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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MOVING THETFORD FORWARD BOARD

**Held on Thursday, 14 July 2011 at 10.00 am in
Keystone Innovation Centre, Thetford**

PRESENT

Mr J.W. Nunn (Chairman)	Mr P. Rabbetts
Mr P.D. Claussen (Vice-Chairman)	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr J. Connolly	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris	Mr N. Stott
Mr R. King	Mr T. Trotman
Mr R.G. Kybird	Mr A. Witton
Mr T. Poulter	

Also Present

Mrs S Armes	Mr T J Jermy
Mr C S Clark	Mrs P.A. Spencer

In Attendance

Miss N. Beal	Planning Policy Officer (Growth Point)
Mr B. Canham	Thetford Town Council
Miss A. Cherry	Work Experience (Breckland Council)
Mr D. Chessum	Joint Marketing & Communications Team Leader
Mr J. Bamford	Funding and Claims Officer
Mrs M. Bailey	Senior Accountant Capital and Treasury
Mrs J. Britton	Senior Committee Officer
Mr R. Burton	Strategic Property Manager
Mr E. Chambers	Town Clerk
Mrs M. Chapman-Allen	Norfolk County Council
Mr D. Cox	Economic Development Officer
Mr T. Edmunds	Developer and Travel Planning Services Manager
Mrs S. Glossop	Town Manager – Thetford Town Council
Mr S. Greener	Homes & Communities Agency
Mr C. Hey	Norfolk County Council (Children's Services)
Ms F. McDiarmid	Norfolk County Council
Mr D. Spencer	Principal Planning Policy Officer (Capita Symonds for Breckland)
Mr M. Spencer	Thetford Town Council
Mr M. Stanton	Economic Development Manager
Mr M. Stokes	Deputy Chief Executive
Mr P. Tracey	Keystone Development Trust
Mr K. Ward	Growth Programme Manager

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21/11 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Mr Paul Rabbets from Flagship Housing Group was welcomed to his first meeting. Mr Rabbets said that he was only attending in an interim capacity and would probably be replaced by someone else in the near future. He would, however, take forward any actions for his predecessor.

The Deputy Chief Executive asked if the Parish Poll, in relation to the location of the bus station, could be discussed as an urgent item.

It was agreed that this matter would be discussed as an urgent item under agenda item 8(b).

22/11 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Murphy, Mr M Goulding, Mr T Gilbert-Wooldridge and Mr R Cooper.

23/11 MINUTES AND ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 4)

(a) Bus Interchange (Minute No. 16/11)

A Member pointed out that TE had not sent the Board graphics of the bus interchange as previously agreed. Members were informed that copies would be sent forthwith.

(b) Empty Shops (Minute No. 18/11 (c))

SG stated that Members were actually shown pictures of window murals not of the empty shops.

(c) Any Other Business (Minute No. 19/11)

Referring to the first paragraph with regard to the rough piece of ground across the river at Arlington Way, TP informed the Board that Brettenham and Kilverstone Parish Council (not the Town Council as stated in the Minutes) would be willing to take over the said land and build a walkway from the A1066 roundabout from Arlington Way to Nunn's Bridges.

The land was currently owned by Thetford Town Council at the Nunn's Bridges end and the other end, at the A1066 roundabout, was jointly owned by Abbey Homes and the British Trust of Ornithology (BTO). The BTO, which already had a permissive footpath, and Abbey Homes were willing to transfer the said land but without any endowment under a S106.

As the Abbey Homes part included a number of dangerous trees, TP asked the Board if it would be willing to fund the work in the first instance and the Parish Council would take on the maintenance.

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It was agreed that the Deputy Chief Executive would take this forward as an action.

MS

24/11 THETFORD AREA ACTION PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 5)

NB and DS were in attendance and took Members through the latest version of the Thetford Area Action Plan (TAAP).

Breckland Council had the benefit of an adopted Core Strategy that provided the framework for finalising the TAAP document. The TAAP looked in detail at the land allocations and policies that would guide the growth and regeneration of Thetford.

The document had already benefited from three rounds of public consultation. The next stage was the six week public consultation which represented the last opportunity for representations to be made on the soundness of the document before it was submitted and considered at an Examination in Public by a Government Inspector which hopefully would take place before or just after Christmas 2011. The above process was, however, dependent upon the nature of the representations received during the final six week statutory consultation period. It was noted that, at this stage, the Council might have to provide additional resources to demonstrate a commitment to the successful delivery of these sites proceeding and during the Examination process, particularly in light of any responses received during the six week publication period.

The main parts of the TAAP were highlighted which included the comments that had been made from the final draft version which had been put out to consultation earlier in the year. The principles of the TAAP had remained valid and had not substantially changed from those comments.

The Submission TAAP sought to allocate land for 5,000 dwellings over the period to 2026 instead of 6,500. These dwellings would be located on greenfield land within the urban extension to the north and north-east of the town. The infrastructure would be delivered in a timely manner to keep pace with the rate of development. The map shown to the Board highlighted the environmental constraints which had reduced some of the housing allocation within these particular areas.

In relation to transport, modal shift from single occupancy car use was essential. Improvements would be required to the A11 junctions as a result of the new growth. Particular care would have to be taken at the Brandon Road/A11 junction where these changes could impact on the protected habitat and species in the area.

The infrastructure needs that would arise from the growth and regeneration would influence the timing and phasing of development to ensure that existing and new communities in Thetford were not compromised. A phasing map was shown which highlighted the order of development.

RK felt that the Health and Healthy Lifestyles provision under Policy

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TH7 was weak and needed to be looked at again. TT said that he would take this back for further review. NB explained that in the Plan period eight GPs and six dentists were required to support the growth. The Policy in question related to a new health facility in the Urban Extension to accommodate three GPs and the six dentists. The existing Healthy Living Centre could accommodate five GPs.

RKg thought it would be useful if the changes could be highlighted. DS pointed out that there was a covering report going to Breckland Council's Cabinet meeting that highlighted all the changes that had been made. It was agreed that this report would be emailed to Board Members for information.

DS

TP had concerns about the new Police facilities referred to in Part 10 of the document and felt that such facilities would not help to reduce the crime in the area and felt that a strategy should be developed. DS pointed out that such a strategy would have to be developed by the Police and not by the Planning Policy Team.

In response to a question about the amount of floor space in the town centre, Members were informed that the retail information had been based on information gathered in 2010 and that retail studies would be updated every three years. The starting point for any new additional retail would start from this document which would be backed up by Breckland Council's Retail and Town Centre Study. In the short term there would be a relatively modest level of need but as more people came in to the town the retail floorspace would be increased accordingly with growth. RK felt that a statement to highlight that fact should be included in the document. DS said that Policy TH1 already reflected this specific town centre reference but that he would look into the Town Centre section.

RK had a number of detailed comments that he wished to discuss with NB outside of this meeting.

NS felt that that the wording within the Policies for community buildings with regard to the sharing of school facilities, and in relation to tackling the imbalance in the town and social inequality, should be tightened up and strengthened. It was agreed that NS would contact NB regarding these concerns.

It was agreed that all comments received from the Board would be verbally reported to Cabinet.

The report was otherwise noted.

25/11 EMPLOYMENT PAPER (AGENDA ITEM 6)

DC the Economic Development Officer from Breckland Council presented the employment paper which he had been asked to prepare for the Board.

The purpose of the paper was to provide a detailed and comprehensive forecast of the potential employment growth of Thetford during the

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period of growth and regeneration in line with the Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) of the TAAP; concentrating on the Sustainable Urban Extension and the Thetford Enterprise Park.

The background, key objectives and analysis were explained.

In response to a question as to whether existing employers had been considered in the document, Members were informed that a questionnaire would be sent out to them once completed.

The Chairman felt that the education and skills base needed to be raised for the businesses in the area. He hoped that the Academy would teach the correct skills as there was nothing in this Employment Paper to ensure that all these matters came together. MSt, Breckland Council's Economic Development Manager, stated that Thetford did have youth unemployment problems and he wanted to make sure that apprenticeship's and internship's were available whilst the development was on-going. This would mean that the youth of Thetford would be building their future. MCA informed the Board that the new Principal of the Academy had already been tasked to work with businesses in the town to find out exactly what skills were required. JC stated that local businesses at the moment were very pro apprenticeships. NS pointed out that he had completed a piece of work with around 120 people highlighting the aspirations of youngsters in Thetford; this piece of work would be published shortly.

A Member felt that an inward growth strategy was required to prevent the people who would be buying or living in the 5,000 new homes from commuting to nearby cities to work. MSt reported that such a strategy had already been developed – the necessary infrastructure would be put in place before development.

AS stated that Norfolk County Council and Breckland Council were already working collectively and all these concerns would be brought together in a Growth Strategy.

The report was otherwise noted.

26/11 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE (AGENDA ITEM 7)

A revised Governance Structure had been circulated which replaced the original draft sent out with the agenda.

The document had been produced at the request of the Moving Thetford Forward Board in response to concerns being voiced by the current Board Members. The report covered the governance of the Moving Thetford Forward programme which was moving from the funding allocation phase to the delivery phase. The report sought to retain Breckland Council's accountability, as required by the CLG, whilst improving transparency and scrutiny of the projects being delivered. The recommendations in the document were intended to replace the project approval sections of the governance document and the other sections and obligations remain unchanged.

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KW, the Council's Growth Programme Manager, said that he had had many conversations with various people about how the Board should be developed. The first suggestion was to have an Overview & Scrutiny Board (see Schedule 1 – Option 1 of the report) and the second suggestion was to have a Moving Thetford Forward Delivery Partnership with various consultative groups underneath (see Schedule 1 – Option 2 of the report). Both ideas were the main ones that seemed to be working across the country. Both options would provide the Programme Delivery Group (PDG) more powers so that the Board itself, or as it would soon be called if either option was chosen, the Stakeholder Group, would not have to meet so often. The first option was preferred as the second was not quite so open and transparent. The financial process would not be changed. The final option was to keep the Board as it was.

The pros and cons of each option were highlighted.

Members were informed that this report had been presented to the PDG which had supported option 1.

NS preferred the scrutiny option, option 1, as it was much more transparent and had a much clearer reporting mechanism. It also gave the PDG the right to choose who it wanted to talk to.

Referring to transparency, AS pointed out that the Moving Thetford Forward Board Minutes already went through to Full Council but she also supported option 1.

TP was concerned about not having any parish representation in the preferred option.

RK supported the above concern. Parish representatives were needed as much of the major development was in the outlying areas of Thetford and certain parishes would be affected. He pointed out that the Board currently had 18 Members, and if the Board favoured option 1, the membership would be decreased to 8; therefore, he could not see why it could not be increased to either 9 or 10. KW explained why no parish representatives had been included. The Chairman stated that only the 8 would have voting rights but the Parish Council could attend as it would be a public meeting. He felt that it would be safer for the Parish Council just to be there rather than having a seat on the new Board. RKg mentioned the localism agenda and had very strong views in support of two parish council representatives sitting on the new Board and having voting rights.

A vote was taken on whether the Moving Thetford Forward Board favoured option 1 or option 2. Option 1 was agreed.

A further vote was taken on whether one or two parish council representatives should have a seat on the new Board and have voting rights. Two parish Council representatives were favoured.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted the PDGs intentions now that the new governance arrangements had been agreed.

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RESOLVED that Option 1 of the report be adopted as the governance structure for the delivery phase of the Moving Thetford Forward programme, subject to adding two Parish Council representatives to the membership.

27/11 FINANCIAL REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)

KW reported that a new programme had been agreed for the Thetford Bus Interchange and was now back on target.

A Member wished to know how the targets were measured; for example, if a project was off target, it was not clear how far off it was and by what; and whether it had met or not met the milestones.

Members were informed that an updated action plan, which would include the above detail, would be sent out with the Minutes.

KW

RESOLVED that the report be noted and an updated Action Plan be sent out with the Minutes.

28/11 URGENT ITEM - BUS INTERCHANGE (AGENDA ITEM 8B)

The Deputy Chief Executive, as the Returning Officer for Breckland Council, reported that the decision to hold a referendum on where the bus station should be sited had been supported at a Parish meeting that had been arranged by Thetford Town Council on Monday, 11 July 2011. The majority of the attendees had voted in favour of moving the bus station from its current location, the Anchor/Bridge Street site to St Nicholas Street. Kevin Cooper from Building Partnerships Ltd had been in attendance.

The Poll would take place on Tuesday, 9 August between the hours of 4.00pm and 9.00pm.

The bus station was a Moving Thetford Forward Board initiative but as the Town Council had called for the Poll the cost would be the Town Council's responsibility.

The Chairman had been surprised at the level of interest against the bus station remaining at the Anchor/Bridge Street site particularly as Kevin Cooper had made it clear to the Town Council that the St Nicholas Street site remained untested. Further to this, a hotel operator, a cinema and a popular coffee chain had expressed an interest in locating to the Bridge Street site as part of the regeneration.

NS asked if a Parish Poll carried much weight. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the results would not be legally binding and would have no legal standing in the eyes of the law.

Cllr Jermy explained the legal process under the 1972 Local Government Act. He pointed out that Thetford Town Council would not have to be spending £6,000 if there had been adequate consultation in the first place. PC advised that a great number of consultations had been carried out and asked NB to enlighten the Board. NB explained that in 2008, 1000 responses had been received from an Issues and Options consultation document of which 75% had been in support of

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relocating the bus station to the Minstergate site; further consultations had been carried out since.

Referring to the current proposals for the new bus station, RK stated that the Coach Services Company had said it would be interested in having a booking office incorporated as part of the facilities. He pointed out that most of the concerns related to vital missing elements within the proposal such as a booking office, a waiting room and parking for taxis. TE acknowledged the concerns being expressed but reminded the Board of the financial limitations that had been imposed on local authorities as a result of the new Coalition Government's focus on reducing national debt, and warned against wishing to raise expectations that could not be maintained going forward. TE commented on the need for community groups to become more involved going forward as the role of the 'state' reduced. TE confirmed that the Bus Interchange Project Team was seeking to address the concerns expressed and would be discussing ways to deliver facilities like a booking office, waiting room and café with those groups, like the Town Council and Keystone Development Trust, who had previously expressed an interest in the future use of the listed building.

AS drew attention to page 10 of the Thetford Area Action Plan document under the summary of comments – Approach to the Town Centre – which highlighted the fact that youngsters would benefit from the bus station being moved to the proposed site as one of the concerns related to Thetford lacking a cinema and restaurants. She felt that the youth of Thetford should be further involved.

JC reminded the Board that the idea of the town's regeneration was to attract new businesses to the town and therefore agreed that the bus station should remain as proposed.

RK disagreed and was in favour of the bus station being moved but with more facilities included.

Cllr Armes asked if there could be a covered area at the Minstergate site for people to take shelter whilst waiting for a bus. Members were reminded that the new bus station would be an unmanned Norfolk County Council facility.

TE said that he had seen many changes over the years - not just to the scope of the facilities but financially as well. What he had been proud of, however, was that the quality of the new bus station had remained. Norfolk County Council was seeking to deliver a quality building that could be sustained. For him, the challenge was how to get the community on board, and what it wanted at the moment was over and above what this project could provide.

Cllr Armes suggested having a general presentation at the Carnegie Rooms before the Poll.

The Deputy Chief Executive felt that this Poll would send out the wrong message to investors. The Chairman agreed and felt that the Board needed to get the public on side and promote the facts for both sites and promote the opportunities going forward in Thetford regardless of the Poll. In this respect, Kevin Cooper would be asked to assist.

Susan Glossop reminded Members that the planning application for the bus station had recently been submitted.

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29/11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 9)

None.

30/11 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The next meeting of the Board would be held on Thursday, 1 September 2011 at 10.00am at the Innovations Centre, Thetford.

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm

CHAIRMAN