake expensive investigations in advance of any application. The Planning team held records of known or potential contaminated sites, and also consulted closely with the Environmental Health Agency on all applications. Conditions were therefore imposed wherever relevant and appropriate.

- (b) Work Programme (Minute No. 29/10)

With regard to the Watton Airfield, which had the potential to be an extremely large development, a Ward Member reiterated the importance of taking a broad perspective, including consultations with key representatives at various levels, such as the Town Council, Carbrooke Parish Council, the County Council, the developers themselves, as well as local estate agents, etc. He also wondered if it would be appropriate to consult representatives from central government with reference to the impact which conforming to government guidelines had on rural developments and communities.

- (c) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission held on 18 March 2010 be adopted.

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**40/10 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - 15 FEBRUARY 2010
(AGENDA ITEM 8)**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Development Control meeting held on 15 February 2010 be adopted.

**41/10 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - 8 MARCH 2010
(AGENDA ITEM 9)**

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Development Control meeting held on 8 March 2010 be adopted.

**42/10 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE - 3 MARCH 2010 (AGENDA
ITEM 10)**

(a) Breckland Council Pay Award (Minute No. 18/10)

A member mentioned the proposed Shared Services arrangement which was designed to create some savings, not least as there were likely to be reductions in the number of staff employed overall. In the event that this went ahead, he hoped that some of the money saved could be put towards a slightly enhanced pay deal to reflect the level of turmoil, as well as the hard work and commitment shown by staff at Breckland and South Norfolk. The Chairman pointed out that discussions with South Norfolk were at an early stage and it was therefore premature to talk about salaries at this point.

(b) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 3 March 2010 be adopted.

43/10 AUDIT COMMITTEE - 12 MARCH 2010 (AGENDA ITEM 11)

(a) REV Programme Budget Review (Minute No. 24/10)

A Member pointed out that the reference to the "REV programme" in the second paragraph on p. 62, should read "REV Active programme".

(b) Adoption

RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 12 March 2010 be adopted.

Julie Britton

44/10 STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 15 MARCH 2010 (AGENDA ITEM 12)

Mrs J. Jenkins, Chair of the Standards Committee, was in attendance to present the Minutes.

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RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 15 March 2010 be adopted.

45/10 YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES - 16 FEBRUARY 2010 (FOR INFORMATION) (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 16 February 2010 were noted.

46/10 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 14)

There were none.

The meeting closed at 11.15 am

CHAIRMAN