

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Special Meeting of the**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION**

**Held on Tuesday, 17 March 2015 at 2.30 pm in the  
Norfolk Room, The Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

**PRESENT**

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)	Mrs S.M. Matthews
Mr T. J. Jermy (Vice-Chairman)	Mr R. R. Richmond
Mr K.S. Gilbert	Mr J.D. Rogers
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr B. Rose
Mr R.G. Kybird	

**Also Present**

Mr T R Carter	Mr M. A. Wassell
Mrs E. M. Jolly	Mr P R W Darby
Mrs L.S. Turner	
Mr M. A. Wassell	

**In Attendance**

Julie Kennealy	- Executive Director (Place) (S151 Officer)
Margaret Bailey	- Senior Accountant Capital and Treasury
Julie Britton	- Senior Democratic Services Officer
Ralph Burton	- Strategic Property Manager
Nigel Robson	- Director, The Land Group
David Winch	- Director, The Land Group
Matthew Gibbard	- Admin Support Officer (LABV)

**26/15 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Byrne and C Carter.

**27/15 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

None.

**28/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

None.

**29/15 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

Councillors M Wassell, L Turner, E Jolly, T Carter and P Darby.

**30/15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

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**31/15 LABV TASK & FINISH GROUP REPORT AND PRESENTATION BY LAND GROUP (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

Nigel Robson and David Winch both Directors of the Land Group were welcomed to the meeting. They had been invited to the meeting to provide Members with a short presentation highlighting the background of Land Group, its achievements and how they perceived their role going forward.

The Land Group had been set up in 2000. Since its foundation, the company had worked extensively with NHS Trusts, educational establishments and commercial businesses. A number of schemes that The Land Group had financed and project managed were highlighted.

In terms of the LABV role, The Land Group would add real value for money in relation to planning, strategy and development management. It also had key financial skills in the day to day running of a Company and would be acting as a critical friend to the Council taking into account the Council's views and objectives. In terms of communication, The Land Group would be responsible for getting all information in relation to the LABV projects out into the public arena. All stakeholders needed to be involved whilst taking into account the key messages of the LABVs vision and project aims. The proposed methods of communication were highlighted.

The Land Group would become the guardian of Breckland Council's and the LABVs reputation and was very much looking forward to working with the Council over the coming years.

The Chairman explained that a number of Members present had met on a number of occasions as the LABV Task & Finish (T&F) Group. One of the questions asked had been why the Land Group was so interested in working with the Council and for a relatively small deal. Mr Robson stated that The Land Group was used to working with public authorities and it had been attracted to the long term partnership with Breckland Council bringing with it high calibre skills with the projects proposed.. The Leader of the Council pointed out that if the initial three projects went well the partnership would continue.

Councillor Jolly asked the Land Group to explain how it would manage costs and remain within budget and how it would manage delivery and timing. Additionally, given that the Company was such a small group she asked how it would manage resilience in terms of its personnel, and if there was a plan B. In terms of management, costs, risks, timing and delivery, Members were informed that The Land Group had a sophisticated risk management system in place that could identify any pitfalls and managed such issues throughout the process. Mr Winch said that he was very proud of the Company's past history; this was all about understanding where the pitfalls were and identifying them in the early stages. Mr Robson stated that this was also about a partnership approach too – any issues that were identified early could be managed and rectified. As far as a plan B was concerned, the Land Group had a large supply chain of personnel to supplement its services and all would be aware of the peaks and troughs to meet those demands.

In response to a question about whether the Company was interested in

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expanding its work outside of the Breckland area, Mr Robson explained that the pure purpose of the LABV was to exploit the Council's land and assets in Breckland for the residents of Breckland. The Leader of the Council reminded Members that the only projects that were dedicated to this LABV were Riverside, Mileham and Attleborough; however, looking ahead, there was nothing to stop the Council buying other land and property in or out of the Breckland area. The Executive Director of Place & S151 Officer stated that when it came to the next reiteration another Business Plan would have to be produced for the next phase and approved by Full Council.

In relation to Riverside, the Vice-Chairman had been pleased to see the presentation slide in relation to communication and asked the Directors of the Land Group if they were aware of the issues that had occurred with regard to the bus station and further asked if they had ever experienced hostile communities in the past. Mr Robson said that he was aware of some of the background controversy but in terms of the LABV process, communication would be dealt with in a variety of ways reflecting what the community wanted in Thetford. The construction contractor would also be involved in the community buy in. He was pleased to point out that the Land Group had never had much negativity in terms of its development schemes in the past.

Councillor Jolly referred to the retail site the other side of the river and asked if phase 1 of the Riverside development would involve collaboration with those land/business owners. Mr Robson felt that this LABV was unique but it was also about how you could use what was being done for beneficial change.

In response to a concern about the Attleborough timeline, Members were informed that the timeline was flexible as it was dependent on when the school moved out.

The Chairman thought that meeting the Land Group had been very helpful and thanked Mr Robson and Mr Winch for providing the Commission with a very interesting presentation.

Mr Robson and Mr Winch left the meeting.

The Chairman of the LABV T&F Group took Members through the key points made at the T&F Group meetings. The Minutes from these meetings had been attached to the agenda, also included was a question and answer paper. The T&F Group had looked very thoroughly into the finances and very good advice had been received. The main focus had been in relation to the risk register for Riverside and the T&F Group had been satisfied that the proper process had been followed to minimise any risk.

The Chairman asked if Land Group's Risk Management system was compatible. The Executive Director of Place & S151 Officer stated that she had looked at Land Group's risk approach with envy and was more than happy with its integrated risk management system.

In response to a question about the ownership of Breckland Bridge Ltd, Members were informed that the Directors would run the company on behalf of the shareholders. The Business Plan was quite different as

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this would need Full Council approval.

The Chairman raised a concern in relation to shareholders' voting rights and who would have the casting vote. The Executive Director of Place & S151 Officer advised that considerable provision had been made around such matters.

In response to a question about property ownership, Members were informed that Riverside would remain as a Breckland Council asset but in terms of the housing, these would be sold and the monies would be split accordingly.

Councillor Gilbert asked about Riverside in relation to the difference between what it would be worth and what it cost. The Chairman stated that Breckland Council would still own the site once developed. Riverside was more about the regeneration of Thetford which was the Council's public responsibility.

The project management fee was highlighted. This was seen to be a gesture of goodwill on Land Groups' behalf which the Chairman thought gave the scheme more viability.

The governance arrangements were explained and these would be appended to the Full Council report. One of the suggestions within the report was for the internal LABV Board to continue for 12 months to receive and consider the progress reports from the approved Business Plan. The LABV Board could then report to Full Council on specific milestones. This process would provide a safety net in the Council's performance management system through the quarterly performance reports that were currently reported to Cabinet. It was agreed that the LABV Board should monitor progress and it was suggested that the Overview & Scrutiny Commission should assess on an annual basis. The Executive Director of Place & S151 Officer thought that the presence of a LABV Board and an annual presence of the Commission would provide a well rounded picture.

The Chairman of the T&F Group asked if there would be a need for a future Project Group once the three sites had been completed. Members were informed that before the end of this Business Plan period, further Business Plan proposals would be developed by the Company Directors and the LABV Board could be the arena to receive the draft Business Plan and then report back to Full Council.

Members' attention was drawn to the recommendation in the forthcoming Full Council report. The Chairman of the T&F Group felt that it needed to be phrased appropriately in order to be flexible. The Senior Accountant for Capital & Treasury advised that advice had been sought from the Council's Treasury Management Advisors. The recommendation was read aloud. The Chairman was convinced that the recommendation was indeed correct. He then quoted Councillor Jordan's and Councillor Borrett's remarks made at the previous T&F Group meeting: "probably the best piece of work the Council has ever done" - "the risks have been identified and there is a plan in place to manage risks – the key is how they are going to be dealt with as and when they arise".

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The Chairman thought that the LABV process had been a very interesting piece of work; Thetford would benefit enormously and the whole District would benefit in the years to come.

Members were reminded of the confidentiality rules.

On behalf of the LABV Board, the Leader of the Council expressed his thanks to the Members of the T&F Group and to the LABV Project Team as without their efforts and expertise the Council would not be where it was now.

Rather than a report being prepared, the Chairman said that he proposed to speak at Full Council under the O&SC Minutes as it was for the Commission to support and not to recommend.

The order of the Full Council agenda was explained.

**32/15 TASK & FINISH GROUP - 4 MARCH 2015**

The Minutes of the Task & Finish Group meeting held on 4 March 2015 were agreed.

**33/15 TASK & FINISH GROUP - 10 MARCH 2015**

The Minutes of the Task & Finish Group meeting held on 10 March 2015 were agreed.

**34/15 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

The arrangements for the next Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting on Thursday, 26 March at 2pm in the Anglia Room were noted.

The meeting closed at 4.50 pm

CHAIRMAN