

---

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**CABINET**

**Held on Monday, 1 June 2020 at 9.30 am in**

**PRESENT**

Mr S. H. Chapman-Allen  
(Chairman)  
Mr P.D. Claussen (Vice-  
Chairman)  
Mr S.G. Bambridge  
Mr J.P. Cowen  
Mr P.J. Hewett

Mr M. S. Robinson  
Mr I. Sherwood  
Mrs S. E. Suggitt  
Mrs A. M. Webb

**Also Present**

Councillor C. Bowes  
Mrs J. James  
Mr R. Atterwill  
Mr T. Birt  
Mr W.P. Borrett  
Miss H. Bushell  
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen  
Mrs H Crane  
Mrs V. Dale  
Mr P.J. Duigan  
Mr F. Eagle  
Mr K.S. Gilbert

Mrs K. Grey  
Mr T. J. Jermy  
Cllr T. Kiddell  
Mr M. Kiddle-Morris  
Mr I. Martin  
Mr K. Martin  
Mr P. Morton  
Mr M. J. Nairn  
Mr J.W. Nunn  
Mrs L.S. Turner  
Mr D. Wickerson  
Mr P. S. Wilkinson

**In Attendance**

Anna Graves  
Maxine O'Mahony

Rob Walker  
Alison Chubbock

Rory Ringer  
Teresa Smith  
Andrew D'Arcy  
Simon Wood  
Matthew Barnard  
Julie Britton

- Chief Executive
- Executive Director of Strategy & Governance  
(Monitoring Officer)
- Executive Director Place
- Chief Accountant (Deputy Section 151 Officer)  
(BDC)
- Democratic Services Manager
- Democratic Services Team Leader
- Planning Policy Manager
- Director of Planning & Building Control
- Communications Manager
- Democratic Services Officer

**Action By**

**Opening comments by the Leader of the Council**

The Leader, Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen welcomed everyone to the meeting, the first of its kind for Breckland Council being streamed live.

The declaration of interest and voting procedure were explained to the Cabinet Members.

**Action By**

**25/20 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

At the previous Full Council meeting held on 27 February 2020, Councillor Atterwill had raised a concern that the February Cabinet minutes had not reflected some of the questions that he had raised and the responses provided. At that time, the Leader had assured Councillor Atterwill that the Cabinet Minutes would be amended accordingly.

Subject to the agreed amendments, the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**26/20 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

None.

**27/20 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None.

**28/20 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

Councillor Philip Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth reinforced his declaration as an architect in practice in Breckland in respect of Agenda item 11, the Local Plan.

**29/20 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

Councillors Atterwill, Birt, Borrett, Bowes, Bushell, Marion Chapman-Allen, Crane, Dale, Duigan, Eagle, Gilbert, Grey, James, Jermy, Kiddell, Kiddle-Morris, Ian Martin, Keith Martin, Morton, Nairn, Nunn, Terry, Turner, Wickerson and Wilkinson.

Councillor Bowes and Councillor James were in attendance as Executive Support Members.

**30/20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

None.

**31/20 COVID-19 UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Leader presented the report.

The report provided a high level outline of the work undertaken to date in responding to the threat posed by the outbreak of COVID 19. It also set out on-going work being undertaken to ensure that all possible steps were being taken to prepare the Council and the District for the challenges in the coming weeks and months.

The Leader praised the staff and Members of this authority for a fantastic effort to keep the Council's critical services running throughout the crisis; whilst supporting vulnerable residents and businesses in new and innovative ways.

**Action By**

The Leader also took the opportunity to thank Members for their support at this time and hoped that he had kept them fully abreast of developments through his regular briefings.

The Government had tasked local authorities with two core objectives during the emergency response phase. One had been to support vulnerable and shielded people within the community by ensuring that they had food and medicine supplies. The second had been to support businesses through the distribution of Business Rate Support and grants distribution.

A COVID 19 Operational Recovery Plan was currently being developed. The Plan would focus on how the Council would recover as an organisation, how it reintroduced services, supported its staff and Members, learning from the experience of dealing with COVID 19, benefited from its new community and business links, and more fundamentally how it ensured that residents could access the services they needed.

The Leader finished by thanking every single member of staff for their professionalism and dedication throughout Covid-19. To all the Members of the Council for their patience, understanding and the phenomenal champion work that had been undertaken within their Wards, the District and the County; and to every other volunteer, resident and business in Norfolk and Breckland who had gone out to support those in need and those who had continued to do so.

Members were invited to ask questions.

Councillor Paul Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets mentioned the distribution of grants and asked the Leader if he would pass on his thanks to the Officers, in particular for the distribution of grants to the various community groups within the District and certainly within his Ward in Shipdham, Cranworth and Scarning who otherwise would have really struggled. This grant funding had been an absolute lifeline and he felt that it was through the swift and diligent, effective distribution of grant monies to those organisations that this essential community work could continue.

The Leader echoed the above comments. It had been a very difficult time for the Council as it had to work at pace to distribute those grants following guidance and legislation from Government and he hoped that this funding had made a little difference to those organisations/businesses across the District. The next phase of funding would now be launched, a further payment of £1.5m for those businesses/organisations that had not been eligible in the first tranche and he asked every business to engage with the Council regardless of size, turnover, or the number of employees, so that details could be taken to support them in the coming months and years ahead.

Councillor Kiddell asked the Leader if it would be possible for Breckland Council to help some of the charitable organisations within the Breckland Wards. She knew of several in Watton, including the Watton Sports Centre that had not qualified for the earlier grant funding. In response the Leader advised that the tranche 2 funding, under the guidance, did allow for some charitable support with any residual monies that remained. He would be more than happy to put together a briefing note about some of the charity

**Action By**

funding that had been announced from Central Government. He was also aware that Sports England had ring-fenced some funding for sports clubs and charities that fell into that criteria and he would be happy to share this information with Members after the meeting.

Councillor Morton thanked the Leader and the Officers for all their hard work. He asked the Leader how the Council was going to develop, away from the lock down, with the likelihood of a second peak occurring and how the Council would keep that to a minimum.

In relation to the lock down, the Leader advised as long as everyone followed the guidance from Government about social distancing and taking responsibility through the track and trace system that had been launched the previous week, his hope was that the 'R' rate would continue to remain as low as practically possible. As for the District, the Council would do everything to ensure that its High Streets and Market Towns were safe places for people to operate. This had been divided into two parts, the first was the physical infrastructure such as making sure that the furniture, signage were right in the High Streets whilst also making sure that the Environmental Health Officers were working with the shopkeepers and retail owners to ensure that they were doing everything that they could to protect, not just themselves and their employees, but also any residents that wished to support and use those premises. The Council would continue to take its lead from Public Health Norfolk and wider Central Government and he believed that people in Breckland and Norfolk, cared passionately about protecting themselves and each other and were adhering to the guidance.

Councillor Atterwill echoed the comments that Councillor Hewett had made about the financial assistance for local businesses and organisations which he felt had worked extremely well. He asked for his thanks to be passed onto all Officers concerned. In relation to Covid-19 he had two questions to ask. The first was in respect of opening up the town centres and he asked the Leader if he could confirm that those Councillors representing the five market towns had been consulted on this matter. Secondly, he asked if it could be confirmed how much financial assistance had been provided during this crisis for the food banks in the Breckland District.

In response, the Leader advised that £10k had been shared 50/50 with the Dereham and Thetford food banks and further funding had been allocated for other food banks within the District if and when required. However, due to some technicalities those individuals had not been able to draw down this further funding but open dialogue had taken place with those businesses and those food banks stating that at any point they required help the Council would try and assist.

In respect of the High Streets, the Leader advised that no consultation had taken place directly with the relevant Ward Members to date. The initial plan had been put together very quickly following the Prime Minister's announcement. On-street visits had then been undertaken with Breckland and County Highway Officers but the important point to note was that this would be a moving feast and nothing put in place would be permanent. He fully expected that over the coming weeks when this was all put in place that the High Streets would not be perfect and everyone would have to work collectively with the Town Councils, the businesses in the High Streets, Ward Members, County Divisional Members and Officers at both District and

**Action By**

County level to get the best fit for each market town. Over the coming days the situation would change and the Council would ensure everything was done to make sure that residents felt safe in the High Street through the physical furniture and the structure that had been put in place; likewise, the Council was working with businesses at pace to establish if they wanted to open and that it was safe to do so.

As a follow up question, Councillor Atterwill asked the Leader again if there had been any dialogue with the Town Councils. He completely understood what the Leader had said about speed but having been in lock down for between 10 and 11 weeks, there had been enough time to get everyone involved in this and the Town Councils should have been consulted as most would probably have some good ideas about how their town centres should look and how they could assist. The Leader pointed out that the Town Councils had been consulted but could not comment as to whether the dialogue had been at the right time in the given time frame.

Councillor Jermy, the Leader of the Labour Group shared the Leader's praise and thanks for all staff and Members who had worked above and beyond over the last few months which should be recognised. He was aware that there had been a number of businesses across the District that had, for whatever reason, not been able to access the business grants and he had been pleased to note in the report that 87% of businesses had been issued with grants which was a credit to the Team who had been working on this. However, in respect of the monies remaining, given the amount of time that had passed and the effort that had gone into promoting it, he wanted to know at what point that funding would no longer be available and at what point that remaining money might be re-deployed into the discretionary fund as acknowledged in the report. This was a lifeline for some businesses and he felt that perhaps this would be an opportunity to re-deploy that funding. The other point he wished to raise was in respect of any fraudulent claims and how the Council would be dealing with such matters, if any. Finally on the hardship fund, a figure of £50k had been mentioned and he asked if more detail could be provided and how this funding could be accessed as this funding, in his opinion, could be a crucial lifeline for a number of residents and organisations.

In response, the Leader assured Members that further details would be provided in respect of the National Hardship Fund. The mechanics of that to be drawn down was for individuals to either contact the Council direct or via Ward Members to contact the Community Hub Lead for their locality. It was noted that, to date a portion of the Hardship funding had been spent on white goods provision for someone whose cooking appliance had broken and did not have the money to purchase another and on food vouchers. The variance of this hardship fund was vast and not all of that funding had been spent but did not mean that it was not needed. The funding had been ring-fenced and would remain until such time it was deemed to re-allocate that money to other areas within the Council.

In relation to any fraudulent claims, the Leader explained that the Council had to undertake physical checks on every applicant to ensure that fraudulent claims were not coming forward that caused, what was felt by others, to slow down the process. However, 87% of the original funding allocation already granted was, in his opinion, a really impressive number and as the Council moved forward there would be further work done. The Government guidance

**Action By**

provided had set out a clear course of action for Councils in respect of those individuals who had committed fraudulent claims.

In respect of the underspend from Tranche 1 and the residual amount that remained, Norfolk as a whole was collectively lobbying Government to allow authorities to retain that money within the District and the County to support businesses moving forward. At this stage, the Government had not, as yet, made a clear position statement as to what that residual money could be spent on.

Councillor Birt, the Leader of the Green Party hoped that the Leader would join him in thanking the many Breckland residents who had stepped up to help their neighbours, and other residents in their local communities during this crisis. Those people should be thanked for grocery shopping, picking up prescriptions and for providing cash for those people without internet banking facilities. There had been a myriad of tasks that had happened in the communities and it should be highlighted that it had been the communities that had worked so well. He was concerned; however, that the documentation presented was, in his opinion, a rather sycophantic statement and referred to the poster on page 18 of the agenda pack. He felt that it had not reflected the huge debt that the Council owed to its residents. The bins had still been collected but had the refuse collectors been thanked. He agreed that the Council had done 'ok' in respect of the business support, but it seemed that the message coming out from this poster was that it had been Breckland Council handing the monies out when in reality it had been an implementation of a national policy. Overall, from what he had seen locally, he felt that the Council's response had been somewhat mediocre and it had forgotten about its residents. Another area in which the Council had badly fallen down was in respect of scrutiny. In his opinion, it looked like Covid-19 had been an excuse for the Council to remove scrutiny altogether.

In response, the Leader thanked Councillor Birt for his positive accolades to all the hardworking members of the community and to the waste services teams who had been putting their lives at risk. Through the positive media campaign that the Council had been running it had praised its waste contractor and he had been immensely humbled by the praise and support of all residents across the District and he hoped that his opening remarks were clear that it had not just been about Breckland Council. He had praised the work of volunteers and to those who had not officially volunteered but to anyone who had gone out of their door to help someone doing grocery shopping or providing cash support. He did not agree with Councillor Birt that the Council was patting itself on the back, his opening remarks had been heartfelt and the residents that he had spoken to were absolutely supportive of what everyone in the District and across the country as a whole had done.

In relation to the scrutiny function, Councillor Birt was informed that scrutiny had not at all been diluted, the constitutional process for call-ins had remained and at any point where a delegation had been made the ability to call it in was still there. Only on two occasions had that right been waived following the Chairman of Scrutiny's authorisation under his emergency powers. He stressed to Councillor Birt that this was not the time to dwell on what had occurred, this would take place over the coming weeks and months as the Council moved forward. Today was to set a very clear scene of where the Council had been and what the future looked like when it stepped up to the recovery stage and what its continued priorities were going to be. In

**Action By**

relation to support, Breckland Council was in comparison to many others, a very small local authority and all had been tasked with two very clear objectives from Government - to support those most vulnerable and to support businesses through the grants scheme. The Leader felt that the Council had pivoted overnight, not just by remote working and not just by delivering critical services but by supporting the vulnerable and the businesses in the District. Over 50 Council Officers had been re-deployed into new areas and in the coming days and weeks there would be ample opportunity for Councillor Birt and all Members of the Council to scrutinise practices, to ensure that Breckland Council was fit for purpose and any lessons that had been learnt from Covid-19.

Councillor Borrett also congratulated the Leader on the format of this Cabinet meeting and to the Team that had put it together. He commented on what Councillor Birt had said and was very disappointed with his tone. He believed that Councillor Birt had missed the point about what had been achieved and had been very disappointed by his comment that Breckland's response had been mediocre given the huge amount of hard work that the Officers and residents of Breckland had put together during this emergency. To actually deliver an incredible service in these hugely challenging and difficult times, and the very fact that the Council had managed to get most of the staff working remotely, in his opinion, was a massive effort by all concerned and he had been very impressed with the response that Breckland had managed and had provided. To that end, Councillor Borrett thanked the Leader and all the staff and everyone who had helped the Council through these difficult times which he felt had been a great achievement.

The Leader thanked Councillor Borrett for his comments.

The report was noted.

**32/20 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19 (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Councillor Philip Cowen, the Executive Member for Finance & Growth presented the report and updated Members on the potential financial implications resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further to the previous report, he hoped that Members appreciated the significant cost to the Council and the alternative ways of working, none of which had been anticipated back in February 2020 when the budget had been produced.

It was no secret that all Councils in the country were facing an unprecedented call on resources. The report, therefore, asked for the financial implications of the pandemic to be noted and that this was an assessment at a moment in time when this report had been drafted some days previous. This provided the Council with a picture of where it thought its costs had been and where they might be going and it also looked at some analysis data providing its optimistic, realistic and pessimistic views.

Government had granted the various local authorities funding at different levels to support the efforts that everyone had to put in place very quickly to deal with the pandemic. There was also a high level of uncertainty about some of the costs, some of which could be clearly defined, for example, the purchase of equipment. For others going forward, it was unclear how long

**Action By**

some of these costs were going to be incurred. Appendix A, clearly highlighted where the Council had anticipated these costs.

Councillor Cowen stated that the Council had a prudent set of finances over the last few years and the impact was perhaps not as great as some local authorities were facing but it was under no misapprehension that the costs that the Council was facing were significant.

Councillor Jermy referred to Appendix A of the report where it listed the assumptions for lost income and although he felt it was helpful to have those figures in percentages he thought it would also be useful to have the cash equivalent and asked if the table could include the financial amounts. Also, referring to the section in respect of in-year savings, he appreciated that a new budget would be coming back in July but wondered how Members could contribute to this process moving forward over the year, and lastly, the financial plan assumed a maximum Council Tax increase over the next few years and asked if there had been any murmurs from Government about the possibly of lifting the cap of council tax increases moving forward.

In response, Councillor Cowen was not aware of any current proposals from Central Government to lift the council tax cap. As far as the budget proposals were concerned, and clearly Members would have seen within the Leader's report, the new structure for the recovery phase of the Council was fundamentally different to the current structure and it was going to take some time to bed in and all Members had a part to play in this; therefore, he felt that this would perhaps be an opportunity for wider Member engagement to understand how the budget was put together and he welcomed Councillor Jermy's suggestion. Finally in respect of the table mentioned at Appendix A, there were figures behind those percentages and he would certainly ask for these to be provided.

Referring to the financial situation, Councillor Atterwill asked about the Worksmart 20:20 project and the significant cash outlay to the Council to refurbish Elizabeth House to make it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and the fact that working practices may well change in the future; therefore, would the Council be pausing this project to take account of these issues and perhaps conduct another review. He asked if it was prudent for the Council to be spending this amount of money at the moment bearing in mind the current situation.

Additionally, Councillor Atterwill raised a further question regarding the waste contract, in respect of the significant amount of funding that had been put aside for the purposes of the waste vehicles and the reason for not borrowing that money. Again, bearing in mind the current situation with the Council's finances, he asked if this was another matter that should be reviewed. Finally, he wanted to know if there had been any information received from Government about whether there would be any further funding available.

In response, to the latter question, Councillor Cowen advised that Government had already provided all Councils with significant sums of money and not all of that money had been drawn down as yet but was likely to be spent over the coming months. He was not aware at this stage of any further funding being provided by Government to plug the gap.

Regarding the waste contract, as the contract had already been approved, he felt that he was not in a position to answer that question.

**Action By**

Regarding Worksmart 20:20, working from home had become possible given the technology available but he ventured to suggest that whilst many staff members were finding it relatively easy to work from home, if you had a young family to look after, and you did not have a separate office/workspace, it was not necessarily the panacea that it might seem at first glance. He agreed with Councillor Atterwill, that there had been a great deal of work planned in respect of Worksmart 20:20 but there was also a great deal of work that could not be implemented such as 'hot desking', social distancing and locations of desks given the challenges of the pandemic. The Council had a huge responsibility to both staff and those people who visited the building to ensure that Elizabeth House was a safe place to work and visit.

The Leader advised that how the Council looked and operated post Covid-19 would be very different and the financial picture that Councillor Cowen had just highlighted would determine what it would look like in some of the already committed programmes whether they continued or whether they were paused. It was not just about Worksmart or the Council's waste provision, the Council as a whole, would look very different over the coming months, this was to ensure that the authority was sustainable whilst delivering all the critical services to its residents and businesses and that as a District was fit for purpose moving forward.

Councillor Hewett commented on Councillor Atterwill and Councillor Jermy's questions. One take on looking at some of the data involved in this report was to despair; however, this was really an exercise in attitude in the art of what was possible now and actually the way ahead, without doubt, this was now a new collaboration. The Council could deliver on this, it had the right staff and the right attitude and resilience and had proved over the last 10 weeks that what Worksmart 20:20 had been suggesting over a matter of years could be delivered and rather than looking at this report as a measure of doom and gloom, this was, in fact a call to action and all Members should collaborate to make sure that this Council allowed its residents and businesses to thrive moving ahead.

The report was otherwise noted.

**33/20 BRECKLAND SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

Councillor Ian Sherwood, the Executive Member for Customer Engagement and Leader Member for Climate Strategy provided Members with the following update.

Since March 2020, due to the outbreak of the coronavirus and subsequent emergency activities environmental work had been paused. COVID-19 had changed the way that many Breckland residents viewed the world including their views on their local environment, climate change and, in particular, issues such as air quality.

These matters would now require further thought as to what Breckland's potential approach might be. At present, the most effective way of picking up this work would be to ensure that this was considered as part of the Council's work on recovery. Given that there was still a lot of uncertainty around restarting the economy and its impact, it would be difficult to establish at this

**Action By**

point if positive impacts on the environment, such as reduced nitrogen dioxide levels, would remain once industry restarted. Additionally, given the guidance around social distancing and to avoid public transport it was likely that there would be a greater usage of cars; therefore, at this point, some of this work would be a watching brief so that the impact could be understood over the coming weeks and months.

The Norfolk-wide Climate Change Partnership Working Group would be reconvened on 20th July 2020 to look at collective partnership recovery actions across Norfolk.

On 15th June 2020, a Climate Change Post-Graduate Intern would be starting a placement with the Council until the end of August following his previous placement in 2019. This would add some extra resource around this agenda and help to restart the process of looking at what the Council's strategy should look like and to understand where resident's expectations had moved to.

Councillor Morton commented on the update and understood that the Covid crisis had dominated the recent months; however, he reminded Members that at the Cabinet meeting in February 2020, it had been agreed that an all Member session on sustainability would be held - to date he had not seen any record of this. The response to the Covid crisis had shown what the Council could do in such a short time period and he felt that climate change in the longer term would be more of a threat than Covid and he felt that the Council needed to put more strength and urgency behind it. He also asked if more resources rather than just an intern could be devoted to climate change.

Councillor Sherwood was very passionate about climate change and understood Councillor Morton's disappointment. Covid-19 had set back many projects not just in Breckland but all over the country and the Council's achievements on this matter should not be forgotten. He agreed that the Climate Change Strategy had been delayed by a few months but an initial budget had already been allocated and the university intern would start in August. This he felt would be an opportunity to see how Covid-19 had changed the way people looked at the world and the environment. He assured Councillor Morton that these matters would be picked up as soon as practically possible and he looked forward to working with him and other Councillors.

The Leader, Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen acknowledged Councillor Morton's disappointment but felt it was important to note that if the Council had gone out to consultation at the beginning of March those questions that the Council would have asked residents and businesses in Breckland would now be very different. The whole world had changed and hopefully everyone would have a more positive outlook on climate change and the environment.

Councillor Peter Wilkinson reminded Members of the public consultation that had been carried out in 2015 in respect of air quality and the subsequent report that the Council had submitted to DEFRA and agreed with the Leader that very different questions would need to be asked.

The update was noted.

**Action By**

**34/20 BRECKLAND COMMUNITY FUNDING APPLICATIONS (STANDING ITEM)  
(AGENDA ITEM 10)**

Councillor Mark Robinson, the Executive Member for Community, Leisure and Culture provided Members with an update on the work that had been undertaken within his Portfolio in respect of the Covid-19 outbreak.

At the end of March 2020 following lockdown the Council had worked as part of a countywide partnership to establish the Community Hub.

The Hub sought to ensure that vulnerable residents in Breckland had access to essential supplies such as food and medicine and was operational within a week.

Over 50 Breckland staff had been redeployed from roles across the Council to ensure those that needed help were supported with welfare calls.

The Hub worked in close partnership with community groups and local businesses that had begun to mobilise in response to the growing pandemic. As part of the Council's existing programme to support vulnerable residents, some partners re-purposed to ensure that they could continue to offer support, for example:

- The Daisy Programme, funded by the Council, to support victims of Domestic Abuse quickly moved to offer online counselling as well as continuing its therapeutic singing groups which were held using Zoom.
- 'Tripstart' adapted by delivering essential prescriptions from Pharmacies to residents. Many other local businesses also donated food for onward distribution and Norwich City FC provided approximately 200 food parcels. A decision had already been taken to allocate £10,000 to Foodbanks to help support this aim.

This he felt had been one of the greatest collective efforts the District had ever seen.

Every Breckland resident had been sent a letter explaining how to access support if they needed it, over 500 prescriptions had been picked up and medication delivered, approximately 400 food packages had been delivered and 3000 calls had been made to vulnerable Breckland residents.

These figures were just those that had gone through via the Community Hub, many more residents had been helped directly by Foodbanks and Community Groups.

Breckland Council had sought to support the community where possible including, awarding a £5,000 grant to Norfolk Accident Rescue Service (NARS), to help continue its vital work in supporting the emergency services and saving lives in the community. This Dereham-based charity was now celebrating its 50th year serving the community and was currently experiencing a dramatic increase in demand for its services provided by a group of highly trained volunteer advanced clinicians. This was a crucial time for them to receive this grant as all of the traditional fundraising channels had been cut off almost instantaneously due to the pandemic.

**Action By**

It was now time to start planning for the future to establish how this authority could continue to support its vulnerable residents. A decision had been taken by the Cabinet, prior to this pandemic, to prioritise a vulnerability programme. This programme covered four main themes: county lines, social isolation and loneliness, domestic abuse and mental health.

A number of these significant issues had been exacerbated by the current pandemic making the programme more important than ever and those who had already been in contact were being closely monitored.

Another way in which the Council had reacted to the current situation was to provide short term financial support to help those in a position of hardship due to the pandemic via the development of a Local Hardship Scheme.

This scheme had been allocated £50,000 and supported emergency food provision and essential white goods or emergency repairs for those households who had been financially constrained as a result of the pandemic.

To date, 20 cases had been identified by Officers through the Community Support Hub as needing assistance, all of which had been approved - 16 had been for emergency food provision and 4 had been for essential household items.

The Council was reviewing how it could build on the partnership arrangements with other organisations to have a better understanding of vulnerability and working collaboratively with Adult Social Services for example to address such matters.

Prior to the pandemic the Council provided funding to 66 community groups to celebrate the 75 VE Day anniversary although the current situation prohibited many proceeding with their planned celebrations. However, at this stage, it was still intended for the community groups to retain this funding, which could still be used for the anniversary of VJ Day on 15th August 2020.

On 27th February 2020, Full Council approved the Cabinet recommendation to allocate £250,000 per annum from the Inclusive Growth Reserve to the Market Town Initiative. This would be allocated equally, with £50,000 funding being ring-fenced each year for each of the five towns and decisions on spend would be carried out in consultation with a forum of local district councillors twice a year.

Finally, Councillor Robinson offered his thanks to the community groups for their support, the businesses that had adapted and to the Council staff who had responded magnificently to help with the Covid-19 outbreak.

**35/20 LOCAL PLAN UPDATE AND DIRECTION (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

Councillor Paul Claussen, the Executive Member for Planning presented this item.

The report and the appendix from the Local Plan Working Group (LPWG) meeting held on 14 May 2020 and the Minutes from that meeting had been attached to the agenda.

The salient points from the report were highlighted and the recommendations

**Action By**

from the LPWG were explained and proposed accordingly.

Councillor Hewett, the Executive Member for Contracts & Assets asked if Councillor Claussen would agree that although in some ways there was some frustration about the need for a review so soon after the adoption of the Local Plan in many ways this should be seen as an opportunity particularly bearing in mind the previous concerns/ conversations raised earlier in this meeting that everything had changed. People were working in new ways, the Council's finances needed to be re-considered and a new collaborative way of thinking was needed. The environmental concerns, the challenges about transport everything would have an impact in terms of how the Council moved forward, and as such, the only way it could bring all these issues into one place had to be through a full review.

Councillor Claussen agreed. In addition, he felt that all these points need to form part of the recovery phase too including a review of the rural and urban economies.

Councillor Birt had been surprised that the meeting notes had not made any mention of the climate emergency. He felt that such matters should be looked at in earnest and be fed into the LPWG. Also, he was aware that the Future Homes Standard was due to come out in less than 5 years and would require a dynamic change to house building. He asked if the LPWG Members were aware of this change and how this might have an impact on the policies - bearing in mind that this Local Plan review should be completed at the same time as the release of the Future Homes Standard.

Additionally, he asked Councillor Claussen how the selection of Members to the LPWG had come about and the skills that each of those Members brought to the Group.

Assurance was given that all Members had the relevant experience and knowledge to sit on the LPWG.

Councillor Duigan commented that different designs standards for new dwellings would be required due to more people working from home and needing office space in future.

Councillor Atterwill asked what the full review was going to cost against the cost of carrying out a partial review and what additional resources would be required.

In response, Councillor Claussen did not have the figures to hand but he reminded Members that Officers and the Executive Director had felt that a full review would be the most economical way forward.

Councillor Morton mentioned the Government White Paper 'Planning for the Future' – that highlighted some changes to the system and raised concern that if Members approved the recommendation of a full review, which he supported in principle, how was the Council going to keep abreast of developments and requirements when, in fact, the guidelines could change. He felt that it might be a better idea for the Council to support a partial review.

Members were informed that the advice from Senior Council Officers was that a full review would meet Members' expectations; a partial review would not.

**Action By**

In response to a previous question, Councillor Wilkinson commented that the LPWG Members had taken into consideration climate change. The Government White Paper due out in September would now need to be revised due to Covid-19 and would dictate to a certain extent how all Council's should move forward. He also commented that the cost between a full review and a partial review would be as the majority of work would be the same whichever type of review was undertaken.

Councillor Ian Martin raised a number of points concerning the timescales required for both a full and partial review he also suggested that both the INF03 and the five year requirement should be evidenced and a final point he wished to make was in respect of the 'White Paper' that came out in March, called 'Planning for the Future' that had been mentioned in the report and had been recorded in the Minutes that the Officers confirmed their view that even if the Council did not submit under INF03, the Council would still be deemed to be compliant with the requirements in 'Planning for the Future' and would have an up to date Local Plan in place in December 2023. This he felt was an important reassurance that the Cabinet should be aware of.

Following unanimous approval, it was

**RESOLVED** that:

- 1) a full Review of the Breckland Local Plan be undertaken by November 2024;
- 2) the Local Development Scheme be adopted to take affect from 1 June 2020;
- 3) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director (Place) following consultation with the Executive Member for Planning to make and approve any final changes to the wording and content of the Local Development Scheme; and to publish the Local Development Scheme on the Council's website;
- 4) delegated authority be given to the Executive Director (Place) following consultation with the Executive Member for Planning to approve any minor changes to the timelines of the production of documents in the Local Development Scheme as required by the process during the period 2020-2024; and
- 5) a letter be sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the Leader of Breckland Council expressing concerns on the short time scales allowed for the review of the Local Plan exacerbated by the restrictions in place as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**36/20 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 12)**

The arrangements for the next meeting had yet to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN