

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 15 July 2010 at 2.15 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr G.P. Balaam	Mr K. Martin
Mr A.J. Byrne	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mr B. Rose
Mr A.P. Joel	

Also Present

Mr A.C. Stasiak	Mrs L.S. Turner
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In Attendance

Mark Broughton	- Scrutiny Officer
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Stephen McGrath	- Member Services Manager
Robert Leigh	- Assistant Director, Communications and Communities
Rod Urquhart	- Support Services Manager (ARP)

58/10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59/10 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Gilbert, Mr Goreham, Mr Chapman-Allen and Mrs Matthews.

Mr Balaam was in attendance as substitute for Mr Goreham.

60/10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

61/10 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Mr Stasiak and Mrs Turner were in attendance.

62/10 EXECUTIVE MEMBER PORTFOLIO UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 6)

Mr Adrian Stasiak and Mrs Lynda Turner were in attendance in their capacity as Executive Member and Executive Support Member for Communities and Benefits.

Mr Stasiak said that it was a huge portfolio which covered such things as Arts, Pride in Breckland, Sports, PFI/Strategic Sport, Community Development, Youth Engagement and Community Safety as well as the

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Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership. The Support Services Manager (ARP) was present to answer any questions.

Mr Stasiak commended the excellent staff within his Portfolio saying that they gave him terrific support. They were preparing for the inevitable cuts, and as many of their services were discretionary, there were several things that were at risk.

He started his update by asking Members to support the One Stop Bus which would be visiting 16 key rural service centres on a monthly basis to offer better access to Council services.

During 2010 the Portfolio had been involved in the following:

Arts

- Successful Film Festival run in 2010 with national press interest
- Theatre Festival planned for summer 2010 with Roger Lloyd-Pack as Patron
- Successful Arts Council bid for art project (rural landscapes) in south of Breckland
- Full holiday arts programme planned for Summer 2010 (details in Voice)
- 95% satisfaction with Arts activities
- 58% increase in participation from 2007/08 to 2009/10
- 572 people participating in arts activities 2009/10
- 28 workshops in 2007/08 compared with 44 workshops delivered in 2009/10

Pride

- 300 volunteers engaged in Pride in Breckland project
- Richard Wills – winner of Employee of the Year at Pride in People Awards
- 6 people recruited on 6 month contracts through Future Jobs Fund to form Pride Team
- Breckland Blitz – successful 9 week environmental engagement programme
- Pride in Breckland Corporate Away Days – participation by Tesco and Sainsbury's
- £1500 raised for Help for Heroes from sale of We Are Proud of You magazine
- World Record attempt to create the worlds longest chain of plastic bottles
- Pride in Breckland Awards being planned for March 2011 at RAF Marham

Sports

- 96% satisfaction with Sports activities
- 1956 people participating in sports holiday activities in 2009/10
- Breckland Cricket Festival: 64 Sessions delivered at 8 primary schools with 1500 young people
- 25 local residents given subsidies for coaching certificates in return for services offered to Breckland Council on sports holiday activity programme.
- Sports Unlimited – 3 x 8 week externally funded projects currently running in Thetford and Dereham (Boxing/Dance/Hip-Hop)

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- Sport-Specific Holiday Programme – Summer program of 25 sport-specific activities planned across the 5 market Towns for Summer 2010.
- Active Norfolk Rural Bid/The Norfolk Village Games, Breckland – The Norfolk Village Games (Breckland) is being launched as part of the Wayland Celebration of Community and Culture on July 24th at Watton Sports and Social Club.
- Gifted and Talented Grant Award Scheme – 12 local young aspiring athletes funded to the total of £3750 since April.

PFI/Strategic Sport

- Third year of full service operation.
- Satisfaction Survey – highly commendable
- Attendance at both leisure centres has increased
- Partnership with Parkwood working very well

Community Development

- Training programmes arranged for first aid, child protection and basic food hygiene
- Funding Fair – a huge success and oversubscribed
- Community Car Scheme – ongoing roll out of scheme
- Playbuilder – funding confirmed until end of year. Bawdeswell held up as best practice.

Youth Engagement

- 33 schools engaged
- 500 young people involved in a range of events/activities
- Youth Select Committee day at Ecotech on 8 July
- Youth Council meetings well attended
- Youth Engagement programme continues to be successful with more schools engaged
- Youth Council member is also UK Youth Parliament representative
- Member of Youth Council attended European Youth Summit in Romania

Community Safety

- Joint Community Safety Team established with Norfolk Constabulary, operating from Elizabeth House
- New £3.5million CCTV system introduced on time and on budget.
- Problem solving projects, working with youths involved with alcohol and anti-social behaviour
- Projects including Kickz (football in the community), Allotment, Right Direction (working with excluded children) and 'Ball Games' (setting out rules to prevent ASB during the World Cup)
- Casework on complaints, antisocial behaviour contracts, Business Watch, etc
- LSP – successful in bids for Migration Impact external Funding of £220,000 and future Jobs Fund external funding of £125,000.

ARP

- Agreed in principle to St Edmundsbury joining ARP
- Level 5 of Breckland House to be rented out for extra staff
- All performance requirements currently being met
- New website to be launched in August
- Electronic claim forms now available on-line

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At this point the Chairman proposed to bring forward Agenda Item 12a (Draft report and minute extract of the ARP Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish Group) to be discussed at the same time.

Mr Rogers told Members that he was the Council's representative on the Brecks Partnership. He was concerned that Breckland was behind in its payments.

Mr Stasiak explained that Breckland Council was one of five partners that financed the Brecks Project and that part of the initial agreement had been that all five should make their allotted payments. The Council was waiting for payment from some of the other partners before making its payment.

Mr Rogers was concerned that the other partners might be doing exactly the same, waiting for Breckland Council to make its payment, thereby causing a stalemate. There were a lot of projects pending which depended upon the funding.

Mr Stasiak agreed to check the position.

In response to a question from Mr Joel, Mr Stasiak confirmed that the mobile CCTV cameras were not yet available as costs had been higher than expected.

The Chairman commented that the leisure centres were good facilities and he was not surprised that their attendance figures were up. However, he felt that the cafeteria was missing an opportunity for additional income and that the services there could be improved.

Mr Stasiak suggested that he and his Support Member could act as 'secret shoppers' to check out the facilities.

Another Member asked if increased visitors to the centres led to increased financial benefit for the Council. Mr Stasiak said this was a good question which he would need to check before he could answer.

The Chairman noted that Mr Stasiak was also Deputy Leader of the Council. He asked him for his thoughts on that role.

Mr Stasiak said that he saw his role as supporting the Leader, being his eyes and ears and acting as a conduit to get information and the thoughts and observations of other Members through to him.

He advised Members that there was a paper about the election of the Leader and Deputy Leader, being presented to the next Cabinet meeting and he suggested that they might want to get involved in that debate.

Discussion then moved on to Item 12a of the agenda (Draft report and minute extract of the ARP Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish Group).

Mr Kybird (Chairman of the Task & Finish Group) explained that the meetings had been held in Thetford and had sought the views of a wide range of officers, including home workers. The draft report would be presented to both Breckland Cabinet and Forest Heath Overview and

Councillor
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Stasiak

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Scrutiny Committee and any comments would be incorporated into the final report.

The Support Services Manager (ARP) then updated Members on the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership.

On 1 July 2010 the ARP Joint Committee had approved in principle St Edmundsbury joining the partnership. This would provide additional savings of £383,000 over three years and over ten years the conservative estimate was \$1,409,660 on top of existing savings. The Council would also receive more direct income as the extended partnership would rent level 5 of Breckland House in Thetford.

He also mentioned that all performance indicators were green; a new website for the partnership would be launched in August; electronic claim forms were now available, speeding up the process and reducing the amount of paper used and a new system of assisted claims (helping people to fill out their forms) was also speeding things up.

The ARP Joint Committee had received a report from the Strategic Manager on the likely effects of the budget. An updated report would be presented to the next meeting when more details were available.

He thanked the Commission for the excellent job that the Task & Finish Group had done, saying that it had sorted out a number of issues and brought out a number of very good ideas. It had been a very robust process which had highlighted the success of the partnership. With the addition of St Edmundsbury the partnership would be the first to include more than three authorities. It was likely that five partners would create the critical mass, beyond which costs would exceed savings. It was therefore possible that in future there might be an ARP 2, or a franchise arrangement to share best practice.

With the forthcoming budget cuts there would be significant opportunities with other authorities over the next two to three years.

He concluded by saying that Members were very welcome to visit to see the way in which the partnership worked.

Mr Stasiak said that he was very impressed with the way that things were proceeding.

Members discussed the success of homeworking and the health and safety and other requirements associated with it.

The Chairman thanked Mr Stasiak, Mrs Turner and the Support Services Manager (ARP) for attending.

63/10 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Chairman introduced the report and explained that he had tried to be general in his introduction as the detail had been provided by the Scrutiny Officer. He said it had been an exceptionally good year for scrutiny and they had achieved a considerable amount of work. He thanked everyone who had taken part.

The Scrutiny Officer then gave a brief overview of the report. He had

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given an explanation on what scrutiny was, recognising that the document was intended as much as an outward facing one as of intrinsic internal merit, and referred to the wide range of Member involvement in overview and scrutiny in the last year as evidenced in the Task & Finish Groups.

A Member said that she had enjoyed doing the Task & Finish Group work and she thought that more people should be encouraged to participate. The Chairman agreed and said that every non-Executive Member had a part to play and should get involved.

He thanked the Scrutiny Officer for his report which was adopted.

64/10 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Scrutiny Officer gave a presentation on this item, which had been introduced as a Statutory duty the previous year, but had not been used at all by Members.

Any long running, unresolved issues could be referred by any Member and would be heard at the next meeting of the Commission. Whilst there were potential minor drawbacks relating particularly to capacity, the Call for Action mechanism represented a positive new approach for all Members to take through an expanded overview and scrutiny route, resolving long-standing issues and helping empower Members through community engagement.

The Chairman asked for the presentation to be e-mailed to all Members with an explanatory note.

The report was noted.

65/10 BRECKLAND COUNCIL PETITIONS SCHEME (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report which had been amended following its initial consideration by the Commission and now included a flowchart to show how petitions would be dealt with.

There was not much flexibility in the requirements of the scheme, but the Council was able to determine the thresholds for dealing with petitions and could also nominate which Senior Officers should attend the Commission when it considered petitions. These four issues for local determination were laid out at item 3.6 (on page 22) of the report. The Scrutiny Officer noted that the second and third bullet points should be transposed.

He concluded by saying that this was a statutory duty that the Council had to do and the scheme should already be in place. He therefore asked Members to recommend the current scheme to Cabinet on the understanding that any issues of concern could be addressed by review.

A Member was concerned that the threshold for petitions was set too high, as issues affecting individual villages would not be able to attract the required number of signatures to trigger debate. However, it was pointed out that each petition would be considered individually by an Officer and the Chairman of the Commission to determine how it should

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be dealt with and there was a minimum threshold of 20 which would trigger a response.

The Scrutiny Officer also pointed out that local issues of concern could be raised through the Councillor Call for Action route.

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

- (1) endorsement of the petition scheme including the proposed thresholds and to further recommend approval to Council;
- (2) agreement of the associated scheme terms and conditions; and
- (3) insertion of appropriate wording into the Council's constitution to officially recognise the petitions scheme.

66/10 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (AGENDA ITEM 10)

None.

67/10 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (AGENDA ITEM 11)

None.

68/10 TASK AND FINISH GROUPS (AGENDA ITEM 12)

- (a) Draft Report and Minute Extract of the ARP Joint Scrutiny Task & Finish Group (Agenda Item 12a)

This item was discussed during the Executive Member Portfolio Update. See Minute No 62/10 above.

69/10 CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT REPORT AND DRAFT RESOLUTION FROM THE PARKING TASK & FINISH GROUP (AGENDA ITEM 12B)

In the absence of the Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, Mr Martin introduced this item and asked Members to support the three recommendations.

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the report had been discussed by the Task & Finish Group as they knew it was going to be presented to Cabinet. They wished to endorse the recommendations through the Commission.

The Chairman noted that this was an officer report, rather than a Member initiative. He asked Members for their comments in relation to the recommendations, in particular 2.3 which he said was generic. He was concerned that there were no details about how the Council would determine on-street parking enforcement arrangements.

A Member asked if this would ultimately lead to wheel-clamping and vehicle removal. The Scrutiny Officer advised that it was not known at this stage and that a partnership approach was being proposed with details to be worked out later.

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The Chairman advised Members that as the police would no longer enforce on-street parking the County were saying that each District would have to decide how to tackle the problem. The recommendations were proposing that the Council did not deal directly but employed a third party.

A Member said that he did not want to approve anything with hidden detail and the Chairman responded by saying that this could be a matter for future scrutiny.

RECOMMEND TO CABINET

- (1) it supports the County wide proposal for Civil Parking Enforcement;
- (2) replaces existing car parking orders in the district to comply with the Traffic Management Act 2004, to enable them to be enforceable; and
- (3) approves the procurement of on-street enforcement in the district by Norfolk County Council from a neighbouring district or other Service Provider.

70/10 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Chairman suggested that between September and October, the Commission should scrutinise proposals re spending and service provision. A report would be presented to Council in October/November about the reduction in Rate Support Grant and its effects on the Council's services. Officers were currently looking for savings and residents would be invited to respond to a survey asking them which services they wanted to keep.

It was also noted that the recommendations from the Contaminated Land Task & Finish Group would be presented to the Commission in October.

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71/10 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on Thursday 2 September 2010 at the Gallery Bar, Watton Sports Centre, were noted.

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm

CHAIRMAN