

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**COUNCIL**

**Held on Thursday, 6 December 2012 at 10.30 am in the  
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mrs S Armes	Mr T.J. Lamb
Mr S. Askew	Mr K. Martin
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mrs K. Millbank
Mr A.J. Byrne	Mrs L.H. Monument
Mrs B Canham	Mr T F C Monument
Mr C G Carter	Mr M J Nairn
Mr T R Carter	Mrs J A North
Councillor M. Chapman-Allen	Mr J.W. Nunn
Mr R.P. Childerhouse	Mrs K. Pettitt
Mr C. S. Clark	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr J.P. Cowen	Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr P R W Darby	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mr B. Rose
Mr R.F. Goreham (Chairman)	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Councillor E. Gould	Mr I. Sherwood
Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mrs P.A. Spencer
Mr T. J. Jermy	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr A.P. Joel	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mrs E. M. Jolly	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr C.R. Jordan	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mr R.G. Kybird	Mr N.C. Wilkin

**In Attendance**

Julie Britton	- Senior Committee Officer
Sharon Jones	- Head of Shared Service (ARP)
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
Robert Walker	- Assistant Director of Commissioning

**111/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**112/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bowes, Mr Claussen, Mr Duffield, Mr Green, Mr Kiddle-Morris, Mr Skull, Mr Smith and Mr Williams.

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The Chairman and Members sent their best wishes for a speedy recovery to Mr Kiddle-Morris who was not well.

**113/12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

The Chairman's engagements were noted.

On behalf of the Member Trainer the Chairman publicised a forthcoming course to be held on Monday 10 December for 'Effective Communication'. Members could register their interest with the Member Trainer after the meeting. A small number of Members had not yet signed up for their PDP interviews and were asked to sign up for those at the end of the meeting, or if they did not wish to have an interview, to confirm that fact with the Member Trainer.

In the evening on Thursday 20 December there would be a quiz held at Swanton Morley Village Hall. All proceeds from the event would go to the Chairman's charity, Water Aid. Mrs Turner had already registered one team and there would also be an Officer's team from the Council. If any other Members wished to take part they were asked to contact the Chairman or the Standards Officer after the meeting.

Following the Welcome Home Parade for the Light Dragoons there were some 'Welcome Home' magazines for sale at the back of the room for a suggested donation of £1.50 or above. The Chairman thanked all members of staff who had assisted in making the Welcome Home Parade such a success. He then read out a letter from the Prime Minister, David Cameron, supporting the Welcome Home Parade. (Copy attached)

**114/12 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

No declarations were made.

**115/12 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

The Assistant Director for Commissioning gave Members a presentation (copy attached). He was accompanied by the Head of Shared Service (ARP).

The presentation provided an update on the forthcoming changes and explained the next steps in the process. No formal decision would be needed until the next meeting in January.

Council Tax Benefit would cease with effect from 13 April 2013 and a Local Council Tax Support Scheme would take its place. That change would be accompanied by a 10% reduction in funding, although the final figures of the grant from Government would not be known until 19 December 2012.

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The changes would have to be implemented on 1 April 2013 and the Council was required to have adopted the new scheme by 31 January 2013, hence the tight timescale.

Part of the required process had been to consult with other preceptors and with those directly affected, along with those on benefits that would not be directly affected by the changes and a demographic panel representative of Breckland residents.

The draft scheme maintained the same principles as the current scheme in that it sought to:

- protect pensioners and vulnerable groups;
- protect those in work; and
- be affordable for Breckland.

To meet the 10% funding gap the main change was a proposed cap to the level of funding paid.

There were also some technical changes proposed with regard to second homes and vacant properties. The Council Tax discount on second homes would cease for all except military personnel and the discount on empty properties would remain at 100% for three months (reduced from six months currently) with a further three months with a 50% reduction. After that period full Council Tax would be due.

The consultation results showed strong support for all the proposals. The only discrepancy was between the Panel responses and those from people on benefits regarding the proposed cap. That was not surprising as the cap would directly affect those responding.

A recent announcement from the Government was that there would be a Transitional Grant for 2013/14. £100 million would be available to Authorities that met the required criteria. An application for the grant could only be made once a scheme had been adopted, after 31 January 2013.

The next steps in the process would be to prepare a final report which would go to Cabinet in early January and then to Council in late January.

Mrs Canham thought it was a good report but was very concerned that the people most affected would be those that could least afford a reduction to their payments. She asked what the Council could do to protect them.

The Assistant Director for Commissioning advised that the Council already had a policy to protect the most vulnerable and they would continue to do so under the draft scheme, albeit with a smaller pot of money.

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The Head of Shared Service (ARP) confirmed that they would work with those struggling to pay their Council Tax, etc.

The Leader of the Labour Group had seen the presentation at the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting and had asked a question there about empty properties. He was therefore aware that if an empty property was reoccupied for 42 days and then became vacant it would be eligible again for the two discounted periods. He thought that did not provide sufficient incentive to keep properties occupied.

The Head of Shared Service (ARP) explained that that had always been the case as it was how the legislation had been laid.

The Leader of the Council agreed with the Leader of the Labour Group and said it was something that had been discussed at the Norfolk Leaders Group meetings. There were a huge number of empty houses and there needed to be a change to bring them back into use.

The Executive Member for Planning & Environmental Services said that she was very keen to prioritise that issue and would be concentrating on it in the New Year, following the restructure to the Housing Team. It was very frustrating to see empty houses when there were so many people on the waiting list.

The report was noted.

**116/12 CABINET MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

(a) Land at Castell Road, Dereham (Minute No 125/12)

The Chairman said that the debate about Council owned land concerned him. Although he sympathised with the need to maximise the Council's assets he thought that sometimes the amenity value of a piece of land outweighed its financial value. He would be concerned if all pieces of land were treated in the same way and hoped that all implications would be taken into consideration when considering other pieces of land.

The Leader of the Council noted his comments.

(b) Corporate Asset Management Strategy (Minute No 129/12)

**RESOLVED** that the new Corporate Asset Management Strategy 2012-2020 be adopted.

(c) Financial Performance Quarter 2 2012-13 (Minute No 130/12)

**RESOLVED** that the sum of £22,010 for the District By-Elections be funded from the General Fund in 2012-13.

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(d) Breckland Collective Energy Switching Scheme (Minute No 132/12)

The Leader of the Labour Group was pleased to note that Breckland was embracing the Socialist principle of collective bargaining, but Mr Kybird remarked that market economics and purchasing power were not Socialist.

The Leader of the Council advised that this proposal was being taken forward for the whole of Norfolk.

(e) Review of Policy for Charging for the Provision of Wheeled Bins to New Properties (Minute No 133/12)

Mr Gilbert asked what powers the Council had if people refused to pay for their bins. The Deputy Chief Executive asked the Interim Environmental Services Manager to respond and he advised that if people refused to pay the charge they would have to make their own arrangements for refuse disposal. If those arrangements did not meet the required standards the Council could take action under Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act.

(f) Delivery of Affordable Housing on Council Owned Land at Snetterton North End (Minute No 134/12)

Mr Askew thought that the decision was good news for local people. Such schemes would enable people to live locally and would help to retain the vibrancy of parishes.

Mr Kybird noted a grammatical error in the paragraph commencing Wellington Construction. The first full stop should be removed and brackets added to read: "... *sum of £90,000 (the District Valuer had valued the whole of the site for £155,000) which was below...*"

Mr Martin asked Members to bear in mind some pockets of land available for development in Attleborough.

Mr Borrett noted that the Council was able to offer land at below market value to allow development because it was managing its assets so well.

(g) The Anchor Hotel, Thetford (Minute No 135/12)

Mr Lamb said that he had spoken in favour of retaining the Anchor Hotel at every stage. He queried the demolition costs and noted that if that money had been spent years ago to repair and retain the building it might have been a vibrant tourist spot. He thought that the Council's policy with regard to

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old buildings was inconsistent and he quoted various examples. He thought that in the near future the Anchor Site would be an ugly sore in the middle of the town as redevelopment was a long way off.

The Leader of the Council advised that officers had found nothing to merit listing the building and as it was now unsafe the best route was to remove it completely. Anything re-useable would be saved and the site would be landscaped so that it did not look a mess.

The Executive Member for Planning and Environmental Services said that it was not the Council's (or Capita's) Officers that had made the decision about listing. English Heritage were responsible for that. She had tried on various occasions to get other buildings listed without success.

The Leader of the Labour Group said that the matter raised serious questions about the protection of historic buildings. This was a Council owned building which had been allowed to get into a poor state. He warned against losing touch with the community and what they wanted and said that the Council needed to learn from past.

The Executive Member for Performance and Business Development said that they had looked at pictures of the original building in the 1930s and the current building was nothing like it. There had been fire and other damage. The matter needed to be moved on to make it better for the whole community.

Mr Lamb pointed out that the building had once been listed and he and others had appealed against its de-listing. The Council's Historic Buildings Officer had not supported their appeal.

Mr Bambridge noted that he had visited the building at the time that the Council had purchased it. It had been dilapidated then with fire damage and large holes in the roof.

Mrs Chapman-Allen wished that Members would speak more positively about the proposal as the Council was putting an enormous amount of investment into Thetford.

**RESOLVED** that £110,000 be released to enable the demolition of the existing buildings on the site of the former Anchor Hotel and an interim landscaping scheme be undertaken.

Mr Lamb voted against the proposal.

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- (h) Economic Development Service – New Way of Working (Minute No 138/12)

The Leader of the Labour Group supported the proposal and hoped that the service would be able to provide support for struggling high streets.

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission reiterated comments he had made at the Cabinet meeting. The performance of the Economic Development Team provided security to the Council in a time of financial pressures. He urged Members to recognise the Team's contribution.

**RESOLVED** that the recommendations as set out in the report be approved.

- (i) Legal Services Review (Minute No 139/12)

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the proposed structure for Legal Services as detailed in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Assistant Director of Democratic Services proceed with conducting a 30 day staff consultation on the proposed changes detailed within the report.

- (j) Adoption

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20 November 2012 be adopted.

**117/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

- a) Review of the National Planning Policy Framework (Minute No 96/12)

Mr Gilbert reiterated his pleasure that Breckland would be able to produce a more local plan which he hoped would encourage better quality housing.

- b) Adoption

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 18 October 2012 be adopted.

**118/12 PLANNING COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

- 118 .a Confirmed minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 29 October 2012

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**RESOLVED** that the confirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 29 October 2012 be adopted.

118 .b Unconfirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 November 2012

a) Schedule of Planning Applications (Minute No 128/12(f))

Mr Martin hoped that negotiations between the applicant and the Highways Authority would be successful and allow the scheme to come to fruition.

b) Adoption

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 26 November 2012 be adopted.

**119/12 GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The Chairman of the General Purposes Committee noted that the recommendations in the Minutes were brief because they concerned reports that were Below the Line.

a) Economic Development Service – New Way of Working (Minute No 69/12)

**RESOLVED** that Option 1 of the report be approved.

b) Community Development Service Review (Minute No 70/12)

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the revised structure at Appendix B be approved; and
- (2) formal consultation with staff should proceed.

c) Legal Services Review (Minute No 71/12)

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) the proposed structure for Legal Services as detailed in the report be approved; and
- (2) the Assistant Director of Democratic Services proceed with conducting a 30 day staff consultation on the proposed changes detailed within the report.

d) Adoption

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 22 November 2012 be adopted.

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**120/12 APPEALS COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 10)**

The Chairman of the Appeals Committee noted that this appeal had not been Below the Line.

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Appeals Committee meeting held on 28 November 2012 be adopted.

**121/12 LICENSING COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 11)**

- a) Revised Statement of Principles – Gambling Act 2005 (Minute No 19/12)

**RESOLVED** that in order for Breckland Council to act as the licensing authority to discharge its statutory duties under the Gambling Act 2005 the revised Statement of Principles be approved.

- b) Adoption

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Licensing Committee meeting held on 24 October 2012 be adopted.

**122/12 AUDIT COMMITTEE (AGENDA ITEM 12)**

**RESOLVED** that the unconfirmed Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 23 November 2012 be adopted.

**123/12 NOMINATIONS FOR COMMITTEE AND OTHER SEATS (AGENDA ITEM 13)**

**RESOLVED** that Mr M Nairn replace Mr S Green on the Member Development Panel.

**The Chairman wished all Members a very Merry Christmas.**

The meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIRMAN