

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

COUNCIL

**Held on Thursday, 22 February 2018 at 10.00 am in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr T. J. Ashby	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr S. Askew	Mr K. Martin
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs K. Millbank (Chairman)
Councillor C. Bowes	Mrs L.H. Monument
Mr R. F. W. Brame	Mr T. F. C. Monument
Mr M. P. Brindle	Mr M. J. Nairn
Mr T. R. Carter	Mr D. R. R. Oliver
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr S. H. Chapman-Allen	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr H. E. J. Clarke	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr D. M. Crawford	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr P. R. W. Darby	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr P. M. M. Dimoglou	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mr R.W. Duffield (Vice-Chairman)	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr M. Taylor
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mrs L.S. Turner
Councillor E. Gould	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mrs T. Hewett	Mrs A M Webb
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr N.C. Wilkin
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr P. S. Wilkinson

In Attendance

Anna Graves	- Chief Executive
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Christine Marshall	- Executive Director Commercialisation (S151 Officer)
Alison Chubbock	- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer) (BDC)
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

21/18 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Borrett, Claussen, P Hewett, Hollis, Matthews, Newton and Nunn.

22/18 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

24/18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Chairman reported that she was almost three quarters of the way through her

civic year. Since the last Council meeting she had attended 3 events in Thetford and one in Norwich. The first event was a 150th anniversary dinner to celebrate the life of Prince Frederick, the son of Maharajah Duleep Singh, who had grown up on the Elveden Estate and was quite a well-known figure in Thetford. The 100th anniversary of women's suffrage was also highlighted. The Chairman had also attended the Mayor of Thetford's charity quiz and had been very pleased to accept an invitation to the Chinese New Year Charity Auction hosted by the Sheriff and the Lord Mayor of Norwich.

25/18 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

In the absence of the Leader, the Chairman invited the Deputy Leader, Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen to make the announcements.

The Deputy Leader was pleased to announce that Breckland Council had been successful in its bid for funding for almost £10m from central government, the second biggest successful bid within Norfolk and one of only a few across the eastern region. This funding would be used to support the delivery of thousands of new homes across the District. The £9.95m investment from the Homes and Communities Agency's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) would be used to improve infrastructure at the Thetford Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) which had been 10 years in the making and would now hopefully soon be delivered. The Council would be working in partnership with many of its key partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Norfolk County Council, the Town Council and residents to draw down this funding for the delivery of this project. These, he felt, were exciting times ahead for Breckland and for the economic growth of Thetford.

The District Lottery was launched earlier in the month. The Council had seen over 100 people in attendance from a wealth of community groups and organisations from across the District and had been a fantastic initial launch. The website would go live on 1 March 2018 to allow individuals to buy tickets; and, for every pound spent, 50p would go to somebody's designated charity. This lottery would be much more robust and 20p in every pound would go back into the Council's community fund to support community groups in the district.

As part of the Market Town Initiative, the Council was continuing to move forward with 'ShopAppy'. The initial launch was announced by the Leader and Councillor Claussen, the Portfolio Holder for Place, at the last Full Council meeting. There had been a very pleasing positive uptake from all the market towns. The Federation of Small Businesses had invited the Deputy Leader along to a conference to discuss ShopAppy and the reasons the Council had decided to invest such a large amount of money into its market town communities and its High Streets. This would be a good opportunity to show the market towns that the Council did understand the concerns and difficulties they were facing moving forward. The first ShopAppy launch would be in Swaffham in March/April and the Deputy Leader would be working with the Members in that area to make it a really successful day. Additionally, the Council had just commissioned another piece of work on top of ShopAppy and the Market Town Initiative. A young man from Dereham had digitally videoed every shop and High Street within Breckland's market towns which would now allow anyone to go onto the website and visualise walking along the High Street and into a shop to see what was available.

In view of the budget setting, the Deputy Leader felt that this was one of the most important Council meetings of the year. Members had hopefully seen from the budget papers that the Council had removed its reliance on the New Homes Bonus (NHB) to the sum of £1.7m as well as its reliance on the Revenue Support Grant.

The £1.7m NHB would be ring-fenced to the Council's Community projects and the Deputy Leader would be working with Members to ascertain how this money would best be utilised moving forward.

The Deputy Leader congratulated all who had been involved with the budget and stressed the envious fiscal position that Breckland Council was in compared to many other Councils.

Councillor Gilbert was very pleased with the news that Breckland Council had been successful in its funding bid and even better news was that the monies would be used for the much needed development and infrastructure in Thetford; however, he wanted to know if this funding would offer a degree of protection for other towns in relation to undesirable development.

The Deputy Leader advised that the HIF bid itself was just for the delivery of housing growth in Thetford, the secondary effect of which would hopefully protect some of Breckland's other communities across the District from undesirable development by delivering much needed housing in Thetford and thus meeting the Council's five year land supply. Through the Local Government Association, the Leader was currently lobbying Government to reduce the five year land supply to three but in the interim, the Council could only work with what it had in the Local Plan, and if adopted, the land allocated as preferred sites suitable for growth would be developed.

**26/18 QUESTIONS ON NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 6 (IF ANY)
(AGENDA ITEM 6)**

None.

27/18 QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE UNDER STANDING ORDER NO 7 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Councillor Gilbert directed his question to the Deputy Leader. He mentioned a recent Town Council meeting where matters in relation to the management of the cemetery were discussed and which he felt could also have an effect on other market towns. He asked if such responsibilities could be transferred to Breckland Council. The Deputy Leader advised that he had no knowledge of this matter but would look into it.

Councillor Brindle highlighted a concern raised by a Mobility Group in Thetford. He asked the Deputy Leader, in the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Place, if anything could be done to the bollards installed on Breckland owned footpaths. The bollards had been installed to prevent the misuse of motorcycles but this had now had a detrimental effect on people who had to use mobility scooters as they could not get through. The Deputy Leader said that this was the first time that such a matter had been raised. Further details would be required, but he would ask the appropriate officer to look into it.

Councillor Clarke directed his question to the Deputy Leader. He was aware that Norfolk County Council was going to introduce charges at recycling centres for DIY waste which he felt could increase the amount of fly-tipping which again could have unintentional consequences on Breckland Council and he asked how this would be monitored and whether any precautions should be put in place. The Deputy Leader advised that any issues would be reported back to Norfolk County Council via the Norfolk Waste Partnership.

Councillor Jermy asked the Portfolio Holder for Growth about a housing issue in his Ward. He was contacted recently by a resident whose father had applied for sheltered housing and had experienced delays in getting a response. Councillor Jermy was aware of other similar experiences and asked the Portfolio Holder if he was aware of the issue and if he could provide reassurance that the service would improve. Councillor Bambridge was not aware of this situation but he had spoken to the Housing Team recently about its service standards. He asked Councillor Jermy to provide him with further details so he could investigate the concern.

Councillor Sherwood asked the Deputy Leader if he had seen the recent coverage in the Eastern Daily Press and heard the coverage on Radio Norfolk about 'Norfolk Day' being held on 27 July 2018. He asked whether Breckland Council would be backing this initiative to mark this occasion. The Deputy Leader knew that Councillor Sherwood was a champion of all things Norfolk and agreed that Breckland Council, being in the very heart of Norfolk, would have a very important role to play. He asked Councillor Sherwood if he would consider being the Member Champion for Norfolk Day and Councillor Sherwood accepted the role.

Councillor Taylor asked a question in relation to the forthcoming Council Tax increase and whether there was any opportunity for the Council to seek additional funding from Central Government. The Deputy Leader pointed out that all public services faced fiscal restraint and Central Government had its own budgetary lines to adhere to and deliver to. As a Member, Breckland Council did lobby the Local Government Association to ensure that authorities were still being supported through these difficult financial times. It was the responsibility of Local authorities to ensure it continued to deliver its front line services. Breckland Council had a very sound budget moving forward and it would be removing its reliance on its Business Rates Support Grant a year early and removing its reliance on the New Homes Bonus to enable that £1.7m to be spent on Breckland Communities.

To clarify, the Portfolio Holder for Finance made Members aware that the Town Councils had already established their precepts.

28/18 CABINET MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 8)

1. Budget Setting Medium term Financial Plan & Capital Strategy (Minute No. 24/18)

These recommendations would be considered under Agenda item 12.

2. Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6 February be adopted.

29/18 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 9)

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 25 January 2018 be adopted.

30/18 PLANNING COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 10)

RESOLVED that the confirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 15 January 2018 be adopted subject to additional wording being inserted in the resolution under Minute No. 9/18(b) for Necton to read: "...and subject to the completion of a S106 Agreement for the reasons as set out in the report".

31/18 GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 11)

1. Treasury Management Policy & Strategy 2018-19 (Minute No. 75/17)

RESOLVED that the following be approved:

- a) the Treasury Management Strategy 2018-19 to 2021-22 at Appendix A to the report of the Governance & Audit Committee;
- b) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement contained within Appendix A to the report which sets out the Council's policy on MRP;
- c) the Prudential Indicators and limits contained within Appendix A to the report (tables 1-10);
- d) the Investment Strategy 2018-19 (Appendix B to the report) and the detailed criteria included in Appendix B1 to the report; and
- e) the Treasury Management Policy at Appendix B2 to the report.

2. Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee meeting held on 1 December 2018 be adopted; subject to an amendment being made to the date of the meeting under Minute No. 71/17 to read 15 February 2019.

32/18 BUDGET SETTING, MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN & CAPITAL STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 12)

Councillor Gould asked the Chairman if she would allow Opposition Groups the opportunity to present their views on the budget first.

Councillor Jermy reported that the Labour Group had discussed the budget papers prior to the meeting. There were items in the budget that the Labour Group welcomed but there were some areas that he felt could be better addressed. He pointed out that on a number of occasions Councillors had remarked that they looked forward to and indeed expected budget proposals to be forthcoming from opposition Councillors. He felt it to be even more incumbent upon the official opposition to do so and to scrutinise proposals. Whilst the Labour Group was not the official opposition, it did want to offer suggestions on how it felt the budget could be improved so that the best outcomes could be secured for the District.

Councillor Jermy felt that securing well-paid jobs for Breckland residents needed to be one of the Council's priorities. The District's low wage economy locally and poor social mobility figures should be of particular concern. In contrast, for many, Breckland was a great place to live, work and visit. Breckland's environmental and heritage assets had much to offer and he felt the authority undersold itself. The economic benefits of tourism could be greater realised.

The proposed amendment from the Labour Group would see £5,000 allocated to support the provision of tourist information services in each market town in Breckland; a small and affordable sum but one that could reap significant benefits. Encouraging people to come here, or perhaps encouraging people already coming to spend more, stay longer and visit other parts of the District was of course being

undertaken but often by volunteers, often with limited budgets – if visitors searched the tourist information for Dereham they were directed to a telephone number that was currently disconnected.

The second part of the Labour Group's amendment concerned housing:

Councillor Jermy pointed out that housing was by far the most common type of casework that he dealt with as a Councillor – the lack of affordable housing, issues with repairs and maintenance, issues with private landlords, the impact of the bedroom tax and more. The Labour Group wanted to propose a link between right to buy receipts and investment in new affordable housing and if targeted correctly, this investment could help save the Council money

Finally, poor street lighting was a major concern in many areas. Poor quality, older street lights in Breckland were costly – failing repeatedly, inefficient use of electricity – the budget of proposed £90k was a welcome start but the Council should be moving much quicker to achieve the savings over a shorter period of time and providing a better quality service

He proposed the following amendments to the Council which were seconded by Councillor Clarke.

1. Jobs

Allocate £5,000 for each market town in the District to support core-running costs associated with the provision of Tourist Information services to maximise the benefit to the local economy and jobs through tourism. This funding to be a one off and taken from the Community Funding Reserve.

2. Communities

Increase the budget set aside to upgrade street lighting infrastructure from £90,000 to £180,000 using funds from the Community Funding Reserve. The improvements would therefore take place more quickly reducing running costs through greater efficiency and reduced maintenance costs whilst improving the quality of the service for residents.

3. Housing

To ring-fence 'right to buy' receipts for the next 3 years (being the remaining amount of time that Breckland Council would receive a share of right to buy receipts) with income received being allocated to support affordable housing projects, including invest to save initiatives that would reduce on-going revenue costs to the Council.

The Deputy Leader felt that some of the aforementioned amendments had merit and he would be more than happy for Councillor Jermy to work through some of these with Councillor Cowen, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, at a later date. He could not support the amendments to the budget at this stage.

Councillor Clarke was pleased that a number of aspects could, in time, be discussed with Councillor Cowen and suggested that these discussions take the form of a Task & Finish Group.

Councillor Wassell congratulated Councillor Jermy on putting forward these proposals as he could see some merit in them all.

Action By

The Portfolio Holder for Finance echoed the Deputy Leader's comments and felt that, going forward, the proposals identified were compatible with the Council's plans. However, again in agreement with the Deputy Leader, he felt that these amendments should be considered separately at a later date.

Councillor Jermy indicated that he would propose his amendments formally once the Portfolio Holder for Finance had presented the budget report.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the budget report. This budget had removed reliance on Revenue Support Grant and its reliance on the New Homes Bonus and the Council was now able to contribute to reserves to support its communities. Referring to Councillor Jermy's proposed amendments, the Portfolio Holder for Finance advised that one of the key points from this budget was to increase community funding to allow Breckland's market towns to thrive. The increase in Council Tax, if approved, would be 9p per week for a Band D property and that additional income would enable the Council to do exactly that. He felt that this Council was fortunate to have a very healthy and positive income stream and the income generation from the business rates retention was vitally important as it related to employment, another point made by Councillor Jermy. If Thetford thrived the rest of the District would thrive and the budget's aim was to put Breckland Council in a strong fiscal position and be in control of its own destiny and he commended the budget to the Council.

Councillor Gilbert supported the vast majority of the budget but had concerns about the risks listed on page 55 and 56 of the agenda pack in relation to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and the alternative to the Special Expenses Levy (SEL).

The Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that the SEL was an integral component within the budget and could not be removed but as it related to one of Councillor Jermy's proposed amendments this would be discussed at a later date. As far as the New Homes Bonus was concerned, dwellings had to be occupied before any NHB could be generated and that was the reason why the Council had to be in control of when, where and how many houses were being built and why it was so essential to have a Local Plan in place.

Councillor Wassell congratulated the Cabinet on the budget. Breckland Council's Band D was the lowest Council Tax in the Country and was lower than some parishes.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance stated that a balanced budget could only be achieved with very strict controls.

The Portfolio Holder for Growth pointed out that SEL's paid for a service that assisted communities.

Councillor Jermy then put forward his proposed his amendments once more but with the last amendment at bullet point 3 above in relation to housing being removed.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance had difficulty in accepting any of the proposed amendments as written until the sums of money could be established against those items even though the principles and sentiment behind them were understood.

Councillor Clarke formally seconded Councillor Jermy's amendments and thanked the Portfolio Holder for Finance for his supportive comments.

A vote was taken on the proposed amendments which were not supported.

The recommendations as listed in the report were proposed and seconded. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations below. The vote was as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Mr Ashby		
Mr Askew		
Mr Bambridge		
Mr Brame		
Councillor Bowes		
	Mr Brindle	
Mr Carter		
Councillor Chapman-Allen		
Mr Sam Chapman-Allen		
	Mr Clarke	
Mr Cowen		
Mr Crawford		
Mr Darby		
Mr Dimoglou		
Mr Duffield		
Mr Duigan		
	Mr Gilbert	
Councillor Gould		
Mrs Hewett		
	Mr Jermy	
Mr Joel		
Mr Kybird		
Mr Martin		
Mrs Millbank		
Mrs Monument		
Mr Monument		
Mr Nairn		
Mr Oliver		
Mr Robert Richmond		
Mr William Richmond		
Mr Robinson		
Mr Rogers		
Mr Sharpe		
Mr Sherwood		
Mr Smith		
Mr Stasiak		
Mr Taylor		
Mrs Turner		
Mr Wassell		
Mrs Webb		
Mr Wilkin		
Mr Wilkinson		

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Breckland revenue estimates and parish special expenses for 2018-19 and outline position through to 2021-22 (as set out in Appendix B and E to the report) be approved;
- 2) the capital estimates and associated funding for 2018-19 and outline position through to 2021-22 (as set out in Appendix H of the report) be approved;
- 3) the fees and charges shown at Appendix D and D2 of the report, for adoption on 1 April 2018, be approved;
- 4) the Council Tax be set at £83.88 for a Band D property in 2018-19 (a £4.95 per annum increase on 2017-18 levels);
- 5) the financial Medium Term Plan at Appendix A of the report be approved;
- 6) the Capital Strategy at Appendix G of the report be approved; and
- 7) the changes to the current pay scheme as detailed in Appendix I of the report be agreed.

33/18 COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2018-19 (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report.

Breckland Council proposed to increase its Council Tax by 9p per week for a Band D property. The Council provided high quality services and value for money as a consequence of its prudent budgeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance proposed the two recommendations to the Council which was seconded by Councillor Wassell.

Again in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a recorded vote was taken on the recommendations below. The vote was as follows:

FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN
Mr Ashby		
Mr Askew		
Mr Bambridge		
Mr Brame		
Councillor Bowes		
	Mr Brindle	
Mr Carter		
Councillor Chapman-Allen		
Mr Sam Chapman-Allen		
	Mr Clarke	
Mr Cowen		
Mr Crawford		
Mr Darby		
Mr Dimoglou		
Mr Duffield		
Mr Duigan		
	Mr Gilbert	

Action By

Councillor Gould		
Mrs Hewett		
	Mr Jermy	
Mr Joel		
Mr Kybird		
Mr Martin		
Mrs Millbank		
Mrs Monument		
Mr Monument		
Mr Nairn		
Mr Oliver		
Mr Robert Richmond		
Mr William Richmond		
Mr Robinson		
Mr Rogers		
Mr Sharpe		
Mr Sherwood		
Mr Smith		
Mr Stasiak		
Mr Taylor		
Mrs Turner		
Mr Wassell		
Mrs Webb		
Mr Wilkin		
Mr Wilkinson		

RESOLVED that:

1. the Special Expenses for 2018-19 (at paragraph 1.3 of the report) be approved; and
2. the formal Council Tax resolutions for 2018-19 (at paragraph 1.4.1 to 1.4.5 of the report) be approved.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked Members for their decision but was disappointed that some Members had not supported the principles in this budget as it all helped to support the Council's communities.

34/18 GENDER PAY GAP STATEMENT (AGENDA ITEM 14)

The Deputy Leader presented the Gender Pay Gap Statement. Its publication was a statutory requirement.

The gender composition of the Council's workforce was made up of 74.07% female and 25.93% male and the majority of the lower paid quartile were in female roles within the Contact Centre and ARP service areas. The Council would continue to work with its Union representatives to make these service areas a more attractive place to work for both genders.

Councillor Jermy queried whether section 5.3.1 of the report was correct. He also asked if there was a date where the Council might be able to bench mark itself against other authorities in the District.

The Deputy Leader responded that the information in the report was standard and based upon six questions that the Council had to respond to which were listed on

page 110 of the agenda pack. It would be difficult to compare with other Councils as there was so much variation in things like the level of outsourcing.

RESOLVED that the Gender Pay Gap Statement be approved.

35/18 PAY POLICY STATEMENT (AGENDA ITEM 15)

The Deputy Leader presented the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19.

Under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011, a Pay Policy Statement was required to be produced annually; this had been a requirement since 2012/13.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19 be approved.

36/18 NOTIFICATION OF BREACH OF STANDARDS BY CLLR M TAYLOR (AGENDA ITEM 16)

The report was for information and for Members to note.

37/18 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2018-19 (AGENDA ITEM 17)

The Deputy Leader presented the report.

The Corporate Plan set out the direction for a 4 year period but was refreshed annually to ensure that the Council was adapting to the needs of all concerned.

The Deputy Leader presented the report.

Councillor Kybird pointed out that figure 2 needed to be corrected as the numbers did not add up.

Councillor Theresa Hewett had noticed a number of errors in the document but would be happy to go through them with the Officers another time accompanied by Councillor Linda Monument.

Subject to the aforementioned comments, it was

RESOLVED that the annual Corporate Plan refresh 2018-19 be adopted.

38/18 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 18)

RESOLVED that Cllr Thomas Monument be replaced by Councillor Roy Brame on the Licensing Committee/Committee of the Licensing Authority

39/18 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 19)

None.

40/18 ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT - NONE

41/18 EXCLUSION PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 20)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

Action By

42/18 COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE REVIEW (AGENDA ITEM 21)

The Deputy Leader presented the report.

A concern was raised in relation to the new structure chart to which an explanation was provided.

RESOLVED that the recommendations as listed in the report be approved.

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN