
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

CABINET

**Held on Tuesday, 24 February 2015 at 9.30 am in
Anglia Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr M. A. Wassell (Chairman)	Mr T R Carter
Mrs L.S. Turner (Vice-Chairman)	Mrs E. M. Jolly
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr I. Sherwood

Also Present

Mrs S.M. Matthews	Mr P R W Darby
Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr F.J. Sharpe
Mr J.P. Cowen	

In Attendance

Julie Kennealy	- Executive Director (Place) (S151 Officer)
Anna Graves	- Chief Executive
Maxine O'Mahony	- Executive Director of Commissioning & Governance
Vicky Thomson	- Democratic Services & Legal Manager
Julie Britton	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Mark Finch	- Finance Manager
Jessica Woodhouse	- Joint Corporate Improvement and Performance Team Leader

Action By

17/15 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18/15 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Elizabeth Gould and Mark Kiddle-Morris.

19/15 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

20/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

None.

Action By

21/15 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Councillors S Matthews, B Borrett, P Cowen, P Darby, P Duigan, R Kybird and F Sharpe.

22/15 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY) (AGENDA ITEM 6)

None.

23/15 BRECKLAND COMMUNITY FUNDING APPLICATIONS (STANDING ITEM) (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The Vice-Chairman and Executive Member for Community & Environmental Services highlighted the four funding applications received since the last Cabinet meeting:

- Norfolk Young Farmers Club in Swaffham - £4,000
- Shipdham Parish Council Village Appraisal Project - £1,100
- Mattishall Cricket Club - £2,574; and
- Ashill Sensory Garden Enhancements - £250

Members were also informed of the Participatory Budget Scheme of which the organisers of this scheme had reported a good response thus far and some great submissions were coming forward. £10,000 had been allocated to each of Breckland's five market towns and their surrounding villages. This funding had been made available to support both capital and revenue projects which fitted into the Pride in Breckland aims of getting active. The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Wayland/Watton scheme had shortlisted 15 projects and an event was being held this evening to declare the winners.

Councillor Borrett thanked everyone involved for supporting the match-funding application for Mattishall Cricket Club.

24/15 CLOSEDOWN OF 2011-15 CORPORATE PLAN AND INTRODUCTION OF 2015-19 CORPORATE PLAN (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The Chairman highlighted the key achievements from the Corporate Plan 2011-2015 and the Council's vision for the next four years, 2015-2019.

'A Better Place and Brighter Future for Everyone' had been the defining phrase for the current Corporate Plan for 2011 to 2015 and the four priorities, to have pride in Breckland, to develop stronger communities, to support our local economy and to be an entrepreneurial council had been used in a number of ways, for example applicants for grant funding had been required to demonstrate that their projects met one or more of these priorities. In summary the Council had achieved a balanced budget without reducing its services, charging for car parking and without cutting or reducing parish support grants. Additionally, the Council had invested additional money into staffing resources in both Housing and Planning to improve services and a prime example in relation to capital investment was the on-going Riverside development in Thetford helping to regenerate the area and increase employment opportunities in the District. The Council had also supported multiple business growth through its REV Active and Grants for Growth

Action By

Programmes, diversified its property portfolio to increase its rental income to be re-invested to support services that it provided. The Council's approach to transformation has been reviewed and strengthened and was being used to fund transformational invest to save/income generation opportunities.

Breckland Council was now moving into a new phase by closing down the existing Corporate Plan and introduce a new one that would take the Council forward to build on its successes that it had already achieved.

The vision for the new Corporate Plan had been embodied in a single phrase: "Breckland is a place of opportunity and ambition for all". Four new corporate priorities would underpin all that the Council did and these were: supporting Breckland to develop and thrive, providing the right services at the right time and in the right way, developing the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth and enabling stronger and more independent communities. A Delivery Plan sat beneath each priority that explained how these would be achieved. The Delivery Plan was an internal Council working document that supported the public facing Corporate Plan.

The main mechanisms that the Council would be using as a vehicle to achieve its vision and priorities over the next four years, were:

- Digitalisation – this would be key to mitigating rural isolation, encouraging growth and enabling residents to access the Council's services at any time and in more convenient manner. In doing this, however, it was not the Council's intention to take away people's choice in how they interacted with the Council. The availability and efficiency of digital channels would allow more time and opportunity to work with those residents who preferred not to embrace those technologies.
- Transformation – this would be achieved through the Transformation Programme and would focus on commercial opportunities as well as organisational improvements where appropriate.
- Partnership Working – working with partners would be key to achieving the Council's strategic vision over the next four years. The policy for partnership working had been attached as an appendix to the Budget and Corporate Plan report (the next agenda item) and set out the strategic direction for partnership working.
- Housing Delivery – working with partners to increase housing delivery that met the needs of residents in the places that they wanted .
- Increased Business Opportunity – Breckland Council already had a number of opportunities and initiatives, Grants4Growth, the Open for Business initiative and the work the Council was continuing around encouraging local businesses to tender for council services. It was the Council's ambition to make procurement opportunities more transparent to local suppliers.
- Planning – planning would achieve and aid in growth whilst ensuring the growth was meaningful, acceptable and sustainable.
- Anti-social behaviour – such incidents reported had reduced by 37% over the life of the existing Corporate Plan. The Council would continue to decrease this through improved partnership working.

There were 21 critical activities that supported the four corporate priorities, all of which would be monitored by way of a quarterly progress report to Cabinet and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission ensuring that the Council was on

Action By

track to deliver those priorities.

As an integral part of this process, the new Corporate Plan would be communicated to residents, members, staff and the Council's partners to ensure that it was successfully embedded and delivered. A Communication Strategy was being developed using a variety of channels. Staff appraisal objectives were being linked to the critical activities that underpinned the delivery of the Plan to ensure that a golden thread ran from the Corporate Plan down through the Delivery Plan, Team Plans and into individual appraisal objectives.

25/15 THE CORPORATE PLAN, BUDGET, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND CAPITAL STRATEGY (AGENDA ITEM 9)

The Executive Member for Finance was pleased to present the Corporate Plan, Budget, Medium Term Plan and Capital Strategy to the Cabinet. Breckland Council by being cautious in recent years was now well placed to meet the inevitable future challenges of any national austerity measures.

The said documents alongside the Corporate Plan had been considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and at the recent Town & Parish Council Forum they had also been made available for consultation on the Council's website.

The Chairman referred to the feedback from the Town & Parish Council Forum on page 12 of the agenda where it had been requested that the Council contributed towards the associated costs of the completion of Neighbourhood Plans. The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had launched a new funding scheme to support the production of Neighbourhood Plans. Groups could apply for funding from February 2015 even though the funding was not going to be released until 1 April 2015. He drew Members' attention to the additional recommendation that had been circulated prior to the start of the meeting stating that Breckland Council was going to match fund 50% of successful bids up to a maximum of £4,000. He did point out however, that a Neighbourhood Plan was not always the panacea to all and reminded Members of the approach that the parish of Shipdham was taking which was going down the route of a community led plan.

It was proposed and seconded that the additional recommendation (recommendation number 9) be recommended to Full Council for approval.

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman agreed that not all communities would find a Neighbourhood Plan appropriate and wanted to know if the funding being made available could be used for community led plans. Members were informed that Breckland Council had awarded Shipdham funding from the Council's match funding pot, DCLG monies could not be used due to the criteria that had been set. The Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman thought it would be useful to publicise this information and advertise the fact that there was other funding available. The Chairman explained that this would be highlighted in future press releases.

In response to a question the Chairman explained how the £4,000 had been derived. Councillor Borrett was in support of this caveat as it would help give weight to a village opinion. He considered this to be very valuable to help

Action By

inform the decision making process. Many of the villages would not have the resources so he had been very encouraged as to what had been said. The Council now had something that fitted all communities across the District and he applauded the work that the Cabinet had done.

The Chairman informed Members that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) was holding a series of meetings across the District to talk about Neighbourhood Plans plus there was a great deal of information on line.

The Executive Member for Finance carried on with the presentation of the remainder of the report and was pleased to announce that the Council now had a balanced budget and was happy to take any questions. Councillor Kybird referred to the Capital Programme on page 62 of the agenda and informed Members that since the publication of the report the ICT Strategy funding had been released. He was concerned however about the £1m that had previously been included in the Capital Programme for footway lighting and he asked for an explanation as to why this figure had been removed. The Executive Director of Place explained that the Executive Members had considered the deliverability in the context of the sum available and the Town and Parish Councils had been informed asking them to come back with a more realistic sum.

The Executive Member for Communications, Organisational Performance & Development drew attention to the Corporate Plan and he thanked both Members of the Cabinet and Officers for all their hard work. He felt that the future priorities tuned in very well with Breckland wanting to be an enabling Council and the additional recommendation would form part of this.

The Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman mentioned the issue of housing for local people which he felt the Council struggled to achieve. This was a very important issue and he asked if there was anything else the Council could do. In relation to the Corporate Plan a 'vision' was about looking forward and he felt that the word 'is' should be replaced with 'will be'. On the housing matter, the Executive Director of Place advised that the Executive Member for Planning, Building Control & Housing would provide additional detail to Full Council where Members would have the opportunity to drill down much further.

In response to a question it was noted that Breckland Council still had the cheapest Council Tax. Councillor Duigan asked Members not to forget that Breckland's spend per head was very much higher than other councils. The Executive Member for Finance agreed and drew attention to the gross spend per household bar chart on page 18 of the agenda which also highlighted the fact that the Council's spending had not gone down.

The Chairman felt that Breckland's residents were getting a very good deal for £69.03.

Options

1. That recommendations 1 to 9 be made to Full Council.
2. Make amendments before recommendations 1 to 9 are made to Full

Action By

Council.

Reasons

To comply with budgetary and policy framework.

RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 1) the Breckland revenue estimates and parish special expenses for 2015-16 and outline position through to 2018-19 as set out in Appendix B be approved;
- 2) the capital estimates, capital carry-overs and associated funding for 2015-16 and outline position through to 2018-19 as set out in Appendix H of the report be approved;
- 3) the fees and charges as shown in Appendix D and D2 of the report, for adoption on 1 April 2015 be approved;
- 4) the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2015-16 be frozen at £69.03 as set out in Appendix B of the report be approved;
- 5) the Medium Term Plan at Appendix A of the report be approved;
- 6) the Capital Strategy at Appendix G of the report be approved;
- 7) the use of the Council's discretionary power (S47 Local Government Finance Act) to provide the transitional relief be approved, and delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, to determine the final guidelines for the operation of the transitional relief for 2015-16 and 2016-17 following the current scheme and guidance issued by Government;
- 8) the Corporate Plan and appendices (as amended) be approved; and
- 9) Breckland Council encourages and supports town and parish councils to bid to Central Government for the recently announced 2015-16 basic grant funding for the delivery of local Neighbourhood Plans. Breckland Council will match fund 50% of the successful bid (up to a maximum of £4,000 per submission) for those organisations provided they have pre-notified Breckland Council of their intention to bid. Any bids which have already been approved will be considered for the same match funding.
 - I. the sum of £372,000 be earmarked from the Communities Reserve (Developing Stronger Communities element) for the Neighbourhood Plan grant match funding for town and parish councils;
 - II. a further £80,000 be earmarked from the Council Tax & NNDR Reserve to top up the Communities Reserve (Developing Stronger Communities element) if required;
 - III. the sum of £50,000 be allocated from the Organisational

Action By

Development Reserve for a fixed term planning resource to provide additional capacity within the Council's retained planning function to support the development of the funded Neighbourhood Plans; and

- IV. any additional specific funding contribution the Council receives from Central Government for completed Neighbourhood Plans be allocated to the Community Reserve.

Mr Atterwill, the Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council applauded the Cabinet for the approval of the aforementioned recommendations.

26/15 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE QTR 3 2014-15 (AGENDA ITEM 10)

The Executive Member for Finance presented the report that provided information on the forecast full year financial position of the Council as at 31 December 2014.

The revenue budgets were showing a forecast below budget spend of £799k. The main variance reasons had been highlighted at section 1.3 of the report and an analysis of the significant reasons had been included on pages 106 to 107 of the agenda. This below budget spend would be analysed and any savings at the end of the year would be set aside to provide initial start up finance for the transformation programme across the medium term plan to secure financial viability over the longer term.

Options

1. To approve recommendations 1 to 4 of the report.
2. To approve some recommendations of 1 to 4 of the report but not all of them.

Reasons

To provide timely information to Members on the overall finances of the Council and to make the best use of resources available - anticipating future years expenditure

RESOLVED that:

- 1) the report and appendix be noted;
- 2) the revenue virements detailed in appendix 1 be approved;
- 3) the capital budget carry-over request of £8,610,655 to future years be noted and considered as part of the budget report;
- 4) the forecast £799k below budget spend be analysed; and:
 - I. year end savings be set aside to provide initial start up finance for the transformation programme across the Medium Term Plan to secure financial viability over the longer term;
 - II. recurring savings be captured at an early stage and removed

Action By

from service based budgets; and

- III. forecasting to be reviewed in order to establish any changes to processes to allow earlier identification.

27/15 NORFOLK DUTY TO COOPERATE - STRUCTURE FOR FUTURE COOPERATION (AGENDA ITEM 11)

In the absence of the Executive Member, the Executive Director of Place presented the report that asked the Cabinet to consider options for the structure for coordination of member-led discussions under the Duty to Cooperate.

The Chairman explained that this request related to the wider cooperation across the County. The Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman stated that Breckland Council had to agree to this but asked if the other councils involved would be asked to endorse the same. The Chairman pointed out that the Executive Member for Strategic Development chaired the Norfolk Duty to Cooperate Forum and this had been the option that had been agreed by that Committee. The Chief Executive said that she would circulate the dates and times of when the other councils would be signing up to this subject to their democratic process. Councillor Borrett felt that there was an incentive for all councils to do this otherwise they would be putting their Local Plans in jeopardy. Councillor Duigan asked if the Chief Executive could email the Central Housing Assessment to Members too. The Executive Member for Democratic Services and Public Protection was pleased to see the Forum move forward in a more formal manner.

**Chief
Executive**

Option A

Members endorse the options paper recommendation for Duty to Cooperate Member Forum structure Option 3 subject to the comments at paragraph 1.35-1.38 above and any further comments.

Option B

Members to endorse one of the alternative options presented in the paper at Appendix A of the report.

Option C

Do nothing.

Reasons

The recommended option (option 3) strengthened mechanisms for cooperation and represented the most effective balance between formality of discussions under Duty to Cooperate, securing consensus on key strategic planning matters and flexibility and resources required.

Doing nothing would have implications on the potential soundness of the Council's Local Plan when it reached subsequent stages. Whilst there were no prescriptions about how cooperation between authorities should be undertaken, it was clear that demonstrating robust and coordinated mechanisms for cooperation had been endorsed through Local Plan

Action By

Inspector's reports elsewhere.

RESOLVED that the Options Paper recommendation at Option 3 be endorsed as follows:

- the Duty to Cooperate Member Forum be structured by means of formal cooperation through a shared non-statutory strategic framework.

28/15 REFERENCE FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION (AGENDA ITEM 12)

None.

29/15 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL (FOR INFORMATION) (AGENDA ITEM 13)

The Minutes of the Member Development Panel meeting held on 29 January 2015 were noted.

30/15 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 14)

The arrangements for the next meeting on Tuesday, 24 March at 9.30am in the Anglia Room were noted.

The meeting closed at 10.20 am

CHAIRMAN