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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 2

Held on Wednesday, 20 June 2007 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

PRESENT

Mr C.R. Jordan (Chairman)	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs J. Ball	Mrs L.H. Monument (Vice-Chairman)
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr D.G. Mortimer
Councillor Claire Bowes	

Also Present

Mrs D.K.R. Irving
Mrs P. Quadling

In Attendance

Mr K. Ambrose	- Ambrose Associates Consultancy Limited
Mark Broughton	- Scrutiny Officer
Annalisa Graziano	- Committee Officer
Lisa Hilton	- Corporate & E-Communications Officer
Robert Walker	- LSP Officer

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25/07 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

- (1) Minute No: 20/07 Local Strategic Partnership Inclusion Strategy – Progress Report

Bottom of the second paragraph correction to read: “local groups and agencies involved in working for the excluded”.

Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2007 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26/07 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs. S.M. Matthews and Mr. M.J. Griffin.

27/07 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Mrs D. Irving and Mrs P. Quadling were in attendance.

28/07 TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN BRECKLAND (AGENDA ITEM 6)

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The Chairman welcomed Mr Kevin Ambrose from Ambrose Associates Consultancy Limited who had been invited to the meeting to report on progress and answer any questions the panel had with regard to the development of the strategy for social inclusion in Breckland.

Members gave consideration to the consultant's report, which would form the basis of the proposed LSP (Local Strategic Partnership) Social Inclusion Strategy.

Mr Ambrose highlighted that as a key stakeholder in the LSP, Breckland Council was asked to consider his report on developing a Social Inclusion Strategy and action plan. The LSP would consider and agree the main priorities (such as the overall vision, the strategic objectives and the main priorities for action) for tackling social exclusion.

Members were informed that the report gave an overview of social exclusion in the district detailing what it meant to be deprived and isolated in a generally prosperous rural area. The report also puts forward proposals for a strategic approach, aimed at enabling all organisations in the area to build on existing initiatives; address gaps in provision and overcome barriers to effective action.

Mr Ambrose informed Members that since the last meeting he had built a picture of social exclusion in Breckland by engaging with the community involving holding workshops in Dereham, Swaffham and Thetford along with 1:1 meetings with key organisations. In addition, a review of published research, local policies and plans was conducted and surveys of voluntary organisations were carried out. The findings enabled him to identify who was affected by social exclusion and through this exclusion what role the LSP should play.

Members received a progress report presentation of Mr Ambrose's findings for their consideration. Following discussion of the presentation and report, Members made the following comments:-

- A Member raised concern regarding the lack of information in the consultant's report in detailing the need to provide more transport in areas of rural deprivation. *Mr Ambrose explained that this was detailed in his report however, he accepted that it was perhaps not made very clear. The LSP Officer explained that on page 8 of the report under 'Transport and Access' it detailed the problems with the lack of available transport in rural areas being a key factor in affecting young people's access to employment and training as well as social and recreational activities. In addition, Members were informed that on page 10 of the report under the heading 'Transport and Access to Services' it detailed the problems caused by the lack of public transport for older people that do not have access to a car – or are no longer able to run a car. The LSP Officer advised Members that perhaps the information regarding*

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the lack of public transport in areas of rural deprivation did need to be more explicit.

- A Member advised Mr Ambrose that the objectives in the report were very good however, regarding Thetford; he was concerned that there was a lack of good communication. It was suggested that if the objectives from the Report were adopted and implemented this would be a great start for the Strategy. *Mr Ambrose acknowledged these comments and agreed that with meetings being held on an ad-hoc basis as they had in the past was simply not proactive enough for driving the strategy forward, and stressed the need for forum arena debates to share findings on a regular basis.*
- A query was raised as to why there had not been a workshop held in Watton. *In response, the LSP Officer advised Members that due to budget and timescale restrictions they had to pick only three of the five towns for the workshops however, they did receive representation from all five Towns.*
- The Chairman stated that the report was very good and highlighted many great ideas however, he was concerned that it would not be an easy task as many of the social groups discussed in the report that were socially excluded did not see themselves as excluded. Using the travelling community as an example, he felt that on the whole, they were generally healthy nevertheless, they were known to suffer from long term health problems due to the nature of their lifestyle however, despite being offered incentives to see doctors to help with health problems they would not accept help.
- A Member expressed concern that there needed to be careful consideration taken that they were not patronising in telling/advising people what they needed to be included in society. It was stressed that everyone was very different in their needs and mindset often causing barriers between people and this must all be taken into account. She explained that in the 12 years she had been a councillor the improvements in her area had been a result of local community helping one another and pushing initiatives. *Mr Ambrose agreed with the Councillors comments and reinforced the points made and suggested that they needed to work with local communities, taking on board what they saw as problems in their areas, helping where possible to empower local initiatives.*

Members thanked Mr Ambrose for his presentation and update and felt that the delivery of the Strategy would be a challenge for the LSP and wished them all the best.

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RESOLVED that when procuring the final Strategy and Action Plan, Officers take account of the comments detailed above.

Rob Walker

29/07 REVIEW OF THE BRECKLAND COUNCIL WEBSITE (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Members gave consideration to the report from the Scrutiny Officer on the 'Review of the Breckland Council Website'. The report detailed the evidence gathering sessions undertaken by the Panel as part of the Review and presented appropriate recommendations.

The Scrutiny Officer introduced his report and advised Members that following their meetings on 15 January 2007 when they had undertaken a practical examination and given an appraisal of the website and on 13 April 2007 when they considered documentary evidence relating to the website's performance and effectiveness and how it compared with other local authorities, their comments had been collated and researched.

Following the Member's recommendations detailed under Sections 5.1 to 5.9 inclusive of the accompanying report to the 'Review of the Breckland Council Website', the Website Officer and Corporate and e-communications Officer tabled their findings to Members as follows:

- **5.1** The layout of the home page be reconsidered to ensure that it was not overburdened with information whilst at the same time it is user friendly and clear for users. *The Corporate and e-communications Officer advised Members that they were currently in the process of changing the navigation tree to comply with the LGNL (Local Government Navigation List) making it easier for users to navigate the site. A report regarding the web site "First Impressions" quoted the website as follows: "Nice home page. Easy to see what each section is about and geared directly to the general public. Good."*
- **5.2** The website should adopt a "four click" approach to ensure that information can be found quickly and easily. *The Website Officer informed Members that regarding the planning links, they had implemented a "2 click" approach from the Council's homepage to the planning search page. In addition, he confirmed that web trend software had been installed on the website which enabled the monitoring of public 'hits' to the website. Members were advised that this software would enable the web officers to receive information on how frequently their pages were being visited and if they were not being visited very often they would receive help to improve the pages functionality.*
- **5.3** Information on the planning process should be

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bolstered on the website enabling the public to access pending planning applications and associated maps and forms. *The Website Officer explained that the planning process had been bolstered on the website by adding to the link already provided on the left hand navigation list. He advised that to make the search more user friendly when using the search function the user would be taken directly to the main planning search page.*

- **5.4** A link is established with the Eastern Daily Press Events Page and action be taken to ensure that news items on the website are removed promptly once they are no longer current. *The Corporate and e-communications Officer advised Members that a link to the EDP Events page had been established for a trial period of 3 months, this would be reviewed regarding the number of "hits" the pages receive. It was confirmed that all news items were live on the site within 2 hours of being released to the press and that old news items were archived automatically enabling the user to search for old press releases.*
- **5.5** Images are limited in size to obviate long download times, especially for dial-up users. *The Website Officer advised Members that all images on the website were optimised before they were published onto the site to avoid the use of images that would take too long to download for the user. It was confirmed that monitoring this would be the responsibility of the Web Officer and the Graphic Designer.*
- **5.6** A link to "Frequently Asked Questions" is installed on the home page and this be updated on a regular basis to ensure freshness. *Members were informed that a link to 'Frequently Asked Question' had been concurrent since the site went live and that all the FAQ's were updated to ensure all information was timely with the questions being taken from the Contact Centre and put onto the website as they were asked by the public.*
- **5.7** The role of web editors needs to be defined and clarified, in relation to their general work commitments and job descriptions should be updated accordingly to take account of the role of web editors as this has such an impact on the site content being kept up to date. *It was explained that the role of Web editors has been defined and Service Managers will be asked to include the targets and commitment to web editing in their future Service Team Plans. All service areas have been asked to confirm the web editor for their team to ensure that there was coverage on each of the service areas. In addition the role of a web editor was defined for Members information as follows:*

(1) To develop specific information resources for the

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service needs.

(2) To maintain and update pages as appropriate.

(3) Coordinate page development and major revisions with the web, communications officer and other web editors to ensure that links from top level pages are accurate (this often includes recommendations on links from the primary page to second).

(4) Serve as liaison to the Web and Communications Officer.

(5) Attend meetings of the Web Editors Group.

- **5.8** The Council continue to work with external organisations in order to ensure best practice is followed to ensure that the design and operational usefulness of the website is maximised. *The Website Officer informed Members that the Web team were benchmarking against South Norfolk Council and were being evaluated by Socitm and SiteMorse. In addition, he confirmed that along with the Business Improvement Team he has developed a number of online forms to be used on the Council's website allowing customers to submit requests and report issues twenty four hours a day seven days a week. Members were advised that the forms currently available online were to report:*

- *Abandoned Vehicles*
- *Fly Tips*
- *Compliments and Complaints*
- *Other comments and feedback*

The forms once submitted go straight through to the Customer Contact Centre for action. In addition, Members were informed that they were creating additional forms over the coming months to offer Breckland's customers more online reporting options on the website.

- **5.9** The Panel be charged with assessing the website improvement plan at regular intervals through 2007 and beyond as necessary. *The Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the website Improvement Plan could be seen by the Panel on a six monthly basis.*

A Member expressed that he was pleased with the progress of the website however, did mention that he had been unable to access an agenda through the new Mod.gov system. Following discussion with the Website Officer it highlighted that it was perhaps a user issue rather than system error nevertheless this would be clarified following the meeting.

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In addition, clarification was sought as to whether the 'frequently asked questions' that were posted onto the Council's website were differentiated between those of the questions asked by the Public, Councillors and Officers, as it was felt only the questions of the Public should be posted on the website. In response, the Website Officer advised Members that this was something that could perhaps be undertaken and may be looked into in the future.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to ICT and Committee Services Team involved in delivering Modern.gov, adding that he felt the new system was much better and easier to use than the old one.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be asked to take into account the Panel's views, together with the responses of the Website and Corporate and e-communications Officers as detailed in 5.1 to 5.9 above, and then recommend to Cabinet that the nine recommendations in the report be agreed;
- (ii) that the Overview and Scrutiny Commission be asked to recommend to Cabinet that the nine recommendations in the report be agreed; and
- (iii) that Members receive the website Improvement Plan on a six monthly basis.

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Jonathon
Collison and Lisa
Hilton

30/07 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Scrutiny Officer updated Members on the work programme and meeting schedule. He informed Members that the Police/Community Support Funding Report scheduled on the programme for the September Panel meeting might be brought forward to the July meeting.

The Chairman advised all Members that if they had any items they would like the Panel to investigate and discuss they should contact The Scrutiny Officer.

31/07 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The arrangements of the next meeting on Wednesday, 25 July 2007 at 10.00 am in the Anglia Room, Committee Suite Elizabeth House, Dereham were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.25 am

CHAIRMAN