

Action By

Development Framework and planning matters relating to Carbrooke, as Ward Member and with business interests, and as referred to in Minute No. 5/08 of the minutes of the Policy Development and Review Panel 1 meeting held on 5 February.

13/08 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The following Members were in attendance:

- Mrs J Ball
- Mr M Kiddle-Morris

14/08 THE PROVISION OF THE DOG CONTROL SERVICE (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Principal Environmental Health Officer updated the Commission on the review of the Dog Warden Service. Members noted that moves were afoot to place the service out to tender, to enable offers to be gauged against in-house provision, in an effort to ensure that a system which gives best value to the Council is adopted. At the Chairman's request, he explained which duties were statutory and which discretionary and the extent to which most activities now fell upon local authorities rather than the Police.

In reply to a question from the Chairman, the Principal Environmental Health Officer assured Members that the Commission would have another opportunity to look at how the service was provided when comparative information was available.

A Member expressed the hope that, whatever form it took in future, the service would continue to be provided by persons with a similar level of commitment and conscientiousness to that applied by the existing Dog Warden.

The report was noted.

15/08 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2008-09 AND BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2014 (AGENDA ITEMS 8 & 9)

The Deputy Chief Executive presented papers summarising the background to these plans, which would be the subject of a full presentation at Cabinet on 18 March, to which Overview and Scrutiny Commission Members were invited.

The current Business Plan dated from 2004-2010 and required updating against such developments as the Local Area Agreement, Community Strategy and six year medium term financial plan.

The Business Plan set out the Council's new priorities with the general intention of introducing a more performance orientated approach.

The Annual Delivery Plan was being slimmed down from the type of document previously produced, which had in the past included planned, rather than actual delivered, objectives. Anything in the ADP which was not related to one of the Council's priorities had been deleted.

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The Deputy Chief Executive expanded upon the new Council aims and priorities, which were as follows:

- Safer and stronger communities – ensuring that communities are safe, secure, integrated with fairness and equality of opportunities for all.
- Prosperous communities – developing prosperous and sustainable communities.
- Environment – our green agenda.
- Delivering the entrepreneurial Council.
- Your Council, your services – to tailor services to customer needs.

As far as the Council's entrepreneurial role was concerned, the respective plans would demonstrate how the Council would deliver value for money. The Deputy Chief Executive assured Members that this role, whilst concerned with the generation of income on behalf of council tax payers, recognised the Council's obligations as a local authority and would not be at the expense of services to residents. The Chairman commented that the discussion on options for vacant land, to follow later in the meeting, was a good example of the need to draw the line between maximising finance and recognising what was of the best benefit to the community.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that, subject to any further comments at the joint presentation, the Annual Delivery Plan and Business Plan be adopted.

16/08 ENVIRONMENTAL & SECURITY SERVICES CONTRACT MONITORING UPDATE (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Street Scene Manager presented the report, pointing out that customer satisfaction levels were above 70% and that all best value performance indicator figures were at "green status". Both he and the Strategic Director (Services) then answered Members' questions on specific areas of performance.

In reply to a comment that a post code analysis of returns would reveal more about customer satisfaction levels and identify more closely where action was required, the Street Scene Manager said that this kind of approach was being developed and also acknowledged that it would be helpful to survey town and parish councils as well as residents. The Strategic Director commented that he did in fact have regular meetings with the clerks of the respective town councils which achieved this objective.

There was some discussion on the condition of roads under the control of the Highways Agency, which appeared to be worse than others. The Street Scene Manager said that attention to these areas had not been specifically costed into operations; however, a risk assessment was carried out where a "hot spot" was identified.

Following comments on levels of composting and costs for waste collection per household, the Strategic Director point out that Breckland was now in the top quartile for both indicators.

Members indicated that they wished to continue with the quarterly monitoring of the contract.

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17/08 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANELS
(AGENDA ITEM 11)

(a) Panel 1 - 5 February 2008

(I) Local Development Framework: Open Space Assessment
(Minute No. 5/08)

In referring to the requirements for open spaces on sites with less than 30 dwellings a Member commented that it was sometimes preferable to pool entitlements in order to provide one suitable site. The Chairman also mentioned Section 106 Agreements and the need for the requirements placed on the developer to be of local benefit.

(II) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of Policy Development and Review Panel 1 held on 5 February 2008 be adopted.

(b) Panel 3 - 19 February 2008

(i) Thetford Healthy Living Centre – Green Travel Plan Monitoring
(Minute No. 5/08)

The Chairman of the Panel reported that the situation had not been resolved by the planning process and that the County Councils relevant Executive Member and representatives of the County Planning Department had been asked to attend the next meeting.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the Overview and Scrutiny Commission notes that the parking levels envisaged in the planning process are wholly inadequate for the Centre use, mainly affected by the lack of public transport and the location of the Centre and the fact that there is no user acceptance of the goals of the Green Travel Plan; and
- (2) County planning representatives and the relevant county Executive Member be asked to attend a future meeting to review the planning process and the issues of signage and bus services to the Centre.

(ii) Housing Waiting List – Allocations Policy and Choice Based Lettings (Minute No. 6/08)

One Member had observed that there appeared to be a good supply of property to let on the market.

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(iii) Adoption

RESOLVED that the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of Policy Development and Review Panel 3 held on 19 February 2008 be adopted.

**18/08 REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL MEETING ON 21 FEBRUARY 2008:
VACANT AND SURPLUS LAND OPTIONS (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

On 12 February, 2008, Cabinet had agreed to the release of £130,000 in revenue funds and the delegation of power to the appropriate Director to offer a contract to a consultant or consultants offering best value to submit planning applications on 11 vacant and surplus Council owned sites and begin negotiations with developers and housing associations to achieve the maximum commercial return subject to adherence to the Council's procurement process.

At the Council meeting on 21 February, it was decided to ask the Commission to review the policy and processes in regard for the future of vacant and surplus land; in the meantime no action would be taken on the Cabinet decision and the Cabinet would be asked to reconsider the matter at a future meeting following the Commission's review.

The Asset Manager explained the history of the process so far that had led to the selection of these sites for possible development. Some 75 locations have been identified in 2004 and, following consultation with Ward Representatives, Town and Parish Councils and appropriate officers, 11 of these had been selected as having development potential. All sites were looked at by one of the Scrutiny Panels. Approval had been sought at the time from the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to pursue development.

Some Members of the Commission were of the view that it would be reasonable to consult further on these sites, to see whether there was any variance in the views expressed by consultees originally. Some of those consulted had been councillors who had since retired and been replaced by others who had not had the benefit of consultation. Updating consultation would have the advantage of enabling the latest information, for example from the National Playing Fields Association on public open space standards, to be taken into account. The same principle could be applied to any areas of vacant and surplus land subsequently identified. As far as the current 11 sites were concerned, the decision of the Cabinet to authorise the expenditure of £130,000 would remain in abeyance pending the further consultation process. It was proposed and seconded that a recommendation to this effect be made to Cabinet.

An alternative view was expressed, to the effect that proper processes had been followed thus far and that to proceed with establishing whether or not the 11 sites in question could be developed was reasonable. This process would give opportunities for further consultation in each case.

The proposal to re-consult was put to the vote and lost by 8 votes to 4.

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It was then proposed that Cabinet be recommended to continue with the current process, the proposer believing that procedures followed so far, and those that would follow in accordance with the Cabinet decision were democratic. This proposal was seconded and, on being put to the vote, was carried by 8 votes to 3.

RECOMMEND TO CABINET that the current process continues as intended in accordance with Cabinet Minute No. 29/08.

Note: Mr K Gilbert and Mr R Goreham asked that their votes against this recommendation be recorded.

19/08 WORK PROGRAMME (AGENDA ITEM 12)

(a) Programme

A revised work programme was circulated and the following additions were agreed:-

- Environmental and Security Services contract monitoring – schedule for 10 July 2008.
- Dog Warden Service – scheduled for 10 July 2008.

Items proposed for future consideration:

- Pest Control Service
- Feasibility of “car free” towns
- Portrayal of Young People in the Media

The Scrutiny Officer pointed out that the next scheduled meeting, on 17 April, may need to be left clear for the Post Office Review. The Working Group appointed to consider representations had met once and would do so again shortly, once the consultation details have been released. Post Office Counters Limited would be represented at the Commission meeting on 17 April.

(b) Forward Plan

A Member enquired as to the nature of the decision appearing on the Forward Plan in relation to Barnham Cross – Peddars Way (Housing) scheduled for reference to Cabinet on 18 March. The Scrutiny Officer agreed to look into this.

20/08 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 17 April 2008 were noted.

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm

CHAIRMAN