



AGENDA

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

- Committee - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**
- Date & Time - Thursday, 14th July, 2011 at 2.00 pm**
- Venue - The Gallery Bar, Watton Sports Centre, Dereham Road, Watton IP25 6EZ**

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.

Members of the OSC

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)
Mr A.J. Byrne
Mr K.S. Gilbert
Mr R.F. Goreham (Vice-Chairman)
Mrs D.K.R. Irving
Mr A.P. Joel

Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr K. Martin
Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr B. Rose
Mr R R Richmond

Substitute Members

Mrs S Armes
Mr S.G. Bambridge
Cllr C.R. Bowes

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

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

Date: Thursday, 7 July 2011

PROTOCOL

Working Style of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC) and Other Scrutiny Bodies

This document sets out the roles of Members and Officers, and the general principles to be adopted by the OSC and other scrutiny bodies such as Scrutiny Task and Finish Groups.

Member Leadership

Members of the OSC will take the lead in selecting topics for overview and scrutiny and will recognise that best practice identifies scrutiny as a non-executive Member-led activity. The OSC will expect Cabinet members to take prime responsibility for answering their questions about topics which chiefly relate to the Council's activities.

A Constructive Atmosphere

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

Independence

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

Openness and Transparency

The OSC's business will be open and transparent, except where there are sound reasons for protecting confidentiality. The minutes of the Commission'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 scrutiny 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

It is the responsibility of the OSC and the wider non-executive to determine its work programme and to allocate specific reviews either through a dedicated task and finish group or to undertake a review itself. Before each topic/review 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 OSC 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.

Member/Officer Roles

Executive members will regularly be called to account for the decisions they have made and to explain progress in key areas of their portfolio – and in the case of the Council Leader – the Council as a whole. Members will be expected to produce and present a brief written account of their executive activities and will then be questioned by members of the OSC for a period no longer than 20 minutes.

Co-optees

“Expert witnesses” may be co-opted onto scrutiny task and finish groups to provide technical assistance to the review. Co-optees possess no voting rights.

Substitutes

Substitute members will be so listed on the agenda papers of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission. It is a member responsibility to alert a substitute in the event that she/he cannot attend a meeting.

PART A - ITEMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

	<u>Page(s) herewith</u>
<p>1. <u>MINUTES</u> To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2011.</p>	1 - 10
<p>2. <u>APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES</u> To receive apologies for absence and to note substitute Members in attendance.</p>	
<p>3. <u>URGENT BUSINESS</u> To note whether the Chairman proposes to accept any item as urgent business pursuant to Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.</p>	
<p>4. <u>DECLARATION OF INTEREST</u> 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 person or prejudicial interest.</p>	
<p>5. <u>NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING</u> To note the names of any non-members or public speakers wishing to address the meeting.</p>	
<p>6. <u>EXECUTIVE MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE</u> Mr William Smith, Executive Member for Internal Services, has been invited to attend the meeting to update Members on key ongoing issues and policies within his portfolio and to answer any questions.</p>	
<p>7. <u>JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS</u> Verbal update by the Chief Executive on the progress of the new ways of working.</p>	
<p>8. <u>BRECKLAND BUSINESS PLAN</u> Verbal update from the Performance Team Leader.</p>	
<p>9. <u>TASK AND FINISH GROUPS</u> Report of the Assistant Director – Democratic Services.</p> <p>a) <u>Joint Scrutiny Working Group</u> To receive an update on the meeting held on 23 June 2011.</p>	11 - 15

	<u>Page(s)</u> <u>herewith</u>
10. <u>OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT</u> To consider the Draft Annual Report of the Commission.	16 - 25
11. <u>SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)</u> To note whether any decisions have been called-in for scrutiny.	
12. <u>COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)</u> To consider any references.	
13. <u>WORK PROGRAMME</u> (a) A copy of the Commission's work programme is attached. The Commission is asked to agree any additions, deletions or amendments to the programme as appropriate. (b) <u>Member Issues</u> : In accordance with the Commission's protocol for member leadership, which states that members of the Commission will take the lead in selecting topics for overview and scrutiny and in the questioning of witnesses, members are invited to put forward items for selection for future review.	26 - 28
14. <u>NEXT MEETING</u> To note the arrangements for the next meeting to be held on 1 September 2011.	

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held on Thursday, 24 March 2011 at 2.00 pm in the Anglia Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham NR19 1EE

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr A.J. Byrne	Mr K. Martin
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr R.F. Goreham (Vice-Chairman)	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mr B. Rose
Mr A.P. Joel	

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Carolyn Bryant – Modern Mindset
Mr J.W. Nunn	

In Attendance

John Chinnery	- Solicitor & Standards Consultant
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Stephen McGrath	- Member Services Manager
Teresa Smith	- Committee Officer
Roger Wilkin	- Shared Services Project Manager

Action By

29/11 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30/11 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies were received from Mr S Chapman-Allen.

31/11 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

There was none.

32/11 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

33/11 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Mr W Nunn and Mr G Bambridge were in attendance.

34/11 EXECUTIVE MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 6)

William Nunn, Leader of the Council, updated Members on a number of current issues.

Joint Management

People had been appointed to form the new Joint Senior Management Team from 1st April 2011. There were four vacant posts and a report

Action By

would be presented to General Purposes Committee on 30 March 2011 recommending the people for those posts.

A meeting had been held to facilitate Members from both authorities getting to know each other and it had proved very worthwhile and other such meetings would be arranged in the future.

Savings of £300,000 had been estimated for each authority, but the Head of Finance had re-worked the figures and was confident that it was likely that each authority would actually achieve savings of over a half a million pounds from the re-organisation.

Members were reminded that no detailed Business Plan for joint services had been agreed at the start of the process. This approach was working well as matters were being dealt with on a case by case basis.

Next year, in excess of one million pounds of savings would need to be made. A strategy to achieve that would be worked out after the elections.

Planning for the Future

If he was returned to office, the Leader intended to work with the new Corporate Management Team (CMT) immediately following the elections, to review the Business Plan for the next four years. There would be an opportunity to focus on what the Council wanted to provide for its community. The Strategic Framework would be developed to incorporate the Big Society agenda and wider public sector working.

Ward Matters

The Leader was aware of examples where Members had not been kept informed about matters occurring within their Ward. He took this issue very seriously and Officers had been advised of the importance of keeping Members informed of what went on in their Wards. He suggested that a Workshop be set up, with Senior Officers and some Cabinet and Scrutiny Members to ensure that the new CMT set the standards for the future.

New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The LEP focussed on economic growth and job creation in Norfolk and Suffolk. The Leader was a member of the Partnership and could therefore ensure that the authority was represented especially in matters of tourism, advanced manufacturing and energy production which were very relevant to Breckland.

LG Eastern Association

The association was going through a process of change to become more sector-led and able to respond to Members' and Local Authorities' needs. Local Authorities would be more pro-active in steering the association in future.

Members were then invited to ask questions.

Several Members commented on the need to be kept informed of issues within their Wards. There was a suggestion that information could be posted on the Intranet.

Action By

The Leader said that a Policy would need to go through both Councils to ensure that Officers kept Members informed. He wanted Officers to be more pro-active in keeping Members up to date.

The Vice-Chairman made the following comments:

- he was delighted that Mark Stokes had been appointed as the Joint Deputy Chief Executive and thought that he would work well with the Chief Executive;
- with regard to the half million pound savings from the liaison with South Holland he suggested that further shared services might be considered with more partners;
- he asked the Leader for his views on the effectiveness of the Commission; and
- he suggested that there might be an opportunity to inject life into full Council meetings, by introducing a dedicated 'question time', after the election.

The Leader responded by saying that they needed to make the partnership with South Holland work first before considering expanding, although he was aware that some Councils and London Boroughs were looking at partnering with three or four other authorities.

He thought that the Commission gave Cabinet a better feel for issues, by being more pro-active and he personally did not have a problem with introducing a question time to Council, which would provide a forum for open debate, and he would look at that proposal after May.

Several Members commented on the meeting with South Holland Members which they had found interesting and useful. One Member suggested that, like South Holland, Breckland should form a separate Company and own their own housing stock.

The Leader said that was an interesting point. Breckland had land and could build houses. It might be possible to use the expertise of the South Holland team going forward.

Discussion turned to the recession and a Member suggested that Partner working with other countries could attract investment.

The Leader said that with EERA, which had been recognised by Europe, there had been a process to bid for European funding. Now that EERA was winding down the LEPs would find it much more difficult to get European money.

The Vice-Chairman wanted the local population to benefit from any new jobs created but said they could not do so without skills. He was concerned that youngsters would be priced out of training because of the lack of grants and said there must be a balance to ensure that the local skills base was improved.

The Chairman was also concerned about the lack of energy available in the area and how that problem could be addressed.

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The Leader said that the Government was aware that development was being held up by the cost of infrastructure. The East of England Energy Group was leading on that issue.

The Chairman concluded by saying that the Localism Bill would bring Ward issues into sharp focus and Members would have additional responsibilities increasing the importance of being kept up to date by Officers.

He thanked the Leader for attending.

35/11 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Member Services Manager introduced Carolyn Bryant from Modern Mindset, the Company which administered the Modern.gov system which had been introduced to the Council four years earlier for agenda management. Part of the Modern.gov system allowed the decision process to be tracked electronically and the Member Services Team had been working to introduce this system.

Ms Bryant explained that when items were put on the Forward Plan they could be tracked through the website. Actions for Officers could be added to the issues and the progress of those actions could be followed on the Intranet.

The system also had the potential to allow Officers to create and submit reports electronically and would automatically send reminders for overdue reports or actions.

Ms Bryant advised that Members would need training to understand how to interact with the internal system.

The Member Services Manager explained that one of the advantages of the system would be to highlight outstanding actions and/or decisions. There were a lot of decisions made by Committees, some as recommendations to other Committees and to Council. The Implementation system gave Members the opportunity to track those decisions.

The Chairman said that the Performance Clinic used a traffic light system to highlight issues that were not 'on-track' or were outstanding. He was concerned that 30% of decisions were not acted upon within 12 months and he wanted to see the outcome and the reasons why items were outstanding.

Ms Bryant advised that on the Forward Plan items could be coloured green when closed or red when still in progress. Outstanding actions could be listed and could be grouped by Committee, Department or Officer. A spreadsheet could also be produced, colour-coded if required.

A Member suggested that it would be useful to have the Action Points listed and that they should then be agreed with the minutes at the following meeting.

Another Member thought it was very interesting and asked if there would be training. The Member Services Manager confirmed that an

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induction programme was already in production for new Members and IT had been identified as a priority. The intention was to have Implementation Tracking rolled out from 1st June and it was already being trialled.

Mr Bambridge asked if Members would be able to sign up for alerts on particular issues as it was difficult to keep track of issues.

Ms Bryant confirmed that it was possible to sign up for updates on specific Committees, Wards, Key Words or Forward Plan issues.

The Member Services Manager explained that actions were already being added to minutes and that the system was accessible by all Officers through the Intranet. Actions could be updated in less than 30 seconds. Automated e-mails were sent to Officers advising them that they had been assigned an action and then reminding them if the action was overdue. The system also provided a clear audit trail.

The Chairman agreed that training was vitally important as was Member buy-in to using computers. New hardware should soon be available to Members which he hoped would improve access.

He thanked Ms Bryant for attending. The report was noted.

36/11 MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Solicitor & Standards Consultant was in attendance, at the request of the Monitoring Officer, in response to comments made at the Commission meeting on 18 December 2010. He read an extract from the Minutes of that meeting:

The Vice-Chairman wanted the Member/Officer protocol to be reviewed. He was concerned at the lack of response from certain departments to enquiries from Members and suggested that this needed to be addressed before the new Councillors were elected in May. The Chairman agreed and said that the importance of notifying Councillors of things happening in their Ward, should also be included.

The existing Protocol had been included on the agenda and the Solicitor asked Members for their comments.

The Vice-Chairman commented that it was excellent that the Monitoring Officer took notice of the Commission. He then made the following suggestions:

- the Protocol should be reviewed periodically;
- at page 31, item 7.3 he disagreed that questions 'ought' to be provided beforehand and thought that it should say that 'the general line that questioning will take' be added;
- at page 34, item 12, involvement of Ward Councillors had been mentioned by the Leader and the Vice-Chairman emphasised the importance of this and said there should be a specific protocol.
- he also felt there should be a protocol to advise Members which officer to contact for specific issues; should it always be the Head of Department, or might that lead to overload?

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The Chairman added to the final point by suggesting that there should be a contact section with Officers, Departments and Portfolios listed. This was particularly pertinent with the new structure starting on 1 April 2011.

The Solicitor took those comments on-board, and agreed with the importance of including Portfolio information and keeping contact lists up to date. With regard to which Officer to contact he said it was a fine line. The Head of Department needed to know what Members were concerned with and if it was a matter of principle then they should definitely be contacted direct.

A Member suggested that any list should indicate which section the Officer worked in and the sections should be divided up by Portfolio. She said that at County each section had a dedicated Officer to advise Members. She also felt that it was important for new Members to have another Member as a mentor.

The Solicitor thought that it was a good idea to have a dedicated officer in each department to deal with Member enquiries.

The Chairman agreed that a contact list would be useful but he was concerned that paper lists might quickly become out of date. He thought that the e-mail account list should be used as it was the easiest to keep up-to-date. The Global address list would need to be re-drafted in the context of Shared Services. He assumed South Holland had their own and said that the two needed to dovetail.

The Solicitor agreed and said there were a whole range of documents that would need to be aligned.

He noted that the existing Protocol had been produced in 2006 and should have been reviewed annually by the Standards Committee – something he had not known about previously. In future it would also be necessary to look at South Holland's protocol as well.

Finally the Vice-Chairman mentioned the importance of ensuring that if an Officer put an 'Out of Office' message on their e-mail system that it did not direct the sender to another officer who was also 'out of office'.

The Chairman agreed and thanked the Solicitor for his attendance.

37/11 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS (AGENDA ITEM 9)

(a) Joint Audit & Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman updated Members on the Joint Audit & Scrutiny Panel (JASP) meeting on 2 March 2011. As a consequence of the work done six options had been identified and at the end of the meeting three of those options had been supported, they were:

1. a new generation laptop – wi-fi enabled
2. a netbook (which was relatively small) – with additional large screen, keyboard, mouse and CD drive
3. an allowance – provide own equipment to stringent requirements ensuring that it was up to the job

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The three options had different cost and support implications.

Since the meeting the report had been updated for the Business Improvement Sub-Committee on 30 March 2011. The original report had some unanswered questions. It had been suggested that iPads might be the way forward and two other authorities were trialling those. Feedback was being sought from those authorities and would be reported to the BISC if received in time. However, the ICT team did not think that iPads would meet Members' or Government security requirements.

Another amendment to the report was the addition of the need for CD drives and add-ons for the Netbooks. Scanners would be required. Faxes might be phased out but Members found the photocopying facility useful.

The report to the BISC had the six options and supporting information. The Chairman did not think that the majority of Members would opt for the allowance. Discussions were taking place with South Holland to see if they were getting new equipment. This might enable economies of scale providing best value for money.

The biggest problem faced by Members was internet availability and that had not been part of the JASP's tasking.

The Vice-Chairman was pleased that this matter had been looked at and had taken a rational approach. He asked if the Commission's recommendations would be passed to the BISC and it was confirmed that they would. He raised concern about the last paragraph of item 3.9 of the report regarding the direct Member Support Officer who he said was invaluable and very supportive. He urged that the Member Support Officer should be kept.

The Chairman agreed. He said that he would be attending the BISC and would reinforce that message.

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE** that Options 1 OR 4 and Option 6 were supported.

(b) Parking Task & Finish Group

The Chairman of the Task & Finish Group presented the final report.

Although there had been very little correspondence before the public meeting it had been very well attended. It had become apparent that members of the public thought that the Council were planning to introduce parking charges and that was why they had attended.

None of the proposed changes were under the direct responsibility of Breckland Council and it would help if it could be agreed with Norfolk County Council who was responsible for all the parking spaces.

The Chairman noted that there were on-going discussions about parking enforcement across Norfolk. A working group had been set up to determine how it would function.

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A Member noted that the Parking Review had started with Attleborough a year ago and it would be nice to see the recommendations put in place.

The Chairman updated Members. The recommendations had gone to Cabinet for both Attleborough and Watton. They had been accepted, subject to costs being worked out and the report going back to Cabinet. Either that action had not taken place, or the costs had been worked out but the report had not gone back to Cabinet. It was incumbent on the Commission to ensure that the report did go back to Cabinet.

A Member pointed out that in the Terms of Reference of the Panel it was asked to consider short and long term parking, but this was not in the report. The Chairman of the Task & Finish Group explained that that was not an issue in Swaffham.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND TO CABINET that:

- (1) the Council reviews the disabled parking and provides easier access to spaces (perhaps in the Market Street car park);
- (2) Norfolk County Council be requested, as the Highways Authority, to undertake an assessment to consider using the land opposite the old sixth-form centre as a dedicated taxi rank;
- (3) Norfolk County Council be requested to produce new, larger signs to entice people to park at Theatre Street;
- (4) the Council, Norfolk County Council and Norfolk Constabulary liaise over de-criminalisation of on-street parking in Swaffham in a multi-agency approach, seeking a transfer of responsibility and action enabled through joined-up thinking and use of resources;
- (5) the Town Council's proposals to employ a traffic warden to undertake off-street parking enforcement within the five market towns, be supported; and
- (6) the Council retains its policy of providing free parking in all Breckland-owned car parks in Swaffham.

38/11 SHARED SERVICES (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Shared Services Project Manager was present and advised Members that this was likely to be his last update as the project was reaching its conclusion and the new structure would 'go live' on 1 April 2011.

The aim of the project had been to make efficiencies whilst preserving effective management and allowing improvements. Cashable efficiencies meant that the number of people had to be reduced. 37 posts had been reduced to 18 plus the Chief Executive. All Senior Managers had undergone a selection process. One had been successful in gaining an external job, seven had opted for voluntary redundancy and ten had been unsuccessful in the selection process

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and had been issued with compulsory redundancy notices.

Of the 18 posts on offer, 14 had been successfully filled and there were currently four vacancies.

The ten people on notice of compulsory redundancy were being supported in finding alternative employment. Vacancies in the two authorities were advertised internally first.

The Environmental Services Team Leader post had been successfully filled by a South Holland Manager on notice of compulsory redundancy. Recruitment for the other posts was in progress and might lead to a reduction in the number of redundancies.

The services of a specialist advisor had been bought to provide outplacement support to those on notice and favourable feedback had been received. Both Councils had given as much support as possible to those on notice.

The Business Development Manager post had been advertised externally as well as internally to ensure that a suitable, experienced person was recruited. Other posts would be discussed at General Purposes Committee on 30 March 2011.

An informal joint Council meeting had been held to introduce Members to the Joint Managers and the relevant Portfolio Holders of both Councils would get to know the Joint Managers as part of the induction process. The new Joint Management Team was aware that they were supporting two separate Councils, each with their own distinct priorities.

The latest figures indicated projected savings in excess of £700,000 across the two Councils and savings should be in excess of that, year on year.

The Vice-Chairman was concerned at the number of redundancies which was more than he had hoped. He was pleased that the organisation was giving assistance to find alternative employment. He asked what levels the ten compulsory redundant Manager had held.

The Shared Services Project Manager said that there was a broad spectrum of grades across the two Councils and there were big variations in the Service Manager's grades. In financial terms the pay scales ranged from the upper £60,000s to the mid £30,000s.

He agreed that the number of redundancies was higher than anticipated but explained that when the proposal was reported to Council in December, Members had been keen that Senior Managers should have set competencies. That process had been carried out by an independent organisation and their testing had identified more Managers than expected not having the required competencies.

The Chairman agreed that no more updates would be required and that they would probably receive Shared Services presentations in future. He thanked the Shared Services Project Manager for the work he had done and the way he had conducted it, which had been in an incredibly sensitive and very competent way.

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39/11 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

None.

40/11 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 12)

None.

41/11 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 13)

It was noted that the Work Programme was almost at an end and would start afresh after the Elections.

The meeting for the Utilities Review (scheduled for 10 March 2011) had been postponed as it had not been arranged to immediately follow Council as expected. It should be a high priority to hold the review after the Election.

The Parking Reviews for Dereham and Thetford would also need to be finished, although Thetford was different because of what was happening there and it might be appropriate to leave it another 18 months.

Mr Kybird (a Thetford Member) explained that parking would form part of the Town Centre action plan. Some short term issues might need to be addressed and an 'outside' set of eyes might be appropriate for those.

Crime and Disorder and the Business Plan would also need to be looked at early on.

A Member suggested that there were lessons to be learnt from the RAF Watton development and another Member mentioned Stone Curlews.

The Chairman agreed and said that they needed an update as the guidance on Stone Curlews was changing.

Drainage and Flooding should also remain on the future work programme.

Finally the Chairman advised Members that the Member Services Manager was leaving to join another authority. He thanked him for all the work that he had done, said he was sorry to see him go and wished him good luck for the future.

The Vice-Chairman endorsed those comments and said that the Mr McGrath was an incredibly conscientious Officer and it was not unusual to receive a reply to an e-mail as late as 7pm. Breckland's loss was Ipswich's gain.

42/11 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 14)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 2 June 2011 were noted.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

CHAIRMAN

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of Assistant Director of Democratic Services

To: Overview & Scrutiny Commission – 14th July 2011

Author: Teresa Smith, Committee Officer (Scrutiny & Projects)

Subject: Parking Task & Finish Group - Dereham

Purpose: The purpose of this report is for the Commission to confirm the membership of the Parking Task & Finish Group, due to recent changes following the elections. Secondly to agree the Terms of Reference and Project Plan for the review of Parking in Dereham.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the Commission agree the membership of the Parking Task and Finish Group.

It is recommended that the Commission agree the terms of reference and the Project Plan.

It is also recommended that the Group re-visit the recommendations given Attleborough, Watton and Swaffham, and to track they have been carried out.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Parking Task & Finish Group was established under the direction of and reporting to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission in 2009.

The Group was charged with exploring issues relating to the Council's own car parks in its market towns and subsequently a review has taken place for Attleborough, Watton and Swaffham.

The Group is now focussing on the market town of Dereham.

1.2 Issues

The investigation will be carried out in the same way as Attleborough, Watton and Swaffham have been.

The purpose is to establish if any improvements can be made in respect of the car parking provision to Breckland residents, businesses and visitors. This will be carried out by:

- Liaising with stakeholders to discover any issues around parking within the town. The stakeholders are: ward representatives / Town & Parish Clerks of surrounding areas / Police / Highways / Doctors Surgeries. They will be contacted by letter, and then invited to attend a meeting to give their views.
- A Public meeting will take place to discuss the parking issues. The date and venue is to be confirmed. Publicity of this event will be critical, and the local media, including the Dereham Times and our website will be used.

- It is recommended the Group carry out a site visit at the outset.

The Group should re-visit the recommendations for the market towns of Attleborough, Watton and Swaffham and ensure these are followed through or responses have been given.

2. IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications into this report.

2.1 Risk

2.2 Financial

2.3 Legal

2.4 Equality and Diversity

2.5 Other [insert statement as appropriate or delete]

3. Alignment to Council Priorities

3.1 Building safer and stronger communities

3.2 Your Council, Your services

4. Wards/Communities Affected

4.1 Dereham and surrounding parishes

Background papers:- NONE.

Lead Contact Officer

Name/Post: Teresa Smith, Committee Officer (Scrutiny & Projects)

Telephone Number: 01362 656295

Email: teresa.smith@breckland.gov.uk

Key Decision

None

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

Appendix 2 – Project Plan

Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Parking Task & Finish Group

Terms of Reference

To understand and review the purpose of the car parking service provided by Breckland Council whilst taking full account of associated issues such as on-street parking and parking provided by retailers, in Dereham.

The review should consider the following elements:

- Charging/non-charging (parking orders)
- Short and Long term parking
- Residents parking permits
- Enforcement resourcing
- Level and range of default fines
- Budgeting for the service – revenue and costs
- Access to and within car parks
- Physical condition of car parks – surfacing, marking of bays
- Signage to and within car parks
- Allocation of disabled bays
- Accommodation of coach and lorry parking
- Park and Ride

Aim

Through evidenced based assessment and evaluation, baseline information, site visits, stakeholder input and other relevant methods, to produce a report with recommendations as appropriate for each town to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

Overview & Scrutiny Commission**Parking – Task and Finish Group****PROJECT PLAN**

Project Title	Review of Car Parking in Breckland Towns (Dereham)
Project Manager	Teresa Smith / Rory Ringer
Project Background	At its meeting on 26 March 2009 the Overview & Scrutiny Commission agreed that a task and finish group be formed to undertake a review of on and off street car parking in all five Breckland Towns.
Project Objectives	To establish if any improvements can be made in respect of the car parking provision to Breckland residents, businesses and visitors.
Project Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To establish the policy position in relation to off-street and on-street parking and identify any improvements in how the service is delivered, taking account of on-street parking and retailer provided parking. 2. The Task and Finish Group will undertake the review and report its findings and recommendation through the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and the Cabinet
Scope	Review of Car Parking in Breckland towns. Attleborough, Watton and Swaffham having already been completed.
Key Milestones	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Group meeting to agree Terms of Reference and consider baseline information – 2. Site Visits – 3. Promotion of the review via local media – 4. Consultation (Public Meeting) – 5. Meeting with Stakeholders 6. Draft Report to Parking Group – 7. Final Report produced –
Background Research	Council Policy, Best Value Review of Car parking (2001), Post BV Review Action Plan, agency agreements covering enforcement, information showing location of council car parks, short term parking orders, and maintenance budgets/spend revenue and costs.
Resources	TS will co-ordinate the review. Additional resource will be required from Member Services to provide a clerking service for meetings of the group. A lead officer from Asset management team to provide technical/specialist knowledge and contribute by attending meetings as required.

Possible witnesses and consultees for the review	Rep from local chamber(s) of trade Norfolk Constabulary Norfolk County Council Asset Manager (Breckland Council) Corporate Project Manager (Breckland Council) Rep from local taxi and bus operators Reps from Town and relevant parish councils Reps from major retailers Other Norfolk local authorities
Possible site visits	To inspect Dereham Car Parks
Possible Consultation Methods to be adopted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To possibly undertake sponsored research through a survey to be undertaken in Dereham. 2. Hold public meeting in Dereham with invites sent to local town and parish councils and other relevant stakeholders.

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/2011



Introduction by Councillor Philip Cowen, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission

The past year has brought with it a number of challenges for scrutiny many of which have been centred on the need to reduce the budget deficit at a national level that has had an impact upon the funds granted to local authorities from central government. We have also responded to calls from local councils to address issues pertinent to them for which Breckland is a key player, from members and officers to assist in the development of policy and we have monitored the business plan of the council insofar as it has an impact upon service delivery.

We have striven over the recent past to encourage the public to bring to our attention matters that may have a bearing upon the health, safety and general wellbeing of the district and thus it was with enthusiasm that the OSC was asked by Attleborough Town Council to review all aspects of car parking in the town.

Under the chairmanship of Councillor Shirley Mathews a Task and Finish Group was established to look at the issues that had been raised and the result was a successful outcome for all, with the cabinet at Breckland accepting the recommendations made.

The model adopted has been rolled out across the other market towns in Breckland and similar recommendations made to cabinet on behalf of Watton and Swaffham; Dereham and Thetford have yet to be reviewed.

The process is to be reviewed again in light of the recent decision that has seen on street parking enforcement change from the police to a combined LA agency.

At times when all are tightening their belts it is challenging to contemplate any capital expenditure. However if spend is inevitable, it is particularly important to ensure that the need has been defined and agreed, the costs are being managed properly and that the tax payer is receiving best value as a consequence.

Set against this background the council instructed a Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel to review the provision of IT services for Members because of the changing demands being placed upon outdated equipment by the advance of the internet and other expanding remit of IT and related aspects of day to day council life.

Thus it was that we reviewed evidence, looked at the options and made a series of recommendations to ensure that the council tax payer receives best value for money and that the individual ward members may access speedily and effectively data to assist them in the discharge of their duties.

The future holds more of the same:

- Cabinet scrutiny
- Performance scrutiny and contract monitoring
- External scrutiny
- Partnership scrutiny
- Policy scrutiny

and in addition, we shall scrutinise the joint working arrangements put in place following the joining up of the Corporate Management Team with that of South Holland Council, to ensure that the tax payers of Breckland receive the high quality of service to which they have become accustomed.

Similarly the impending enactment of the Localism bill will have a bearing upon our work stream. We anticipate that our scrutiny of outside bodies and partner agencies with whom we do business will expand to review the ways and means by which non elected groups may receive public funding and be called upon to assist councils in the running of local communities.

As ever I am indebted to the support that I have received from the Vice Chairman, Councillor Robin Goreham, throughout the year. Furthermore the work and achievements of the Commission would have been much more daunting without the support of Member Services at Breckland. In particular that of Mark Broughton who has since left Breckland for a new challenge in the public sector but the baton has been passed, successfully, to a new team led by Rory Ringer and Teresa Smith. Their expertise will be invaluable to the members of the OSC in the months to come.



Councillor Philip Cowen
Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Membership of the 2010/11 Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Mr J P Cowen (Chairman)
Mr R F Goreham (Vice Chairman)
Mr A J Byrne
Mr K S Gilbert
Mrs D K R Irving
Mr A P Joel
Mr R G Kybird
Mr K Martin
Mrs S M Matthews
Mr J D Rogers
Mr B Rose

Substitutes

Ms S Armes
Mr G Bambridge
Ms C Bowes

Breckland Representatives on Joint Scrutiny bodies

Norfolk Health Overview & Scrutiny
Committee

Mrs Lady Fisher
Mr R Kybird (Substitute)

Norfolk County Strategic Partnership
Joint Scrutiny Panel

Mr J P Cowen



Introduction to Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny was established through the 2000 Local Government Act as part of the new governance and executive arrangements for local authorities in England and Wales. Elected members are either 'executive', who take decisions either individually as Portfolio holders or collectively as the cabinet, or 'non executive' who have a role to scrutinise council decisions, develop and review council policy and hold the decision-makers to account.

Scrutiny committees are also able to investigate matters of local community importance and in the last decade have expanded their role further on the back of a strengthened legislative basis to cover aspects such as scrutiny of the Local Strategic Partnership, Call for Action etc. It is anticipated that with the impending implementation of the Localism Bill that the role of and extent of work undertaken by Local Authority Scrutiny bodies will increase.

Overview & Scrutiny at Breckland

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission (OSC) is the overarching scrutiny body at Breckland Council which manages the Scrutiny work programme and co-ordinates dedicated task and finish groups that are established from time to time by the Commission.

Formal OSC meetings are held every 6 weeks (there were 9 formal meetings during 2010) at the main council offices in Dereham and, where relevant and appropriate, in the other market towns within the district.

The Commission currently has 12 members, is politically balanced and is made up of 10 Conservative Members, 1 Labour Member and 1 Independent Member. Breckland Council has also separated out the role of Finance and Risk Management from the OSC and formed an Audit Committee that reports directly to Full Council although its membership does include a member of the OSC who is able to give verbal reports from time to time to OSC.

The current Commission identified 5 broad areas of investigation that forms the core of the workload for either the OSC as a whole or specific Task and Finish Groups established for the purpose:

1. Executive Scrutiny
2. Partnership Scrutiny
3. Performance/Contract Monitoring
4. External Agency Scrutiny
5. Policy Scrutiny

Following on from this, there are a number of standard recurring items which are:

- The Executive Report – Executive members are invited to attend OSC on a rota basis and give a brief account of their portfolio activities as well as a heads up on the relevant issues on the horizon.
- Updates from Breckland District Council's representatives on the Norfolk County Health Scrutiny committee.
- Partnership Scrutiny – Which in previous years has included Wayland and Icen area partnerships.
- Contract Monitoring – Covering the outsourced delivery of council services, such as Planning & Building Control (Capita Symonds)
- Updates from Task & Finish Groups.

There are also regular standing items on every OSC agenda:

1. Call Ins
2. Referrals under the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) mechanism.

With a multi-million pound budget, 200 staff and covering a population in excess of 130,000 and covering some 500 square miles of predominantly rural area, the Council makes many decisions that affect residents throughout the year. Scrutiny provides a prime opportunity to hold decision-makers to account and the past year has witnessed those decision-makers – Breckland's Executive Members – regularly appearing at the OSC to answer questions about their decisions and activities and generally to be held to account.

Scrutiny has also added value to the Council through regular monitoring of the performance of contracts through external providers covering Planning & Building Control (Capita Symonds), IT (Steria) and Environmental & Security Services (Serco) to ensure continuing performance levels and value for money.

The Commission and Group Memberships, Scrutiny structures and work undertaken at Breckland in 2010/11 are outlined in the following sections of this report.

Task & Finish Groups

Firstly a definition as to what a “task and finish” group does. This is a dedicated piece of work, a task or a project, within a defined terms of reference to be undertaken over an agreed timescale.

The object is to fully consider the issue under discussion and to produce a report identifying recommendations for improvement. The usual reporting route is from the T&F Group to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and then on to either Cabinet or Council for endorsement.

This section of the report details the work of these groups and the outcomes arising during 2010/11.

Provision of IT equipment

A Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel (JASP) was set up to review the provision of IT equipment and facilities for elected members ahead of the District Council elections in May 2011, and to be completed by 31 December 2010.

After research with the members, and investigating products available on the market, it was decided that all Members would have their kit upgraded with new laptops and printers.

Contaminated Land

A Contaminated Land Task and Finish Group was established in March 2010. The purpose was to review the original strategy in light of an internal audit report and the need to identify the council’s new priorities for investigating contaminated land and the procedures to be used in prioritising work activities taking account of the resources available. A revised strategy has now been produced.

Parking

The OSC agreed to a widespread and comprehensive review of parking in the spring of 2009. Initially the task and finish group were planning to examine solely the issue of off street car parking in Breckland owned car parks in each of the five market towns in the district. However it was agreed to extend the remit to cover on-street parking also. Subsequently the focus shifted to Attleborough on receipt of a letter from the Town Council indicating local parking problems and traffic flows in the town.

During 2010/11, a review was undertaken of both Watton, and subsequently Swaffham.

The Group will continue their review and focus on Dereham and Thetford during 2011/12.

The various final reports and minutes of the meeting of the task and finish groups can be accessed through the website or by request from the Scrutiny Officer.

Joint Scrutiny

Breckland and South Holland District Council have joined together to form a 'Shared Management' structure.

The Commission were continually updated with the progress of this project.

The Profile of Scrutiny

The opportunity for members of the public – Breckland's residents – to get involved and suggest suitable issues for review by Scrutiny has always been championed at Breckland. In order to try to raise the profile of scrutiny in the community, attempts have been made through the local media to advertise Scrutiny and to seek press coverage of scrutiny work.

The Parking Task and Finish Group made a conscious decision to seek full community involvement in its reviews on each of the market towns. Parking is a sensitive subject at the best of times, particularly when the shadow of potential charging is brought to the fore when free parking has always been the norm. An example of this is with the review on the town of Swaffham, an initial press release (which was on the front page of the Swaffham & Watton Times) was issued

asking for comment and reaction from local residents on parking issues so as to help inform councillors.

The subsequent public meeting was well attended by both stakeholders and agencies such as the Police, Town Council, and also by the public. The press were also in attendance to report the meeting through their columns and help advertise what scrutiny was and the purpose of the review.

The Chair was also interviewed on Wayland Radio explaining the purpose of the review.

During 2011/12, the Commission will consider using 'Voice' which is a publication issued to every household in the Breckland. This is a fantastic opportunity to place an article about OSC and to advertise to the public that Scrutiny is a role for them. It will give an opportunity for the public to raise any concerns and to scrutinise these issues on their behalf. This gives an opportunity to engage the community into the services Breckland provide and to make a difference.

Norfolk Scrutiny Network

The Norfolk Scrutiny Network (NSN) comprises lead scrutiny officers from all first and second tier Norfolk councils. The Network meets quarterly to exchange information about their respective scrutiny activities and to share their respective work programmes in order to highlight current projects and reviews being undertaken. This free flow of information also presents opportunities for future joint working, to help prevent duplication and potentially facilitate joint working.

Through the Looking Glass

Local authority scrutiny continues to develop apace, with new provisions and opportunities being added to the function. Most recently these have included scrutiny of crime and disorder, the councillor call for action mechanism, possibilities for further joint working and opportunities for co-option onto scrutiny bodies.

Scrutiny is always looking to test itself and consider how it can improve and be more effective. Members attended a refresher training course held in June 2011 and as a result formulated the work programme for 2011/12. The work programme is intended to be a working document which whilst facilitating a sound basis for planning of future work is also flexible enough to accommodate new and topical issues.

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission will continue to welcome Executive Members on a rota basis to report on developments and issues within their respective portfolios in the coming year and thus provide an essential accountability mechanism. Similarly the Commission has also taken an interest – and will continue to do so in the coming year – of various partnerships with which Breckland works and interacts.

Likewise there will be a switch of emphasis to consider decision implementation through tracking systems which will identify decisions taken but not yet implemented and will allow members to question senior officers and portfolio holders accordingly.

Another continued feature will be a quarterly assessment of internal performance which again will allow identification and subsequent scrutiny of perceived areas of service delivery that are deemed to be falling short.

With the continued focus on Shared Management, Scrutiny will be undertaking a proactive role, and looking at how Breckland can work with South Holland in the Scrutiny function going forward.



Contacts

If you are interested in finding out more about Overview and Scrutiny at Breckland, have a query, or would like to suggest a community topic, please contact the Scrutiny Officer who will be pleased to assist further.

Phone: 01362 656295

E-mail: scrutiny@breckland.gov.uk

Web: www.breckland.gov.uk/scrutiny

Breckland Council

Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Work Programme 2011 – 2012

This is only an outline programme and will be amended as issues arise or priorities change

Meeting date / Venue	Topic	Member / Officer	Exec Member / Portfolio	Objective	Comment / Outcome
14 July 2011	Executive Report	William Smith	Internal Services	To provide an Executive update on portfolio.	
Gallery Bar, Watton Sports Centre	Joint Working arrangements	CMT		Invite CMT to give progress report on new ways of working.	Terry Huggins or Mark Stokes to attend.
	Breckland Business Plan	Performance Mgt Team	Adrian Stasiak Deputy Idr & Performance & Business Development	As a result of the new shared service arrangements with South Holland DC, a new business plan is being produced, looking at the current plan with suggestions for the future.	Outcome is to schedule quarterly meetings when understand perf. clinic timetable. This will be a verbal update at the meeting as a planning mtg being held on 11 July.
	Parking Review	Task & Finish Grp / Teresa Smith	Mark Kiddle-Morris Asset & Strategic Dev.	The town of Dereham is scheduled for the next review. Re-visit the on-street parking within all the towns (NCC responsible from Nov 2011?). Civil parking arrangements due to recent legislative changes.	
1 September 2011	Executive Report	tbc			
	Review of Local Development Framework	Keith Eccles / David Spencer ?	Mark Kiddle-Morris Asset & Strategic Dev.	An Annual review of LDF with specific attention to the implications of the Localism Bill and any advice and evidence on the Stone Curlew habitat debate as furthered by evidence from DEFRA, English Nature et al.	

	Disaster Recovery Planning	Emergency Planning Officer (Teresa Cannon)	Lynda Turner Localism, Big Society, Community & Street Scene	Understanding the issues re: emergency generation and back up supplies generally.	
	Bunker	Asset mgt / Emergency Planning	Mark Kiddle-Morris Asset & Strategic Dev.	In-depth discussion of what the Council's requirements are for business continuity.	
6 October 2011	Executive Report	tbc			
	Drainage & Flooding	Drainage Board to Discuss new ways of working.		Should be at the centre of planning decisions	
	Health Review			To ensure that residents of Breckland are getting the best out of the NHS, e.g. looking at the new proposed arrangements for GPs managing their own budgets. Again in the light of the new health Bill, the provision of and GPs role in the commissioning of patient services.	
17 November 2011	Executive Report	tbc			
	Broadband access in Breckland			Invite a representative from Norfolk County Council (Ann Steward as exec member with responsibility for economic growth) to provide an update on the situation.	
	Stone Curlews (<i>should be a part of the LDF discussion and maybe spin out a T&FG as a consequence</i>)	Keith Eccles / David Spencer ?	Paul Claussen Planning & Environmental Serv.	A European Habitat Directive which focuses on developments within 1500m of nests is raising both planning issues and frustrations within the local community. A review could consider the plan of work and planning guidance.	

6 January 2012	Executive Report	tbc	Paul Claussen Planning & Environmental Serv.	Forward planning team, CIL implications, section 278 contributions etc.	A Substantial new residential development is taking place on the old RAF Watton site. The Site is in the village of Carbrooke (i.e. not within the town of Watton) and the development has raised issues within the local community. To consider the impacts should this happen in the future.	
9 February 2012	Executive Report	tbc				
15 March 2012	Executive Report	tbc		Economic Development?	Looking at the issues around the effect of the recession on the Breckland area, e.g. knock-on effects on employment etc.	
26 April 2012	Executive Report	tbc			Scope to scrutinise the current removal plan.	
	Norfolk Fire & Rescue				Invite a representative for an update on issues affecting the Breckland area.	

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Utilities Review – there is to be a single meeting arranged to look at the work the main utility companies are undertaking to enable the necessary infrastructure to be in place when large scale development takes place.

Note:

Standing items on OSC Agenda are:

- Executive Report (as listed in work programme)
- Joint Working Arrangements
- Call-in
- Councillor Call for Action
- Verbal updates from Outside bodies Scrutiny Panels, e.g Joint Scrutiny Panel (Phil Cowen) and Health Scrutiny Panel (Robert Kybird).
- Decision Tracking