

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 2

**Held on Wednesday, 25 July 2007 at 10.00 am in
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr C.R. Jordan (Chairman)
Mrs J. Ball
Councillor Claire Bowes
Mr M.J. Griffin

Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mrs L.H. Monument (Vice-Chairman)
Mr D.G. Mortimer

Also Present

Mrs D.K.R. Irving

In Attendance

Mark Broughton
David Green
Ray Johnson

Stephen McGrath
Keith Stevens
Robert Walker
Elaine Wilkes

- Scrutiny Officer
- Project Manager
- Acting Operations Manager (Commercial Services)
- Principal Committee Officer
- Acting Business Transformation Director
- LSP Officer
- Senior Committee Officer

32/07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S.G. Bambridge and Mrs P. Quadling.

34/07 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The following persons were in attendance:

- Councillor D. Irving
- Chief Inspector Carl Edwards – Invited speaker for agenda item 7

**35/07 LSP FUNDING - SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS VEHICLES
(AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Officer introduced Chief Inspector Carl Edwards, who had been invited to talk to members about the use of the Safer Neighbourhood Vehicles.

The LSP Officer presented the report and outlined the background as to how the LSP was funded. The Norfolk County Council

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received the income from Second Homes Council Tax from the seven Norfolk District Councils each year. Half of this income was set aside for use by the relevant District LSP, a further 25% was set aside for affordable housing projects and 25% was retained by the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership.

The Breckland LSP received approximately £70,000 income per annum from Second Homes Council Tax funding, which had to be spent on the delivery of the Community Plan for Breckland. In Breckland, this funding had been used to fund the LSP Development Officer post on a two-year fixed term contract. Over the last year, more than £91,000 had been committed to project funding, including some £22,325 funding for the five Safer Neighbourhood Vehicles. Currently, the LSP had £108,435 funding which was not yet committed.

All decisions on LSP funding were made by the LSP Board, whose membership included Breckland's Leader and Chief Executive.

Chief Inspector Edwards then outlined the background to the Safer Neighbourhood Vehicles scheme.

Five vehicles had been funded by the Breckland LSP as part of the delivery of the Government's Safer Neighbourhoods initiative aimed at providing dedicated, visible, accessible and responsive neighbourhood policing through police and partnership agency teams. The vehicles were leased on a three year full maintenance contract. Insurance and petrol costs were met by Norfolk Constabulary. The vehicles were not liveried police cars but were clearly branded with the Partnership logos.

The District had five Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) and one vehicle was provided for each team for use by any of the agencies or officers within that team.

While there was a strong police input, the cornerstone of the approach was the involvement of all relevant partners in addressing issues of local concern identified by local communities.

The vehicles enabled access to rural communities, which was crucial to the success of Safer Neighbourhoods. At present, police and partners were using the vehicles to access the priority areas identified through Community Action Group meetings in order to deliver necessary interventions, such as targeting rogue traders, burglaries, fly tipping, road-side car selling, working with community safety and licensing officers to target anti-social behaviour and disorder.

Many of these outcomes directly related to national performance targets under Best Value.

Working within an SNT had the benefit of providing individuals from the partner agencies with added security and reassurance when dealing with potentially problematic situations, avoiding the need for them to take their private vehicle to an area where it might subsequently be recognised or identified.

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The vehicle scheme was governed by a written protocol as to the operation of the vehicles and quarterly monitoring returns. A copy of the protocol was tabled at the meeting for members' information.

A member commented that she felt that the scheme should be fully funded by the Police. In response, it was pointed out that Police Community Support Officers were centrally funded but there was no central funding for the support infrastructure. LSP funding was a separate stream available to all partners, including the police.

It was further explained that while Breckland acted as the Accountable body for the Breckland LSP, the LSP Board was responsible for funding decisions and the Community Plan for Breckland. The Safer Neighbourhoods Vehicles scheme was not considered to be direct funding for the Police and the use of the vehicles by the various partner agencies was being monitored.

Members welcomed the report and there was general support for the scheme, which it was felt was meeting the public desire for safer communities.

Following some further questioning, it was noted that the Police had committed to bear ongoing revenue costs of the Safer Neighbourhood Teams and that the funding from second homes council tax could be used to lever down additional funding from other match funding sources to support projects.

The officers were thanked for their report and it was

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

36/07 BRECKLAND COUNCIL CAR PARKS REVIEW
(AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Acting Operations Manager (Commercial Services) and the Project Manager presented the report, which informed members of the background to the development of the car parks review and progress to date.

The work done to date followed the policies and improvement and action plan arising from the Best Value Service Review carried out in 2001, which had set the overarching principles to be applied across the service in terms of why and what type of parking should be provided by Breckland, that short and long term parking orders would be introduced, with a regular enforcement regime established to maintain compliance with car parking orders.

A number of consultation events had taken place over the intervening period in Thetford and Dereham involving all relevant stakeholders and these had confirmed that the overarching principles were still valid and that the towns would welcome practical progress on implementation of these policies.

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During 2006, it had been possible to take advantage of some last minute funding opportunities which had enabled some improvement works to be carried out to car parks at White Hart Street and Castle Street, Thetford, and Cowper Road, Dereham.

The preparation of detailed design proposals for some sites had brought to light new issues that would require members' guidance before physical arrangements could be confirmed, for example the question of inclusion of residents' parking, 'Park Mark' accreditation and displacement of coach and/or HGV use.

Further feasibility works at Thetford would be linked in with the "Moving Thetford Forward" programme and consultations were ongoing at Dereham.

Although designs were being progress across the District, members were informed that there was currently insufficient approved budget remaining for further major car park works.

The next phase of the review was to begin work on producing an overall scheme for each town, commencing with Dereham which it was felt would give the best insight into developments to date and enable an assessment to be made for the new standard for physical improvements from the Cowper Road pilot scheme. It was proposed to run workshops to examine the issues in detail and it was suggested that the members of the Panel should participate in these workshops.

During the ensuing discussion, members concurred with the view that it was desirable to set overall standards for the management and maintenance of the Council's car parks whilst allowing for the individual and varied needs of the towns to be met. The importance of having regard to strategic and other influences, such as public transport, traffic flow, links with trunk routes, parking for commuters, day-time parking for local workers, etc. was also acknowledged.

In answer to a question, it was explained that the question of car park charges did not form part of this review, although it was acceded that the issue might be raised through the wider debating arena.

It was agreed that the membership of the Panel provided a sufficient representation of the towns and rural areas, with the exception that there was no Attleborough ward member on the Panel.

It was noted that it was intended that the findings and recommendations arising from the member workshops would be disseminated out to the wider consultation forums for public consideration.

Members welcomed the report and

RESOLVED that the members of the Panel participate in the proposed car park workshops and that the officers be asked

to ensure member representation for Attleborough is included.

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37/07 OVERVIEW AND UPDATE ON SPORTS DEVELOPMENT AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT IN BRECKLAND (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Business Transformation Director (formerly PFI Manager) attended for this item to present the report, which updated members on the progress of sports and arts development in the district and outlined future plans and opportunities.

The sports and arts development function was re-established following the successful signing of the PFI Contract and the first year of the new arrangements was just completed. Funding of £90,000 was available, shared between arts and sports development and towards health improvement work. (The post of Health Improvement Officer was funded by the Norfolk Primary Care Trust.)

The establishment comprised the permanent posts of Senior Leisure Manager and Sports Development Officer and a two-year fixed term contract post of Arts Development Officer.

The role of sports and arts development was to enable a greater number of residents to engage in and gain access to cultural and leisure opportunities in the district. This was being achieved by working strategically with key delivery agencies, such as Active Norfolk and Creative Arts East, and by enabling local individuals, communities and organisations to develop their own initiatives.

Sports Development: A variety of initiatives had been developed to address the recommendations of the Cultural Strategy and the priorities and objectives of the Council. The Sports Development Officer was working with the various local sports clubs and organisations to deliver a variety of courses around the district.

Strong partnerships had been formed with agencies such as Active Norfolk, Sport England, Sports Coach UK, Skills Active, National Governing Bodies of Sport, School Sports Partnerships, Parkwood Leisure (the authority's leisure operator under the PFI), as well as with community clubs, leisure facility providers, coaches, village hall committees and schools.

Such a joint approach had created new opportunities and enabled access to information, assistance and financial/human resources. Partnership events and activities, such as the Active Norfolk Youth Games and the Community Sports Coach scheme had been very successful and proved the worth of these partnerships.

Priorities for the coming year included assisting clubs to achieve 'Club Mark' standard, further development of the holiday activities programme, upskilling the sports workforce, engaging with partner agencies to deliver cross-cutting themes, as well as exploring diversionary activities in key areas. In addition, it was proposed to develop a directory of opportunities to help clubs attract more participants.

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Draft projects were being developed with a view to drawing down further funding for sports activity and grass roots delivery in the district as part of the Community Sports Network.

Arts Development: Again, various initiatives had been developed to address the recommendations in the Cultural Strategy and the priorities and objectives of the Council. Festivals, carnivals and community events had been supported in all five towns and relevant parishes which had enabled them to diversify and extend professional live programmes and reach new audiences. Rural areas had been supported in particular through a professional touring theatre scheme and holiday arts activities.

Opportunities for local artists to practice, exhibit and perform had been developed, for example through the Open Studios scheme and the purchase of portable exhibition screens for community hire. In addition, participatory workshop and visual art competition and other such initiatives had been introduced.

As for sports development, strong partnerships had been established with other agencies, such as Norfolk County Council, Creative Arts East, Norfolk Music Works, Norfolk and Norwich Festival, The SeaChange Trust, Theatre Is, as well as with other district arts officers. This partnership working had enabled a collaborative approach to the development of new opportunities, bringing benefits in terms of financial, human and physical resources that otherwise would not have been accessible.

In the forthcoming year, it was proposed that more generic support for community arts and heritage groups would be available through networking events, equipment hire, email and web-based information. Other key areas of work would entail greater cultural involvement with developments such as the Dereham Memorial Hall and plans relating to Thetford Growth Point Status, support for the creative industries and development of the Arts Award scheme for young people.

Holiday Activity Programme: The holiday activity programme had proved very successful and copies of the Breckland Summer Activities Guide 2007 were distributed to members.

Since the programme was introduced in October 2006, over 600 young people had attended the holiday activity sessions run in the half term and Easter holidays. All events had achieved a 100% satisfied/very satisfied rating, with 100% of those attending indicating that they would attend again if similar events were organised. These satisfaction levels were very pleasing.

In answer to questions, it was noted that there were proposals to develop activities for the under-5 age group and also for the over-14 age group.

Members suggested some additional village venues for future holiday activities programmes.

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Concerns were raised by a Swaffham ward member about the deterioration in the leisure centre facilities provided under the dual use arrangements at Hamonds High School.

In response, it was explained that the dual use centres were taken out of the PFI contract arrangements and that, instead, the Council had entered into a five-year management agreement with Parkwood Leisure in relation to these centres. It was confirmed that the existing annual budget transferred to Parkwood under this arrangement was very small and gave little scope for initiatives. However, repair and maintenance of the existing fixtures and fittings was the responsibility of the Norfolk County Council as Education Authority and it was noted that major capital investment had been made at the school but that the school had not included the leisure facilities within that programme. It was noted that there was a possibility that the management agreement on the dual use centres with Parkwood Leisure might be re-negotiable to give a longer, more viable period which could enable the company to develop some facilities there but any such provisions could not be in competition with existing facilities under the PFI contract.

A member drew attention to the importance of footpaths and bridleways to leisure activities and felt that this was an area that seemed to be neglected in the wider aspect of rural leisure/health provision.

Although Breckland did have a Walking for Health programme, it was accepted that this was an area that could be explored further. Play provision was another objective within the Leisure Strategy and the question of footpaths and bridleways could fit within that.

It was pointed out that the responsibility for designated public footpaths and bridleways lay with the County Council but it was felt that the general public was not fully aware of this.

The Panel was informed that a further update on the approved work plans of the Arts and Sports Development Officers would be brought to the Panel's October meeting.

Members thanked the Business Transformation Director for his report and

RESOLVED that the report be noted and a review of public footpaths / walkways / bridleways as part of the wider leisure / health agenda be added to the Panel's future work programme.

38/07 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The following amendments to the work programme were noted and agreed:

- Update on Member Development and Training – put back to September meeting.
- Update on Work Plans of the Sports & Arts Development Officers – allocate to October meeting

- Review of public footpaths / walkways / bridleways as part of the wider leisure / health agenda – allocate to October meeting

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39/07 DATE OF NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Arrangements for the next meeting on 4 September 2007 at the Town Hall, Attleborough were confirmed.

It was also noted that the venue for the October meeting would be King's House, Thetford.

The meeting closed at 11.48 am

CHAIRMAN