

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION

**Held on Thursday, 9 October 2014 at 2.00 pm in the
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr T. J. Jermy (Vice-Chairman)	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr C G Carter	Mr B. Rose
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Councillor C Bowes (Substitute Member)
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr S.G. Bambridge (Substitute Member)
Mr R.G. Kybird	

Also Present

Mr M. A. Wassell	Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mrs E. M. Jolly

In Attendance

Tom Baker	- Chief Information Officer, Norfolk County Council
Kevin Rump	- ICT and Customer Services Manager
Simon Linsley	- Interim ICT and Customer Services Manager
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Officer
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Commissioning & Governance
Vicky Thomson	- Democratic Services & Legal Manager

56/14 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

Amendments to Minute No 50/14 were tabled and agreed by Members (see attached).

A recommendation from the Overview and Scrutiny Commission on 28 August 2014 to Cabinet had not been moved (Minute Ref No 51/14).

It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET** that the Discretionary Rate Relief Guidelines be recommended to Cabinet.

Councillor Kybird asked for an amendment to Minute Ref: 52/14 to, 'The problem was that there could be a conflict of interest as the Commissioning body included GPs'.

Subject to the above amendments the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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57/14 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Byrne, Irving and Matthews. Councillor Bambridge was present as Substitute for Councillor Irving, and Councillor Bowes was present as Substitute for Councillor Byrne.

58/14 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

59/14 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

60/14 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Councillors Duigan, Jolly, Turner and Wassell were in attendance.

61/14 EXECUTIVE MEMBER UPDATE

The Leader of the Council was in attendance to update the Commission on his ICT Portfolio. He introduced Simon Linsley, the Interim IT and Customer Services Manager as Kevin Rump was leaving.

He informed the Commission that he had taken lead of the portfolio since July 2014. He explained that the current arrangements included resilience, added skills and economy of scales. There was a 5-year joint service agreement between Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council (NCC), with a 6-month exit clause for Breckland and 12-month clause for NCC with no need for a reason.

There had been some positives on resilience such as the Public Service Network (PSN) compliance needs which had been met. There had been a resolution to 22,000 vulnerabilities. By using the service provided by NCC, Breckland had access to more staff.

However there had been challenges such as the support from the Customer Service desk which had deteriorated. An example of this was where a Member had bought their laptop for fixing and was then informed by an email that it was ready to collect. The Member was unable to access emails whilst the laptop was being repaired. It also appeared there was no continuity of support for Members.

Members were informed there were outstanding actions from a recent audit which were being looked into.

It had been noted that since NCC had moved to a Committee

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System an Elected Member had not been appointed to the Governing Board.

Councillor Jermy asked for clarification on what vulnerabilities meant. The ICT Manager said that vulnerabilities meant a point of weakness in that someone could attack the systems and put the organisation at risk.

Councillor Jermy asked how the deterioration of Customer Service support was documented so that Members could better understand the concerns. The ICT Manager said that when he heard that ICT issues were not being resolved he encouraged Members and Officers to follow the complaints procedure so that statistics could be recorded.

The Chairman asked for clarification that when the word 'Customer' was used it meant both Members and Officers. The ICT Manager confirmed this and also clarified that it meant Officers based at Dereham and Thetford Offices. The ICT service for ARP staff had been provided by West Suffolk from 1 December 2013.

Councillor Jermy asked for more information on the outstanding actions. The ICT Manager said that only high priority actions were reported to the Audit Committee and there was no track of the low to medium priorities. Both NCC and Breckland Council were audited together and jointly agreed an action plan.

Councillor Jolly informed Members that Internal Audit would be changing to a new regime which would be risk based and before the new scheme could come into effect wanted to ensure that no ongoing issues would transfer into the new system.

Councillor Bowes said that NCC Officers and Members received better customer service responses than Breckland and asked why this should be the case.

The ICT Manager felt that it was perceived Members of Breckland Council received a different level of service to NCC Members and suggested that this could be explored in more detail.

The Leader of the Council commented that Members were frustrated as calls to the ICT helpline were not answered and were not transferred to a voicemail service. The Chairman concurred with this frustration.

The Chairman said that the word 'Contract' implied a contract between two parties and this was not the arrangement. He was disappointed that a Member from NCC was not present at the meeting.

Mr Tom Baker, Chief Information Officer at Norfolk County

Council apologised for not securing a Member to attend the meeting.

The Leader of the Council said that when NCC were under the Cabinet system it was clear who had the portfolio responsibility, however this was not the case now a Committee system was in operation. He asked Councillor Jermy as an elected member of NCC to share the Council's level of dissatisfaction.

62/14 ICT CONTRACT

Mr Tom Baker, Chief Information Officer at Norfolk County Council presented to Members and said that there was an open, honest and good working relationship between Breckland and NCC.

He assured Members that five dedicated members of staff had worked in partnership to provide the Public Service Network (PSN) compliance piece of work which had been successfully completed.

It was highlighted that some software would no longer be supported which affected the vast majority of Officers and Members who were using equipment and operating systems that were out of date.

He provided assurances that they were working to achieve improvements with the Customer Service Desk. There had been 21 vacancies following a recent restructure within ICT at NCC and these positions had now been filled. Nine of these posts would be in the Service desk.

NCC were working with Microsoft and Hewlett Packard to ensure delivery of over 5000 devices. Vodafone were also working with the partnership to review the working styles of Officers and Members which had proved valuable as this had also contributed to the wider estate strategy. There appeared to be an appetite for mobile working which would provide flexibility for the work / life balance.

Everyone seemed very keen on using tablets as a way forward, however after analysis it appeared the best device would be a light-weight laptop. This had a built-in web cam which would enable individuals to work from home. New smartphones were also being considered. He emphasised the importance for both NCC and Breckland to remain PSN compliant. Storing information in the Government Cloud would enable a safe and secure environment.

Roll out of devices had begun at NCC and feedback received so far was that performance had increased and people seemed

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happy with the new equipment.

The Leader of the Council said he wanted to ensure that Breckland Members and Officers had the best equipment and reminded Mr Baker that many Members were in rural areas and therefore had very low broadband speeds. He also said that the Shared Managers at Breckland and South Holland had system access difficulties across the two sites. Whilst the vision of the future seemed great the current system was not working and in order to gain confidence Breckland needed to ensure that the systems proposed were right for the organisation.

Councillor Bambridge said that he was not convinced that the Digital Norfolk Ambition (DNA) was right for Breckland as it was a District Council. As Member E-Champion he was aware of the IT issues of Members and said that it would be a great pity if the relationship was lost on the little things. He suggested that someone could concentrate on these little issues to improve service and confidence as he would like to see the service work.

Councillor Turner simply asked for systems that were fit for purpose and worked properly. Mr Baker said that the current systems were not fit for purpose as the outdated equipment did not work effectively.

Mr Baker went on to say that Microsoft Office software would be available on the laptop and was designed with using the Cloud in mind. All documents and emails would be synchronised to the Cloud. Members would need access to the internet.

The Chairman said that Broadband within rural areas was limited or the speed is so low that it did not allow download of files. There appeared to be a misunderstanding of the Members requirements. Members were responsible to the public who expected their elected Member to do a job. The focus seemed to be the majority of people who worked at NCC and not the 54 Members who were situated in a rural location.

Mr Baker understood the issues and would take the points on board. He understood there was an emphasis on the need for connectivity and wanted to work together to address the Broadband issues across Norfolk.

Councillor Kybird was aware that the Officers re-refresh was well overdue. However, he asked if the cost of it had been included in any budget figures.

Mr Baker said that conversations were taking place with regards to the costs involved.

Councillor Kybird wanted confirmation that budgets had been considered and the ICT Manager confirmed that there was some

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ICT Strategy money available and figures were being reviewed.

Councillor Bowes asked if the laptops would be synchronised to the smartphones. Mr Baker confirmed that this would be the case and the same information could be seen across the two devices.

With regards to connectivity issues Councillor Jolly asked what minimum broadband speed would be required to ensure the systems would work properly.

Mr Baker said that for a video conference a minimum of 2MB would be required.

Mr Jermy said that as a County Member he received an allowance for his broadband; as a Breckland Member he had a Breckland Router; and he also had a personal router. Mr Baker said there was no need to have two lines into his house as other options were available.

Mr Jermy was pleased that this topic was being debated at Scrutiny and suggested that better monitoring should be built in to ensure better safeguarding and systems were in place.

Mr Baker agreed and said that improvements such as the service desk needed to be seen and that agreements that were in place were met. NCC were committed to delivering the contract.

The Director of Commissioning said that she had recently received the new device and reminded Members that Mr Baker would not be able to deal with the broadband connectivity issues as this formed a wider project across Norfolk. She said the system was much easier to use and there were benefits even when there was not full connectivity.

The Leader of the Council thanked Mr Baker and commented that he was in a difficult position but doing a great job. He was sure that Mr Baker sensed Members frustration.

63/14 ICT REFRESH WORKING GROUP

Councillor Bambridge informed Members that the group were on target to meet deadlines and had looked at some suggested IT equipment at a previous meeting. It was hoped that a decision could be made at the next meeting of the ICT Refresh Group.

Views from a Members survey had also been taken into consideration as to what type of kit was preferred.

He informed Members that a decision would need to be made by the end of 2014 in order to meet budget requirements.

The Leader of the Council advised that he would ensure a

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decision would be made within the timescale and would consider different ways of implementation. He agreed that the ICT Refresh would need to be delivered on budget and ensure that the equipment that was provided to Members was meaningful and useful.

Councillor Bambridge confirmed that Members of the ICT Refresh Group were aware there was a budget, but not clear on the exact figure.

The Chairman was unclear as to what the ICT Refresh Group were asking for and wanted assurances that NCC were involved in the process and would be able to provide IT support to the device that was chosen.

Councillor Bambridge apologised for the confusion and confirmed that the Group were considering all options and that NCC supported the different options the Group were considering.

Mr Baker said he was mindful that people had different jobs but strongly recommended that Members went with the option of the HP light-weight laptop device.

Mr Baker went on to say that Members at NCC decided to go with the iPad, however he believed that the proposed laptop would suit the needs of Breckland's Members.

Councillor Jolly said everyone needed to be clear on the Capital and Revenue budget and she would ensure that everyone involved was fully aware of this.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that it was Mr Kevin Rump's last day at Breckland, and thanked him for all his support. He had done a fantastic job and wished him well with the future.

64/14 HEALTH SCRUTINY (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Kybird informed Members that the next Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC) meeting was scheduled for 16 October and that he had forwarded information to Overview and Scrutiny Members as and when appropriate.

The Overview and Scrutiny Commission were required to suggest a Substitute Member for the NHOSC board, and it was recommended that Councillor Robert Richmond be the Substitute Member.

He reminded Members that the issue of Wider GP Recruitment would be covered at the November meeting of NHOSC.

The Chairman informed Members that he would be meeting the

Watton Medical Centre together with the Leader of the Council at the end of October.

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65/14 SCRUTINY CALL-INS (STANDING ITEM)

None.

66/14 COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION (STANDING ITEM)

None.

67/14 WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Jermy commented that he was pleased the Police and Crime Commissioner had confirmed his attendance at the next scheduled meeting. He mentioned that the SNAP meetings varied across the District and suggested that the Chair of SNAP meetings attended to submit their views on the way the process was working.

Councillor Turner said that if the Chairman was unable to attend then Members could input into the meeting.

Councillor Jermy also suggested that an opportunity could be provided to question the Leader of the Council, and to also receive information regarding Anglia Revenues Partnership.

The Chairman confirmed that the Work Programme was scheduled up until April 2015 and felt it appropriate to have a Crime themed meeting in November.

He felt it was important that the Commission had the opportunity to challenge the budget which had been scheduled for January 2015. It was suggested that ARP was considered at the February 2015 meeting.

68/14 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on 20 November 2014 were noted.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm

CHAIRMAN