

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 6 June 2013 at 2.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr T. J. Jermy (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr A.J. Byrne	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Councillor C Bowes (Substitute Member)
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr S.G. Bambridge (Substitute Member)

Also Present

Mrs B Canham	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr M. S. Robinson	

In Attendance

Glen Chapman	- Environmental Services Team Leader
Samantha Dancer	- Joint Performance Team Manager
Stephen James	- PFI Monitoring & Strategic Sports Officer
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Maureen Orr	- Scrutiny Support Manager (NCC)
Teresa Smith	- Committee Officer (Scrutiny & Projects)
Jamie Smith	- Environmental Planning Officer (Capita Symonds for Breckland Council)
David Spencer	- Joint Deputy Planning Manager

24/13 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

It was noted that Councillor A Joel had been present at the previous meeting and Councillor D Irving had not.

Subject to those amendments the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25/13 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies were received from Councillor C Carter and Councillor B Rose. Councillor C Bowes and Councillor G Bambridge were present as Substitutes.

26/13 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Councillors Canham, Robinson and Turner were in attendance.

Action By

27/13 EXECUTIVE MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Councillor Turner, Executive Member for Localism, Community and Environmental Services presented an update on her Portfolio. She was accompanied by her Executive Support Member, Councillor Robinson and Officers Steve James and Glen Chapman.

Environmental Services

The SERCO contract had been extended to 2021 and negotiations continued to maximise best value for the residents of Breckland. The procurement process for a new Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) was in the final stages and the new contract would allow for more materials to be recycled. The total saving for the financial year 2012/13 was £355,233 which included £229,613 in recycling income.

The current programme for grass cutting allowed for regular two to three weekly cutting with larger sites such as Castle Park in Thetford being cut every seven to ten days. There was also an annual grass flail on selected sites such as Neatherd Moor, Dereham to manage biodiversity. There had been recent publicity about conservation groups asking Councils to leave grass longer to allow for greater biodiversity, but that also led to an accumulation of litter and foul matter making grass cutting harder to manage.

In February work with other agencies including Flagship, had started on the Abbey Estate in Thetford to address the fly tipping problem there. Since then the tonnage of fly tipped materials collected by SERCO was down by one third. Offenders were being written to by Flagship reminding them of their tenancy terms and conditions.

Enforcement action was taken where necessary, taking into account the cost, time and likelihood of success of a prosecution. The latest success was a fine of almost £5,000 for the dumping of waste on Forestry Commission land by a resident of Swaffham. The Forestry Commission had written with their grateful thanks for the Councils support in prosecuting the offender.

Since the introduction of the Chargeable Bin Policy in 2012 income of £8494 for 2012/13 and £3038 for the current financial year, had been collected from developers and individual residents.

The Service review was almost complete and savings of £355,233 had been made in 2012/13 with projected savings of £394,000 forecast for 2013/14.

The Vice-Chairman said that there were lots of examples of grass being cut with rubbish in it which was very frustrating because the rubbish then got strewn about. He also noted that an elderly resident in his ward was paying a neighbour to take his bin to the

Action By

collection point, having been told by the Council that he would be charged for that service.

The Executive Member advised the Vice-Chairman to ring the Council on behalf of his resident because incorrect information had been given and no charge should be made.

Councillor Bambridge asked for grass cutting to be timed to suit village festivals and was advised that successful negotiations with SERCO meant that would be done.

Councillor Joel asked where the MRF would be located and was told that the preferred bidder was local and the contract was due to start on 1 April 2014.

The Chairman was pleased to hear about the successful fines and asked where that money went. It was confirmed that it came to the Council.

Councillor Canham noted that many Town and Parish Councils also undertook grass cutting and money could be saved by joining with them. The Executive Member agreed to look into that for the future.

Communities

A copy of the new Community Services structure was tabled. The Service restructure was complete and the team had been reduced to a Shared Manager and 7.5 Officers, three of whom were externally funded. The review had taken into account the comments received from the Could We Should We consultation. The service now acted more in an enabling role to the community with a greater expectation on groups to deliver their own activities. However work would still continue in partnership with other agencies to deliver a full range of holiday, sporting and cultural opportunities to engage all ages and abilities.

The Executive Member was pleased to announce that Graham Parfitt would be moving from the Legal Team following their restructure and joining the Community Safety and Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) Team. His expertise would ensure the team had immediate access to advice and action.

The Operational Partnership Team (OPT) of Breckland and Police Officers working together was recognised as an example of good practice county wide. ASB had reduced across the district by 26% to March 2012 and then by another 14% to date.

A full report on CCTV had been given to the previous meeting. Work continued to identify inherited issues. The new contract with KLWN would save £64,000 per year.

The Community Engagement team had run a range of activities in the last year. The forthcoming summer programme included a

Action By

cycle festival at Swaffham, running coaching by Olympic athlete Paul Evans leading up to the Annual Dereham 5k fun and the promotion of the Village Games at Watton. The Park Runs in Thetford were attracting large numbers of people (500 the previous Saturday). The Council also currently supported 21 Community Car Schemes.

The Commission had also received a Grants update at the last meeting so the Executive Member just advised that applications were being processed on the new on-line system. It was proposed to hold a Pride in Breckland event in the spring of 2015.

The Big Switch and Save had seen 2,600 Breckland residents register and of those 71% had been offered a saving averaging £116.

Work was currently underway to gather information on the Council's CO² emissions which would then be submitted to the Department of Energy & Climate Change. The Asset Management Team were responsible for ensuring the building operated efficiently and previous work had been undertaken to amend behaviours by encouraging staff to switch off lights and computer monitors, etc.

The PFI Benchmarking process had commenced in April and the initial figure had been rejected by Breckland. The Council was actively challenging aspects of the figure which it believed to be unreasonable or inaccurate. If agreement had not been reached by 1 August 2013 the next phase would be to appoint a benchmark consultant. Parkwood had also put forward a proposal to convert to a Non-Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO).

The Youth Council had been suspended. However, the Breckland Older People's Forum continued to have regular events. A new safeguarding Policy for the young and vulnerable was being written and the Executive Member was recommending to the Leader of the Council that a short presentation was given to Members at a full Council meeting to make them all aware of it.

The Emergency Planning Officer had been unable to attend due to a County exercise. She had submitted a briefing which the Executive Member read. A Business Continuity Project Group (BCPG) had been formed to provide a co-ordinated approach. The Group consisted of Officers from Breckland and South Holland. All Service areas had completed a Business Impact Analysis to identify the key activities of the authority, the impact of failing to perform those activities and the resources required to support the delivery of those activities.

The information was being collated and a report about critical activities would be presented to CMT by the end of June. Following that, strategies would be developed to mitigate risk and to ensure that critical activities could continue in the event of a disruption.

Action By

Town and Parish Councils were being actively encouraged to develop Community Emergency Plans to enhance resilience at local level. Those Plans should take local risks into consideration, such as flooding, fires, loss of utilities, etc. Members were asked to add their encouragement as experience showed that those that had spent time planning and preparing for a disruption were better able to cope and recovered more quickly. A resilience workshop had been held in March but only two District Councillors had attended.

The Communities service review had realised £80,000 savings and had projected savings for 2013/14 of £138.960.

In conclusion the Executive Member advised that her Portfolio had realised total savings of £435,233 for 2012/13 and projected savings of £532,960 for 2013/14 – almost a million pounds in just over two years. She wished Stephanie Barnard and Teresa Cannon well for the future. Both were leaving the Council in July and she thanked them and all the Officers in her Portfolio for their loyalty, support and breadth of knowledge.

Councillor Kybird commented that he had found it very difficult to progress the Business Continuity Task & Finish and thought that the report to CMT should have come to the Group first.

Councillor Bambridge was surprised that the BCPG was joint with South Holland. He also asked how much a benchmarking consultant would cost.

The PFI Monitoring Officer advised that money had been put aside in the PFI reserve to cover that cost and a consultant would only be employed if no satisfactory figure could be reached. It was important that the partnership agreed a figure ahead of consideration of the NPDO proposal. The Benchmark Consultant would be a cost to the Council, but their job as an independent consultant would be to ensure that any additional costs incurred by the Council were reasonable.

The Chairman thought that the Council should be taking advice from the users of the leisure centres before choosing a benchmarking figure.

The PFI Monitoring Officer explained that benchmarking took place every five years and income generated against the forecast was assessed. This showed areas that the public did not use in the leisure centres. Any loss was investigated to determine if it was due to the economy or to the management of the centres. There was an opportunity in the contract to adjust levels of service and type of service if agreed by both parties.

The Chairman felt that the public should be consulted as part of the review of base cost and level of service.

Action By

Councillor Rogers was concerned that the Council might end up covering the costs if Parkwood did not put in sufficient effort and the PFI Monitoring Officer advised that part of the current process was to challenge Parkwood. Rigorous monitoring took place and Parkwood could have deductions applied if they were not offering a good enough service.

Councillor Gilbert said he had not been in favour of PFI and he was concerned that the contract was not working for the benefit of residents.

Councillor Bambridge congratulated the Executive Member and the Council for continuing to offer community funding. He said that even small grants could do a tremendous amount of good in communities.

The Vice-Chairman returned to the PFI issue and asked the Executive Member to look at the running of the Thetford Leisure Centre and to note the number of complaints made about its poor organisation.

He was also sad about the demise of the Youth Council which had been a flagship achievement for Breckland. He asked what future plans there were to take it forward.

With regard to the Leisure Centre the PFI Monitoring Officer agreed that Parkwood needed to be more club focussed. They did a lot of good, but there were opportunities for them to maximise their performance.

The Executive Member responded to the Youth Council question by explaining that the first members had been older and dedicated, but had still needed a lot of Council support in terms of Officer time and money providing them with transport to meetings, etc. The current Youth Councillors were a lot younger and although they had been enthusiastic, they were primarily interested in fundraising, which was not the sole purpose of the Youth Council. Under the new structure the Council no longer had a dedicated Youth Officer, nor did it have the same resources. She would be meeting with the Deputy Chief Executive to discuss future opportunities to support young people.

The Vice-Chairman was concerned that activities tended to be focussed on younger children leaving a gap for those aged 14 to 18, however Councillor Robinson said that the Breckland Youth Advisory Group which was funded by NCC provided a range of projects and summer activities targeted at areas with spikes in anti-social behaviour and aimed at supporting the 14 to 18 age groups.

The Vice-Chairman asked how many people had taken up the Switch and Save offer and the Executive Member said she would

Action By

find out and provide him with the figures. He was also concerned that Thetford CCTV cameras were still not working. No up-to-date information was available but the Executive Member assured him that most of the cameras in his ward were working. The new system was a reduction of the old, saving on resources and money. Previously there had been a 24/7 monitored service. Now the system was based on hot spots and only monitored for 12 hours a day, although 24 hour recording still took place and the police could and did review the tapes. The remit for KLWN was to work with the Town Councils to see where cameras were most needed. It was an on-going process.

Councillor Joel asked if the community grant application forms were on the website and was advised that they were ready and just awaiting a trial run before going live.

The Chairman returned to the PFI issue and suggested that an Action Plan was required if one had not already been produced. He also suggested that the Council should contact the clubs and members of the leisure centres and formally talk to the Town and Parish Councils to gather feedback.

Councillor Bambridge then asked about the Dereham Memorial Hall which the Council had supported with considerable refurbishment contributions. He had raised concerns with the Town Council about problems and complaints from his villagers but had not received adequate responses.

The Executive Member was glad that he had raised the matter. The Council had given almost a quarter of a million pounds towards the refurbishment of the Hall and its facilities and it should be in regular use. She asked the Commission to look into the matter as a formal agenda item.

Councillor Richmond thanked the Executive Member and her team for the work they were doing with the police. He had attended CAG meetings and said the diary system worked well.

The Chairman thanked the Executive Member and her team for their update.

28/13 HEALTH & SCRUTINY (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Maureen Orr, Scrutiny Support Manager (Health) Norfolk County Council gave Members a presentation on the Health Scrutiny Process.

The Norfolk Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC) was made up of eight Norfolk County Councillors and seven District Councillors (one from each Local Authority). It met every six weeks and examined healthcare issues raised by Councillors, Healthwatch and others as well as responding to consultations.

Action By

NHS funded organisations were required to:

- Provide information
- Attend scrutiny meetings and answer questions
- Consult on plans for substantial changes to services
- Respond to scrutiny reports and recommendations within 28 days

The Committee had powers to:

- Make reports and recommendations to health service bodies
- Refer substantial changes to the Secretary of State for review

The Health Scrutiny relationships with Providers, NHS Commissioners, Local Authority Commissioners, other scrutiny partners and the public were explained. All NHS funded providers were required to consult NHOSC on any substantial changes they proposed to make. The criteria for referring matters to the Committee were wide ranging and very open.

The current work programme of the Committee included:

Proactive

- Access to NHS dentistry
- Same day admissions to hospital
- Ambulance turnaround times at the N&N
- Wheelchair provision
- Use of the Liverpool Care Pathway for the dying

Reactive

- Radical redesign of mental health services
- Dickleburgh branch surgery

The Health and Wellbeing Board was an official Committee of Norfolk County Council with high level membership. It was a mixed Member / Officer Board with voluntary and community sector representatives. The first meeting of the Board would be held on 1 July 2013.

The Board's operating framework was explained. The Board would produce strategy based on evidence and identify priorities for focus on issues where a difference could be made. A one year strategy for 2013/14 had already been produced and had three strategies:

- Unplanned care/emergency admissions
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)
- Creating good developmental/learning outcomes for Children and Young People

The Board would also hold a watching brief over issues already

Action By

being dealt with by other agencies and receive detailed reports.

Councillor Gilbert asked whether the Committee's remit included looking at individual surgeries and was advised that since 1 April 2013 GP surgeries were within the Committee's remit. However, guidance was awaited and it was expected that the Committee would look at overarching issues such as the appointments systems.

Councillor Kybird asked Members to bear in mind that the NHS was a very large employer with a £1.6 billion budget. The Committee had to focus on high level issues and complaints about surgeries should be made to Health Watch Norfolk in the first instance.

Councillor Bambridge asked if there was a good spread of rural and urban Councillors on the Committee and whether recent changes to the political makeup of the County was reflected on the Committee. He was advised that the majority were Councillors from rural areas and the Committee had four Conservative, two UKIP, one Labour and one Liberal Democrat member. The overall Committee was not politically balanced due to the District membership. The Committee did not operate in a political way and Members worked very well together.

Councillor Matthews who was also the Chairman of Breckland Older People's Forum noted that it could be frustrating trying to get information about people who paid for their own care due to confidentiality issues.

Councillor Irving asked whether the Committee would look at A&E waiting times, the 111 service and charity hospices, as well as NHS hospices.

Mrs Orr said that A&E was a big part of the Committee's remit and was already being looked at. The 111 service was a good subject which would be worth looking at. Hospices in receipt of NHS funding were also within the Committee's remit.

Councillor Richmond said he had enjoyed listening to the presentation. He attended a patient participation group and the Practice Manager and Doctor usually attended but had been too busy since the changes. He was also concerned that people might have to travel longer distances to access care.

Mrs Orr acknowledged that there was a lot of work to be done and the services were under a lot of pressure to make savings and to commission care with less money. Commissioning groups would be contacted and told that they needed to consult NHOSC if they were planning to make major changes.

Councillor Richmond asked whether mental health support would still be available and was advised that the Committee was looking

Action By

at mental health services. A local service would still be available but the change meant that access to those services would be handled through a central point.

Councillor Byrne wondered how decisions were ever made when so many different agencies had to be consulted. He was also concerned that the change to out of hours services was causing problems at A&E departments.

Mrs Orr said there was a lot of debate about what was causing the problems at A&E. She confirmed that despite the consultations decisions were being made and the services took on board what Health Scrutiny said and welcomed responses from people that knew the service.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Orr for her presentation.

29/13 REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2013 (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Joint Deputy Planning Manager and the Environmental Planning Officer were in attendance to present the report.

Consultation had been carried out on the Statement of Community Involvement and 11 respondents had made comments but no substantial issues had been made. All Statutory Bodies were in support of the document. A small number of public consultees had sought clarification. Only four comments had been received from a public perspective.

The amendments to the document were marked in red. They were pointed out to Members individually and the changes were explained. They were all small changes and minor in nature.

Councillor Gilbert was surprised that Anglian Water were not one of the Statutory Consultees and it was explained that they were sent most documents and were consulted on site specific matters.

Councillor Kybird pointed out a minor error in the table on page 21 which should be headed 'Duty to Co-operate Bodies' (not Cooperate as printed).

RESOLVED to **RECOMMEND TO CABINET** that Option 1 and the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)(2013) including changes made as a result of the public consultation as a Council document is endorsed. The SCI (2013) will replace the current SCI (2006) which will then be defunct.

30/13 GOVERNANCE & PERFORMANCE MONITORING (QUARTER 4 2012/13) (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Joint Performance Team Leader was in attendance to present

Action By

the report.

She advised Members that it had taken two years to get a clear format for quarterly reporting. The report was the first attempt and could be improved in the future.

The foreword explained the vision and provided a key to interpret the report. Two symbols were missing; a purple ? and an orange ! – both of which indicated missing data.

Each priority started with a summary which outlined how the projects were progressing. One concern was that the Corporate Plan covered a four year period and it was not possible to deliver all aims every year.

Rather than go through the report page by page Members were invited to ask questions.

Councillor Kybird noted that an unsatisfactory audit opinion was being discussed at the Audit Committee. He asked if such an issue would appear on the risk register.

The Joint Performance Team Leader said that quarterly meetings were held to discuss risk. She was not aware of the unsatisfactory opinion but it would be dealt with.

Councillor Bambridge commented that the format of the report did not display well on Members' computers. The multi-column report was not easy to read and so Members would want a paper copy. He could see the advantages of the format but thought that a wide screen was needed to view it electronically.

The Joint Performance Team Leader noted that in pdf format there was a tool which would shrink the layout down, but she agreed that that made it less clear to read. She thought the report might be one exception to a paperless future.

The Chairman noted that there were quite a few downward red arrows.

The Joint Performance Team Leader explained that although it indicated the direction of travel it did not necessarily mean that the target was not being met. It had to be taken in context with the status of the action and would be a bigger issue if the status was orange or red.

She said that there would never be a report which was all green. The challenge was to get accurate information and officers had been asked to be open and honest. The Performance Board looked at all poor performance and questioned the Service Manager to find areas to give support to get the issue back on track.

Action By

The Chairman wanted the Commission to receive regular reports to allow them to scrutinise areas of concern and support the process. Lessons could be learned from things that were going well and it was important to pick up on what was going wrong.

The Joint Performance Team Leader explained that the report went to the Programme Board, then CMT, then the Portfolio Briefing before coming to the Commission and finally on to Cabinet.

The Chairman asked Members to go through each page and raise any concerns.

On Page 49 the number of empty properties was a concern. The Joint Performance Team Leader advised that the service restructure had affected progress and the figures showed the position at the end of the year. Since then it had become a key Corporate project and a lot of work was being done.

On Page 55 Councillor Rogers was concerned that a huge amount of money was being spent in Thetford and Attleborough but very little in Watton.

On Page 56 Councillor Kybird noted that Moving Thetford Forward was scrutinised by its own Programme Delivery Panel. There had been a failure to agree on the ownership of parking places in Pine Close and the Leader of the Council was in negotiation with the Housing Association.

The Chairman asked for that matter to be put on the agenda.

On Page 57 Councillor Bambridge noted that there could be severe financial impact for failure to meet the major planning application target and the Chairman thought it needed to be reviewed regularly.

On Page 61 regarding ICT platforms, Councillor Bambridge knew that there had been a hold-up with Licensing.

The Chairman was concerned that the information was 13 weeks old and it was too long for the Commission to wait to find out there was a problem. The Joint Performance Team Leader agreed that it was unacceptable and suggested that the information could be published to the Intranet for Members to view once it had gone through the Programme Board and CMT.

The Chairman asked for a 'snapshot' to be sent to the Scrutiny Officer 10 days in advance of each Commission meeting so that issues could be highlighted and feedback provided by the Commission.

The Joint Performance Team Leader advised that projects and risks were only updated quarterly. The indicators were updated

monthly.

The Chairman thanked the Joint Performance Team Leader and hoped that the Commission would be able to offer more constructive comments in future.

31/13 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 12)

The Chairman referred to Councillor Roger's concerns and suggested that the Council's investment in the District could be a Task & Finish Group issue. It would show what was being invested and unearth any areas which needed more attention.

The Dereham Memorial Hall would be added. It had received a very large grant and needed to be scrutinised if it was not delivering benefits as it should.

Capita Symonds would be added to the September agenda as there were two key officers leaving in August.

32/13 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The arrangements for the meeting on 18 July 2013 at 2.00pm in the Anglia Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham were noted.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm

Action By

CHAIRMAN