
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

**Held on Tuesday, 31 July 2012 at 9.30 am in
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.W. Nunn (Chairman)	Mr M.A. Kiddle-Morris
Mr M. A. Wassell (Vice-Chairman)	Mr I. Sherwood
Councillor E. Gould	Mr W.H.C. Smith
Mrs L.S. Turner	

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs E. M. Jolly
Councillor C Bowes	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr N.C. Wilkin
Mr T. J. Jermy	

In Attendance

Dominic Chessum	- Joint Marketing & Communications Team Leader
Maxine O'Mahony	- Director of Commissioning
Robert Walker	- Assistant Director of Commissioning
Roger Wilkin	- Interim Housing Manager
Terry Huggins	- Chief Executive
Vicky Thomson	- Assistant Director - Democratic Services
Julie Britton	- Senior Committee Officer
Phil Mileham	- Senior Planning Policy Officer (Capita Symonds for Breckland Council)
Sarah Robertson	- Planning Policy Officer*
Rod Urquhart	- Operations Manager (Support and Fraud)

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86/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

None.

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88/12 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

89/12 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Mesdames C Bowes and E Jolly and Messrs G Bambridge, P Cowen, P Duigan, T Jermy, W Richmond, M Robinson and N Wilkin.

90/12 ADDITIONAL LICENSING SCHEME (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Executive Member for Planning & Environmental Services presented the report that followed on from the consultation held regarding the introduction of an additional Licensing Scheme. Cabinet had previously confirmed at its meeting in February 2012 that it wished to introduce such a Scheme.

To make the formal designation would allow the powers required to license houses in multiple occupation not covered by the Mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation provisions to come into force three months from the date of designation being the 31 July 2012.

The only comment made was from the Chairman who could not understand why this matter, which was in relation to licensing, came under the Housing Portfolio when there was a stand-alone Licensing Team.

The report was otherwise agreed.

Options

Not to make the designation.

Reasons

Through licensing to ensure proper management and control of Houses in Multiple Occupation.

To reduce threats to the health safety and welfare of occupants and incidents of anti-social behaviour associated with multiple occupancy.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the formal designation be made for an Additional Licensing Scheme for houses in multiple occupation within the Breckland area;
- 2) the designation be made under Section 56 Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Act 2004: Licensing of Housing Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing of other Residential Accommodation (England) General Approval 2010;
- 3) the designation made apply to all Wards within the Breckland

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administrative district and to all buildings, or parts of buildings as follows:

- a) occupied by more than one household and where more than one household shares or lacks an amenity;
- b) occupied by more than one household and is a converted building containing not entirely self contained flats; and
- c) is converted into self contained flats but does not meet the requirements of the Building Regulations 1991 and where at least one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies.

91/12 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2012 (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Executive Member for Assets and Strategic Development presented the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for the 2011/2012 financial year. All local authorities were required to produce an AMR in conjunction with Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. He thanked the Planning Policy Team for such a detailed report.

The key findings were highlighted.

In total, only 346 new dwellings had been built within the last financial year. The Executive Member for Assets & Strategic Development was disappointed with this amount but was content with the other trends in relation to the increase in floor space and employment.

The Opposition Leader had found the report very useful but had concerns about the small amount of affordable dwellings that Breckland had provided in the past year in comparison to South Norfolk Council. He pointed out that affordable housing targets in South Norfolk had been exceeded. Members were informed that nationally, particularly in the north of the Country, the percentage of affordable units developed was less. Developers were finding it difficult to include 40% of affordable housing on all sites of five or more dwellings. The Executive Member for Internal Services advised that there were differences throughout the Country - London was in a property boom, therefore, developers were finding it easy to meet the targets set. There were many complicated factors to consider particularly with the continued economic uncertainty. Breckland's percentage in comparison to the dwellings built was not low and the policies as far as he was concerned were correct.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission was delighted that this vital piece of information had been brought to Cabinet again this year. He pointed out that the Core Strategy was going to be reviewed to take account of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the Attleborough and Snetterton Heath Area Action Plan. The aforementioned concerns underlined the fact that the key areas needed to be reassessed to encourage growth and, more importantly, to look at the houses that had been delivered in areas that were not considered to be appropriate. He raised the following questions:

- How had the figures been arrived at on page 51 of the agenda?
- In relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy, how many

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houses needed to be built to achieve the figures?

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission knew it was and had been difficult to deliver the level of housing growth required but this was something that was out of Breckland Council's control. This was the deepest recession that the Country had experienced since the War years and developers were being cautious.

The Chairman felt that the delivery numbers would be achievable if Council's were able to build where they wanted, particularly in parishes. The Executive Member for Assets & Strategic Development said that the review of the Core Strategy would be a key piece of work and the pieces of work coming through would enable parishes to build what they wanted. The Executive Member for Internal Services stated that there were many villages that did not want extra housing or development.

Options

To note the contents of the report.

Reasons

Local Authorities were required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report which analysed progress of Local Development Documents. It was recommended that Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

92/12 ANGLIA REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership meeting held on 14 June 2012 be adopted.

93/12 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL (FOR INFORMATION) (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Subject to the following recommendations, the Minutes of the Member Development Panel meeting held on 12 July 2012 were noted.

(a) **Moving Training Forward - Member Development Panel Minute No. 28/12(b)**

The Executive Member for Performance & Business Development said that he supported the issues raised at the Member Development Panel in relation to the lack of a Members' Room. He had constantly found the St George's Room to be full when wanting to use it and felt that it should be made available.

The Executive Member for Localism, Community & Environmental Services pointed out that Room 35, the new meeting room next to the Contact Centre that had been recommended by the Member Development Panel to be used as the new Members' Room, was far too small and felt that the St George's Room should be re-instated as a

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room purely for Members. The Executive Member for Internal Services pointed out that he had never felt the need to have an exclusive Members' Room as Breckland Council had an excellent ICT service. If the St George's Room was used exclusively for Members it would remain empty most of the time. The Vice-Chairman stated that a number of the recommendations listed had cost implications and felt it reasonable to find out how much the video conferencing equipment would cost to move.

The Chairman of Planning agreed that a Members' Room was required but felt that the St George's Room was too big and would be better for Officers to use.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission agreed there should be an appropriate sized room made available with appropriate facilities, including pigeon holes for all Members. The Leader's Room, as far as he was concerned, was completely inaccessible when the main room was being used. He raised concerns about the video conferencing equipment being removed as Breckland Council would be relying more and more on such technology in this shared environment.

The Chief Executive said that it was not unusual to have a Members' Room in an authority. However, he felt that the room designated as a Members' Room appeared to be a meeting room because of the long table. He had attended the Member Development Panel meeting and it was agreed that the Members' Room should be made more informal and that there should be a distinction between a Members' Room and a meeting room. To help move this forward he suggested that Room 35 be turned into a Members' Room whilst Members' reviewed what they wanted to do with the St George's Room. The Chairman agreed with the suggestion and said that Room 35 should be trialled with swipe cards to monitor how much it was used.

The Executive Member for Assets & Strategic Development said that whilst the table was in the St George's Room it would always be used as a meeting room.

The Executive Member for Performance & Business Development felt that Room 35 was too small. He wanted to hear the thoughts of Mr Bambridge who was a Member of the Member Development Panel. Mr Bambridge advised that he had never been in favour of Room 35 but Members needed a room that was exclusive to them.

The Opposition Leader put his views forward and felt that the St George's Room should be turned into a meeting room and Room 35 should become the new Members' Room.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Room 35 becomes a formal meeting room for all to use;
- 2) the St George's Room to remain as a Members' Room only (no meetings to take place in this room except for Executive Board

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meetings and Emergency Planning meetings);

- 3) the video conferencing equipment and the White Board be removed from the St George's Room and WIFI equipment be installed; and
- 4) the St George's Room be monitored for the next three months to gauge usage.

(b) **Town & Parish Council Forums - Member Development Panel Minute No. 29/12**

It was agreed that Forums should include exhibitions only as and when required.

RESOLVED that Town & Parish Forums continue to be held around the District.

94/12 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 4 September 2012 at 9.30am in the Norfolk Room were noted.

95/12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 12)

RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 19872, the Press and the Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

96/12 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SERVICE (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Executive Member for Planning & Environmental Services presented the report which sought comments upon the proposals to commence formal staff consultation on a proposed restructure of the service.

It was anticipated that through improving structures and processes within the service the customer experience would improve and staffing requirements would be reduced, thus enabling the achievement of the relevant financial objective.

If Members' were mindful to approve the implementation of the consultation process, a further report would be brought to Cabinet following consideration by the Local Joint Consultative Committee and the General Purposes Committee.

The proposal, issues and the risks were highlighted.

The Interim Housing Manager explained that there had been a degree of discussion with affected staff and redundancy costs would be taken from the Organisational Development Reserve.

The Executive Member for Internal Services drew attention to the introduction of the report and asked why the significant 'waste' within

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processes had not been captured in performance management. He asked if something could be built into this process in future. He also asked if assurance could be given that the new structure would be able to cope with the likely increase in demand for housing. The Interim Housing Manager advised that this concern had already been considered and had been built into the proposals. However, in the longer term, there could be a need to draw on additional resources but based on the current model/service he had not wanted to build a structure with slack built in.

In response to a question, it was noted that there would be no savings made in year one. In response to a further question about the replacement of Breckland's Lagan expert, Members were informed that the Business Development Manager and the IT Manager were looking to rebuild that capacity as soon as possible, in the interim some existing Officers would be trained.

The Executive Member for Internal Services had noticed within the new structure that a team would be set up to take calls and asked why the Contact Centre could not be utilised. The Interim Housing Manager explained that this new team would cut out delays and avoid repetition and ultimately produce a more effective system. Customers expected to speak to someone who could resolve their needs without being passed from pillar to post, and a certain degree of specialist knowledge was required to deal with the nature of housing enquiries that the Contact Centre could not provide.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that the Housing Service needed to be kept under constant review.

Options

- 1) Not to endorse formal staff consultation on the proposed restructure. This would severely restrict the ability of the Housing Manager to deliver sustainable efficiency savings and improve value for money.
- 2) To endorse the formal staff consultation. It is possible that the consultation will lead to an alternative structure being developed; and the proposals developed following the consultation will be taken to both Cabinet and Full Council for final approval prior to implementation.

Reasons

The recommendation was in line with the spirit and letter of the Council's redundancy policy.

RESOLVED that the formal consultation commence with relevant employees concerning a proposed restructure of the service.

97/12 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (AGENDA ITEM 14)

It was agreed that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme would be discussed in public session.

The Executive Member for Internal Services presented the report which sought Members' approval to undertake a formal consultation on a draft

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Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Government had announced that it would be localising support for Council Tax from 2013 -2014 – reducing expenditure by 10%. All billing authorities had to adopt such a Scheme by 31 January 2013 for implementation from 1 April 2013.

The regulations were still unclear but every local authority must have a Scheme set up by the required timeline. To do nothing would have the effect of invoking the Government's default statutory scheme and as a result, the precepting authorities would bear the full cost of the grant reduction.

As mentioned above, the new Council Tax Support Scheme would be funded to 90% of the current level by Government and the 10% funding gap would have to be borne by Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority and Breckland Council. Parish Councils would also be affected.

Breckland Council was obliged to consult with all stakeholders and the format of how the consultation would be carried out was explained.

The Executive Member for Internal Services felt that this would be an important function for the Overview & Scrutiny Commission to consider particularly before the recommendations were published. The Assistant Director of Commissioning emphasised that the timescales were extremely tight and highlighted the fact that at this stage the consultation was purely a consultation on the draft scheme and would come back to Cabinet once completed.

The Executive Member for Performance & Business Development supported the recommendations but drew attention to paragraph 6.7 of the report. He anticipated that Parish Councils would not realise what this would mean for them and he hoped that Breckland Council would make them aware before they set their parish precepts. Members were assured that Parish Councils would be classed as one of the stakeholders and would be informed accordingly.

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman referred to the timetable on page 96 of the agenda. He felt that it would be useful to have this Scheme presented to Scrutiny as this could be politically sensitive and therefore needed to be right. Again the Assistant Director of Commissioning pointed out that the timetable was extremely tight and it would be difficult to get it to the Commission prior to the consultation. The Executive Member for Internal Services suggested that it would be better for Scrutiny to come in at the end of the consultation process once all the information had been gathered.

Options

- 1) To do nothing.
- 2) To undertake consultation of a draft Council Tax Support Scheme that makes savings through new support arrangements and generated income through appropriate technical changes in Council Tax collection.

Action By

Reasons

To do nothing would have the effect of invoking Government's default statutory scheme and as a result the precepting authorities would bear the full cost of the grant reduction. This was therefore not deemed to be an appropriate option.

The approach as outlined in the report and in the appendices would, where possible, use appropriate technical changes to fill the funding gap but would also consider savings that could be made by changing levels of support e.g. capping entitlement.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to determine the draft Council Tax Support Scheme for consultation; and
- 2) a draft Council Tax Support Scheme be published for consultation, in order to meet the statutory timetable to approve a final scheme before the end of January 2013.

The meeting closed at 10.55 am

CHAIRMAN